

## A HISTORY OF CITY CREEK CANYON

by Matthew Prince  
and Patrick A. Shea

### INTRODUCTION

In 1995, the year before Utah's Centennial, Matthew Prince, a Senior at Trinity College, Hartford Connecticut, undertook with Patrick Shea, an attorney in Salt Lake City, a study of the history of City Creek Canyon. Both Mr. Prince and Mr. Shea are natives of Salt Lake City. Mr. Shea became involved with City Creek Canyon during the flood of 1983. He worked with many others in sandbagging the banks of the river as it was channeled down State Street. Later in 1983 and 1984, he along with many Utah citizens, particularly from the Utah Symphony, were involved in petitioning the city to close the canyon entrance to automobile traffic.

In 1984, the Utah Freedom Trail was constructed in the lower portion of City Creek Canyon. The Freedom Trail was constructed with the assistance of six city high schools (Highland High School, East High School, South High School, West High School, Judge Memorial and Rowland Hall St. Marks). Each high school built a monument to a concept of freedom, such as, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press. The Freedom Trail monument remains just above Memory Grove.

As the restoration of the canyon proceeded, and the Freedom Trail was constructed, many of the participants began asking questions about the history of the canyon. For instance, why was a canyon so well preserved, particularly when it ran into a crowded urban area? As these questions were asked different individuals, in different times, attempted to answer them.

It was believed by Mr. Shea and Mr. Prince, a short history would assist future generations to understand the remarkable history of City Creek Canyon. The story focuses on Brigham Young. During his life time he took a deep personal interest in preserving the canyon, both because it was the primary water source for Salt Lake City, but also he was unhappy about some of the destruction and pollution that he observed in Emigration Canyon and Parley's Canyon. He did not want this to happen in City Creek Canyon.

The history of City Creek Canyon is both a story of tragedies (the first fatality in the valley was a child of the pioneers who drowned in the Creek near present day, Memory Grove) and of triumphs, (the ingenious creation of an irrigation system which was vital to sustaining the pioneers in the early days in Salt Lake City). The history attempts to chronicle these events so the reader will understand why the canyon is as it is.

Many people contributed to the history. Matthew received helpful assistance

from Leonard Arrington. He is most appreciative of the help from the staff at the Marriott Library and the Utah State Historical Society.

When the history was nearly completed, Rick Graham of the Salt Lake City Parks Department, supplied the authors with a copy of the history of the canyon written by Thora Watson entitled The Stream that Built the City. A reading of both documents confirm the important role the canyon played in the development of Salt Lake City. The Watson book is a wonderful story of personal involvement with the canyon. Mr. Prince's piece contains many important historic references.

Mr. Prince is the publisher of the weekly newspaper for Trinity College. His writing skills are evident in the text of this history.

Mr. Shea, his wife Debbie and their two sons, Michael Patrick Shea and Paul Arthur Shea, live on East Capitol Boulevard, which parallels City Creek Canyon.

It is the hope of the authors of this History of City Creek Canyon, that it will allow future generations to understand the struggles and opportunities the founders of Salt Lake City had with City Creek Canyon. The park, which was dedicated on September 27, 1995, at the intersection of State Street and North Temple, is an important landmark which represents the most recent commitment to sustain and celebrate our pioneer heritage in all of its diversity.

## THE BEGINNING

Just above Salt Lake, City Creek Canyon still looks much as it did when the first pioneers arrived. More than anything else, the creek established the location of the city within the valley. It irrigated the first potatoes. It powered mills and provided timber. And even today, the creek is responsible for nearly 20 percent of the city's water.

However, the canyon was not without controversy. Brigham Young purchased the rights to it for \$500 and always seemed to consider it his. Even when miners began to make discoveries in the canyon — something Young had encouraged when he first arrived — he and the City Council were quick to take steps to remove them from "his" canyon.

But the biggest concern with City Creek has always been its water. The diversion of the creek was what made Salt Lake's arid valley livable. But once it ran through the center of the city, settlers had to deal with drownings, floods, and even disease. The problems, however, were not confined to the first pioneers. In 1983, more than one hundred years after the creek had been hidden away in pipes under the city's streets, residents once again had to contend with an unruly City Creek that jumped confines and took its natural course down State Street.

And so City Creek has a rich history entwined with the beginnings of Salt Lake. Without its waters, the city may well have been located elsewhere, and the first pioneers might not have survived the arid desert valley.

### An Epoch-Making Event

July 22, 1847, two days before Brigham Young reached the Salt Lake valley, an advance company lead by Orson Pratt camped along a creek near the site where the City and County Building now stands.<sup>1</sup> Once Brigham Young, who had been ill, and the rest of the Counsel of the Twelve reached the valley, one of the first items of business was naming the various streams that ran from the mountains into the valley. H. C. Kimball said, "There are some creeks that have no names." To which, President Young said, "I move that this creek be called the City Creek. That the large creek about eight miles south be called Mill Creek. That the little creek, a little south, be called Red Bute Creek. That the next be called Canyon Creek. That the next be

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<sup>1</sup>*The Founding of Utah*, Levi Edgar Young, 1923.

called Big Canyon Creek." All motions passed.<sup>2</sup>

John R. Young, one of the original pioneers, wrote in the first days in the valley:

From our cabin in the mouth of City Creek canyon, in 1847, one could see a lone cedar tree on the plain southeast of us, and on the south fork of the creek ... stood seven wind swept, scraggy cottonwood trees. On the north side of City Creek stood a large oak tree. No other trees were visible in the valley.<sup>3</sup>

City Creek's most valuable resource was the water it provided for the settlers. The arid valley was perfect for the early Mormon pioneers who were seeking a sanctuary from outside influences. It was not, however, perfect for crops. Jim Bridger, a western explorer, offered \$1,000 for the first ear of corn that ripened in the valley, and many believed that the survival of the settlement was doubtful.<sup>4</sup>

When the pioneers first arrived in the valley, City Creek flowed out of its canyon and split naturally near what is now the intersection of State Street and North Temple. The north fork flowed through what is now Temple Square and then west to the Jordan River. The south fork flowed along Main Street and then curved west after Fourth South and merged with Red Butte, Emigration and Parley's Creek to flow into the Jordan River.

However, on September 9th, 1847, Brigham Young wrote to "the Saints in the Great Salt Lake City, Great Basin, North America," setting in motion the diversion of City Creek from its natural course.

... the City Creek will yield an abundance of water ... We would therefore, recommend that you prepare pools, vats, tanks, reservoirs and ditches on the highest points of land in your field or fields that may be filled during the night, and be drawn off to any point you may find necessary, thro' a high and permanent gate prepared for that purpose, when it shall have become sufficiently warm, so as not to check

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<sup>2</sup>*Pioneering the West 1846 to 1878*, Major Howard Egan's Diary, 1917, page 128.

<sup>3</sup>"Reminiscences of John R. Young," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, Volume 3, Issue 3, July 1930, page 339.

<sup>4</sup>*Salt Lake City's Ownership And Rights To Water In City Creek*, Salt Lake City Corporation, Department of Water Supply and Waterworks, 1975 — page 1.

vegetation.<sup>5</sup>

The epistle to the early settlers continued, reemphasizing the importance of City Creek's water:

It is important that the water of the City Creek should be preserved pure as possible, and that no mills be placed thereon, and the appropriation of all water privileges will be by the Council.<sup>6</sup>

By the spring of 1848 over 5,000 acres of land were being irrigated and farmed. Central to the irrigation scheme were the various "ditches" that diverted water from the mountain streams into farming communities. In 1856 the two forks of City Creek were collected into one ditch that was routed down the center of North Temple. After the water was collected, the area to the west of Ninth West became inhabitable. This land became known as "Agriculture Park," and then later the State Fairgrounds.<sup>7</sup> In addition to City Creek, water was diverted from the Jordan River, Little and Big Cottonwood, Emigration, Parley's and Mill Creek.<sup>8</sup>

The farm land extended from City Creek — near what became the Temple Block — to approximately one mile south of Mill Creek.<sup>9</sup> John Steele wrote in his journal at the time of the newly planted crops, "Our grain grew very fast ... our wheat, corn, beans and peas are all up and looking grand and grass is 6 inches high."<sup>10</sup> It was not known at the time, but the initial diversion of water from City Creek for irrigation — the first in the western United States — was, according to Dr. John A. Widstoe, "an epoch-making event ... it was the infant beginning of the later mighty dams and canals that now make the western United States a fortress of

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5"An Epistle of the Council of the Twelve Apostles," Brigham Young, September 9, 1847, page 3.

6"An Epistle of the Council of the Twelve Apostles," Brigham Young, September 9, 1847, page 4.

7*Tales of a Triumphant People — A History of Salt Lake County, Utah 1847 - 1900*, Daughters of Utah Pioneers, page 50.

8*One Hundred Years of Water Development*, Fisher Sanford Harris, April 1942, page 1.

9*Utah — The Storied Domain*, J. Cecil Alter, Volume 1, 1932, page 87.

10"Extracts from the Journal of John Steele," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, Volume 6, Issue 1, January 1933, page 710.

strength."<sup>11</sup> The irrigation of the valley proved that the rest of the desert West could be settled.

In 1850 Captain Stansbury wrote to the U. S. Government on his survey of the newly formed city:

The site for the city is most beautiful; it lies at the western base of the Wasatch Mountains, in a curve formed by the projection westward from the range of a lofty spur which forms its southern boundary ... Through the city itself flows an unfailing stream of pure, sweet water, which, by an ingenious mode of irrigation is made to traverse each side of every street, whence it is led into every garden spot, spreading life, verdure and beauty over what was heretofore a barren waste.<sup>12</sup>

By 1865, only 18 years after the first ditch was dug, 110,000 acres were irrigated, 1,000 miles of canals criss-crossed the valley, and 65,000 people lived in the once arid valley.<sup>13</sup>

With the first grain being produced in the valley, City Creek's waters were again harnessed. Despite initial regulations against mills built on City Creek, Brigham Young and leaders of the church commissioned Charles Crismon, the son of a German miller, to build a mill near the mouth of the canyon. The millstones were obtained from the mountains to the east of the city, and ground grain into whole-wheat flour.<sup>14</sup> John Steele wrote, "I could get a bushel of the sweepings of the millstones where corn was ground for \$5.00 from Brother Christman [sic] who had his little corn cracker at the mouth of City Creek. And after I got it and made a cake we could not bite it for the grit, so we made mush and used it that way."<sup>15</sup>

Crismon built a sawmill further down the creek in the spring of 1848, and later

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<sup>11</sup>*Utah — A Centennial History*, Wain Sutton, Volume 1, 1949, page 83.

<sup>12</sup>*Salt Lake City's Ownership And Rights To Water In City Creek*, Salt Lake City Corporation, Department of Water Supply and Waterworks, 1975 — page 10.

<sup>13</sup>*Utah — A Centennial History*, Wain Sutton, Volume 1, 1949, page 83-4.

<sup>14</sup>*Our Pioneer Heritage*, Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1958, page 451.

<sup>15</sup>"Extracts from the Journal of John Steele," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, Volume 6, Issue 1, January 1933, page 710.

that year sold both mills to Brigham Young. November 23, 1850, Brigham Young petitioned for complete control of City Creek Canyon:

The undersigned, humbly prays your Honorable Body to grant unto him the exclusive control over the timber, rocks, minerals and water, in the City Creek Canyon, as far as your jurisdiction extends; in order that the water may be continued pure unto the inhabitants of Great Salt Lake City; and he agrees to pay to the Treasury of the State, such sum as shall be an equivalent for the timber, rocks, and minerals, between the dividing ridges running down to said Creek, as shall be the valuation of the same; to be decided by a Committee of three, or such other Committee as shall be agreed upon by your Honorable Body.<sup>16</sup>

The petition was approved and Brigham Young paid \$500 for control of the canyon. At its base he built the Empire Mill — driven by a 40-foot waterwheel — and a sawmill that supplied firewood for the valley, both of which were powered by the water of City Creek. Later the L. D. S. Church would build a mill on City Creek to power a blacksmith shop that made tools that were used to build the Salt Lake Temple.<sup>17</sup>

Much of the lumber that was used in the construction of Salt Lake City came from the canyon. Brigham Young personally wrote the "Regulations of City Creek Canyon":

Leave all the fir trees standing, also all such oak and maple saplings as will do for plow handles, beams, hoop poles ad other useful purposes, together with the cedar whether down or standing, cutting or hauling none such without express permission.

With these exceptions, take all the wood, clearing the Kanyon of the dead wood, and the creek of every combustible likely to injure the water, leaving the small timer and shrubbery on its banks to shade it.

Observing the above regulations, you are entitled to the privilege of the Kanyon, by delivering every third load at my house, or such other place as I may desire until further notice.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Petition to Assembly of the State of Deseret, Brigham Young, November 23, 1850.

<sup>17</sup>*Our Pioneer Heritage*, Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1958, page 452.

<sup>18</sup>"Regulations of City Creek Kanyon," Brigham Young, 1853.

The common practice became that citizens would drive up City Creek and bring back loads of wood. The third load was a toll which was delivered to Brigham Young at Eagle Gate to help keep up the road he maintained up the canyon.<sup>19</sup>

### Controlling The Creek

In January of 1851, in response to the incorporation of the Territory of Utah into the United States, the Assembly created the municipal government of the city of Great Salt Lake. Additionally, a law was passed to incorporate the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in order to separate church from state.<sup>20</sup> The new government believed that the public should own the natural resources of the valley. As a result, County Courts were given jurisdiction over the water and timber.

The County Courts shall ... have control of all timber, water privileges, or any water course or creek, to grant mill sites, and exercise such powers as in their judgement shall best preserve the timber and subserve the interests of the settlements in the distribution of water for irrigation or other purposes. Grants of rights held under legislative authority shall not be interfered with.<sup>21</sup>

Additionally, the State of Deseret Act of Incorporating Cities allowed the city "to provide the city water, to dig wells, lay pump logs, and pipes, and to erect pumps in the streets for the extinguishment of fires and convenience of the inhabitants." The act also created the position of watermaster to have "authority over the flow of water within the city and farm lands."<sup>22</sup>

Since the water from City Creek was being used for "culinary purposes" one of the primary concerns was that of pollution. March 21, 1851 the City Council passed an ordinance to remove filth from the city's streams:

#### Section 1:

Be it ordained by the City Council of Great Salt Lake City that no person

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<sup>19</sup>*Tales of a Triumphant People – A History of Salt Lake County, Utah 1847 - 1900*, Daughters of Utah Pioneers, page 315.

<sup>20</sup>*Salt Lake City's Ownership And Rights To Water In City Creek*, Salt Lake City Corporation, Department of Water Supply and Waterworks, 1975 – page 12.

<sup>21</sup>Territorial Laws of Utah, Chapter 1, Section 38.

<sup>22</sup>State of Deseret Act of Incorporating Cities, Section 15, January 19, 1951.



or persons shall be allowed to build cow yards, privies, or deposit any filthy substance in or near any of the streams running through this city so as to affect the water thereof.

Section 2:

Any person or persons having filth of yards, pens, privies, or any hides or other filthy substance on the banks or in the waters of any of the streams of the city are hereby required to remove the same forthwith.

Section 3:

Any person or persons neglecting or refusing to comply with the forgoing ordinances shall be liable to pay a fine of not less than five nor more than \$50 for each offense.<sup>23</sup>

Brigham Young worked to clean City Creek in September of 1855, and the City Council paid him for the service.

... Brother Brigham Young reported to the council that he had employed a number of hands in cleaning out City Creek up in that canyon. They had hauled logs, leaves, bark, and removed dams caused by falling trees. Eight or nine miles had already been cleaned and the waters when the work was completed by running much deeper in the creek would be much colder and more pure ... [Mayor] J. M. Grant represented what from his knowledge of removing of obstructions of like nature that a creek could not be cleaned under \$700. He considered that if the Council appropriated half its costs or \$400 or \$500 it would be doing some liberal benefit where upon it was moved, seconded and carried that \$500 be appropriated for the city treasurer to Governor Brigham Young to aid him in the prosecution of cleaning the water of the City Creek.<sup>24</sup>

City Creek, however, was not a tamed resource. The report from the watermaster to the council on May 20, 1859 spoke of problems with ice and high water in the creeks that flowed into the city.<sup>25</sup> Again in August of 1861, the council heard a petition from William Moss asking for a new home after he had to abandon

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23Salt Lake City Council Minutes, March 21, 1851.

24*Salt Lake City's Ownership And Rights To Water In City Creek*, Salt Lake City Corporation, Department of Water Supply and Waterworks, 1975 – page 13.

25Salt Lake City Council Minutes, May 20, 1859.

his due to high City Creek waters. The same City Creek waters washed out roads and filled many of the ditches with gravel and debris.<sup>26</sup> During the spring run-off North Temple was sometimes impassable for weeks with ankle deep mud.<sup>27</sup> The spring of 1862 saw an unusually high water — depositing between one and five feet of gravel on North Temple, and forcing many to leave their homes and seek shelter on higher ground.<sup>28</sup>

Even when the waters weren't overflowing their ditches, City Creek was still dangerous. On May 11, 1850 at about 9:00 a.m., Celestia Kimball, the young daughter of Heber C. and Prescinda Kimball, drown when she fell off a foot bridge while attempting to cross City Creek. Elder John R. Young wrote:

As soon as the family missed her, a cry of alarm was given. I was confined to the house with a painful flesh wound in my left leg. Hearing the tumult, and seeing the excited people running along the creek, I surmised what had happened. Running to the slab, I dropped into the water and was carried by the swift current to Bro. Well's lot where the fence had caught flood wood and formed a dam and eddy. I dove under the drift and finding the body brought it to the surface and gave it to Dr. Williams, but the precious life was gone.<sup>29</sup>

Typhoid and other water-borne diseases were prevalent in the open ditches and canals that ran through the city.<sup>30</sup>

The people who lived in the vicinity of City Creek in the early days, will remember the foaming, swift course down the canyon, and crossed between Second and Third Avenues to State and North Temple Streets, and down North Temple to the Jordan River. Occasionally a rock would

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<sup>26</sup>Salt Lake City Council Minutes, August 19, 1862.

<sup>27</sup>*Tales of a Triumphant People — A History of Salt Lake County, Utah 1847 - 1900*, Daughters of Utah Pioneers, page 53.

<sup>28</sup>*Tales of a Triumphant People — A History of Salt Lake County, Utah 1847 - 1900*, Daughters of Utah Pioneers, page 54.

<sup>29</sup>Salt Lake City Council Minutes, May 11, 1850.

<sup>30</sup>*Tales of a Triumphant People — A History of Salt Lake County, Utah 1847 - 1900*, Daughters of Utah Pioneers, page 53.

fall into the stream, and one could hear it in the night banging and crashing its way down the creek. For many years it was an open and a dangerous stream, as the current was so swift and powerful that a strong man could not keep his footing in the current. A number of children were drowned in City Creek, both in the canyon and in the city.<sup>31</sup>

In March of 1865, in the face of what appeared to be another high run-off spring, Bishop Kesler petitioned the council "to take such measures as would prevent the reoccurrence of similar damage during the present season of high water to that of 1852."<sup>32</sup> Kesler's suggestion was to place boarded up walls along the sidewalks to keep the river in its proper channel. The County Surveyor and Isaac Hunter expressed concern that gravel coming down the canyon might topple the walls and leave the channel. Additionally, the Mayor, citing the fact that \$1,000 had already been appropriated and that there had been little revenue from taxes, said "the City could not do, for they are not able to do it." Brigham Young, however, believed that Kesler's was a good suggestion and was reported as saying, "... if the City wish anything done, it is the business of the people to do it, and further recommended that the council ask the Legislature for an appropriation for that purpose." Young went on to state that there was little chance of more gravel coming down the creek and washing out the fences. He would begin driving poles for the canal walls, and "hoped that the city would not stop until it had a proper channel."<sup>33</sup>

Despite attempts to improve the channel down North Temple, damage to surrounding property continued to be high. John W. Clark was awarded \$50 for damage from high waters.<sup>34</sup> The Mayor proposed that the city should buy out the land four blocks to each side of the creek, then the city will "bear the burden and the people will not suffer."<sup>35</sup> While the concern of those directly around the creek was too much water, those in the rest of the city were worried about shortages. City Creek was the main source of water for most of Salt Lake, and farmers had

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<sup>31</sup>*Tales of a Triumphant People — A History of Salt Lake County, Utah 1847 - 1900*, Daughters of Utah Pioneers, page 62.

<sup>32</sup>Salt Lake City Council Minutes, March 14, 1865.

<sup>33</sup>Salt Lake City Council Minutes, March 14, 1865.

<sup>34</sup>Salt Lake City Council Minutes, June 29, 1866.

<sup>35</sup>Salt Lake City Council Minutes, May 23, 1865.

appropriated almost all of the water that came from the other mountain streams as well.<sup>36</sup> In the early 1860's the city began to explore other options for providing citizens their water. Of special concern was the Avenues area — referred to as the "Dry Bench."<sup>37</sup> Despite the fact that a canal was built to bring water from the Jordan River to the city, avenues residents were still short of water. The avenues residents petitioned the City Council in 1878 saying that "their resources for water are inadequate either for culinary or irrigating purposes."<sup>38</sup> Articles in *The Salt Lake Herald* from settlers on the north bench insisted that the City do something to supply them with water. "The only practicable scheme yet mooted is the one of taking out some of the City Creek water high enough up the canyon or sink artisan wells upon scientific principles."<sup>39</sup>

At the City Council meeting of December 17, 1870 the idea of a piping system was first introduced.<sup>40</sup> March 1, 1871 the Committee on Improvements suggested to the council that they recommended running 6 inch pipe from the mouth of City Creek to Second South at a cost of \$10,000. Brigham Young and 42 others petitioned the council on April 19, 1872 asking "that immediate measures be adopted to establish water works in the City."<sup>41</sup> Hermann Schussler, a hydraulic engineer, was invited by the mayor to speak before the council on August 9, 1872:

[Schussler] never saw a better chance in any City nor a location so favorable for putting up the Water Works. Fire Engines would not be required, nor would it require over 250 feet of hose for protection against fires. He thought that by a fall of 120 feet about the N.E. corner of the Temple Block with a gradual fall from that point would through a

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36*Salt Lake City's Ownership And Rights To Water In City Creek*, Salt Lake City Corporation, Department of Water Supply and Waterworks, 1975 — page 26.

37*Salt Lake City's Ownership And Rights To Water In City Creek*, Salt Lake City Corporation, Department of Water Supply and Waterworks, 1975 — page 27.

38Salt Lake City Council Minutes, April 9, 1878.

39*Salt Lake Herald*, August 22, 1874.

40*Salt Lake City's Ownership And Rights To Water In City Creek*, Salt Lake City Corporation, Department of Water Supply and Waterworks, 1975 — page 40.

41Salt Lake City Council Minutes, April 19, 1872.

stream 75 to 80 feet high.<sup>42</sup>

And so on September 10, 1872, the Superintendent of the Water Works, ordered ten tons of laminated, wooden pipe at \$225/ton from Rochester, New York. At nearly the same time, construction began on the tanks inside City Creek Canyon that were to serve as reservoirs for the piping system.<sup>43</sup>

February 9, 1875 the council authorized the right of way to lay pipes to convey water from the City Creek water tanks to the streets in the city.<sup>44</sup> The plans from Schussler indicated more than sufficient water to supply the city.

The City Creek has for the present and many years to come an abundant supply for Salt Lake City, especially as its present volume will decrease but very little according to the statements made to me by members of your council. By an approximate gauging I found the creek to deliver in the neighborhood of ten million gallons per diem of 24 hours, which amount is far in excess of the water required. The average daily consume through the largest cities in the United States and Europe is 45 gallons per head. Salt Lake containing about 20,000 inhabitants, and a good deal of water being required for irrigating gardens and sprinkling streets, I will assume a daily supply of 100 gallons per head, that is for every man, woman and child, thus aggregating a total daily supply of two million gallons. In order to make provisions for the future growth of the city, I propose to construct the pipe system of the city of such dimensions as to be capable of supplying five million gallons per diem.<sup>45</sup>

The plans also allowed the possibility in the future for the construction of a surplus reservoir at the pipes inlet. However, at the time it was deemed an "unnecessary expenditure" as it was thought there was more than double the quantity of water flowing in the creek to be needed for years to come.

The excavations for the inlet for the new water pipes proceeded quickly. *The*

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42Salt Lake City Council Minutes, August 9, 1872.

43*Salt Lake City's Ownership And Rights To Water In City Creek*, Salt Lake City Corporation, Department of Water Supply and Waterworks, 1975 — page 45.

44Salt Lake City Council Minutes, February 9, 1875.

45"Letter to the Honorable the Mayor & City Council of the City of Salt Lake," Salt Lake City Council Minutes, Hermann Schussler (Hydraulic Engineer), August 12, 1872.

*Deseret Evening News* reported on September 2, 1875:

The excavations for the water pipes in the City Creek Canyon are progressing under the immediate direction of the supervisor. This portion of the work has been completed a distance of 1500 feet from the head of the works down the canyon, and in that distance there are alternate tunneling and open excavations, some of which are nearly twenty feet deep from the surface to the ground ... The pipes will cross City Creek immediately below President Young's saw mill ... the laying of the pipes ... will probably commence within a few days.<sup>46</sup>

Construction of the pipes into the city was equally efficient, as the *Deseret Evening News* again reported on October 26, 1875:

The pipes on East Temple Street have been laid a distance of over two blocks from a short distance north of Second South Street to Fourth South Street. The excavations on the same street north of where the pipes have been laid will probably be completed tomorrow.<sup>47</sup>

T. W. Ellerbeck was praised by the newspapers in his role as Superintendent of construction. City prisoners worked on the project, working off their fines at \$1 per day. Additionally, skilled pipe layers from the gas company caulked and fitted the pipe together.<sup>48</sup>

The pipes were a complete success. March 17, 1876 the *Deseret Evening News* reported on the initial test of the fire prevention system:

From an inch nozzle, a solid stream was thrown a height rising of 70 feet, and from an inch and a quarter nozzle a solid stream about 80 feet, the force being sufficient to carry spray nearly 100 feet. An inch and half nozzle sent a solid stream upon the dome of the city hall. This test demonstrates the fact that the waterworks are an unqualified success and those who have seen the hydrants at work in the large cities of America state that those of Salt Lake operate superior to them. As a constructor of waterworks, Mr. Ellerbeck has shown himself a master

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<sup>46</sup>*Deseret Evening News*, September 2, 1875.

<sup>47</sup>*Deseret Evening News*, October 26, 1875.

<sup>48</sup>*Salt Lake City's Ownership And Rights To Water In City Creek*, Salt Lake City Corporation, Department of Water Supply and Waterworks, 1975 — page 47.

hand and together with his successful manipulation of the gas works indicates that he possesses a great deal of mechanical and engineering skill and ingenuity.<sup>49</sup>

The *Deseret Evening News* wrote an editorial on October 6, 1876 extolling the virtues of the new, clean, piped water:

Pure water running into your own house. Good creek water being perhaps the best of all water for general purposes, especially one filtered, causes the people of this city to be favorably situated for a water supply, as City Creek is an excellent stream, and constantly abundant for all domestic uses for a much more densely populated city than this is. The fall of the stream is rapid, and sufficient, without artificial pressure, to take it into the highest rooms in the main portions of the city, which is a great advantage.

The city authorities, with laudable enterprise, have built filtering reservoirs and laid pipes to convey the water of the creek to the principle portions of the city and also put in numerous hydrants for use in extinguishing fires and in sprinkling the streets, as well as a few plain running fountains for street use for drinking purposes.

It now remains for the citizens, who reside where the pipes are laid, to take advantage of these circumstances and have service pipes laid to take the water into their houses, so that they may enjoy the inestimable boon of good, clean water constantly at hand and in their very rooms, as many of them as they may wish, and in quantity and quality at all that can reasonable be desired.

The City Council evidently desires to supply householders with the water at as low rates and of as favorable terms as can be fairly expected. It is really worth a good deal to have pure water in one's house to draw upon at will. The single circumstance of a degree of resultant good health, to say nothing of the other circumstances of convenience and the time and labor saved, is a matter of no slight consideration.

With the water service laid into the house, what a great saving it is to the housekeeper. You go to the tap and turn it, and you have a swift stream of more than ordinarily pure water in your kitchen, or any other room, without any trouble whatever. The water is not only clean and sweet at all seasons, but, coming through the ground, there is a considerable uniformity of the temperature in it throughout the year, and

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<sup>49</sup>*Deseret Evening News*, March 17, 1876.

consequently it is cool in the summer and winter, not ice cold at any time, but at a more pleasant and healthful temperature all the time.

What a difference in the quality and convenience of this water from that which runs in the ditches, either in the summer or in winter. In summer it is warm, and frequently muddy, sometimes is very muddy indeed. In winter it is icy cold and sometimes muddy too. While neither in summer nor in winter is it very clean and sweet.

Then think of the time and labor expended in going back and forth to the ditch, and dipping and carrying the water into the house, which very often is fit neither to drink nor to cook with after you have carried it into the house, carried it in night and morning, and many times between, every day. Even when you have a well, the labor of drawing or pumping the water amounts to considerable in the course of a year, all of which is saved by having the water service taken into your house from the street pipes.<sup>50</sup>

Individuals and businesses were charged annually to tap into the new water service. Public baths were charged \$10 for the first tub and \$5 for each additional tub. Fire hydrants cost \$5 a year, private residences cost \$15, and barber shops cost \$10 for two chairs and \$2 for each additional chair.<sup>51</sup> John S. McCormick wrote in his book on Salt Lake City that "the Mormons were the first group in North America to formulate rules, regulations, and laws governing the use of water for irrigation."<sup>52</sup> In June of 1877 the final water pipes were laid for the main conduit of water from City Creek into the city. From this point extensions were built to connect more residents to the water system. By 1892 there were 19,165 feet of supply lines feeding water from the creek to the city. By 1915 that number had increased to 36.89 miles, and a number of other sources had been added to provide the city's water. And by 1949 the number of supply lines had nearly doubled to 56.5 miles.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>*Deseret Evening News*, October 6, 1876.

<sup>51</sup>*Salt Lake City's Ownership And Rights To Water In City Creek*, Salt Lake City Corporation, Department of Water Supply and Waterworks, 1975 — page 53-54.

<sup>52</sup>*Salt Lake City*, John S. McCormick, p. 17.

<sup>53</sup>*Salt Lake City's Ownership And Rights To Water In City Creek*, Salt Lake City Corporation, Department of Water Supply and Waterworks, 1975 — page 56-57.



## Minerals, Miners & Filth

In Brigham Young's 1847 epistle to the first settlers of the valley, he seems to encourage prospecting for minerals in the mountains that surrounded their new home.

Should the brethren at any time discover any specimens or beds of chalk, lime, coal, lead, copper or any other minerals, we wish they would report the same to the Council, who will keep a record of the same with the specimens, the place where found, and by whom, which record may be of great worth hereafter.<sup>54</sup>

However, when in the early 1870's prospectors began finding minerals in City Creek Canyon, Young and the council were quick to change their position.

Counselor Young said he had been credibly informed that there had been some very rich mines discovered up City Creek Canyon, that about six miles up the creek it was contemplated to build a city. If the town should be built its natural tendency would be to foul the waters leading into the city, on which the inhabitants of this city are dependent for domestic purposes. He hoped the Council would take the matter into consideration as all the citizens would have to use the water. The ground he was informed was in the city limits. The mayor remarked that an order should be passed by the Council prohibiting the filthing of those waters. The rules and regulations for quarantine purposes should protect the citizens against the waters being made impure.<sup>55</sup>

The primarily Mormon City Council seemed uncomfortable with the primarily non-Mormon miners in City Creek. Marshal McAllister was instructed by the council to enforce the regulations against the discarding of "filth" into the creek. The *Salt Lake Daily Herald* reported June 25, 1873 on the possible problems with miners establishing camps in the canyon.

Mining towns are generally established on a stream which is made serviceable for carrying off the filth and offal which necessarily accumulated in and about such places; but in this instance such must not be the case. The inhabitants of this city use the water of City Creek for culinary and other domestic purposes, it being by far the best that can be obtained, and in some cases the only water that is possible to

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4. 54"An Epistle of the Council of the Twelve Apostles," Brigham Young, September 9, 1847, page

55Salt Lake City Council Minutes, June 24, 1873.

procure.<sup>56</sup>

Even *The Salt Lake Tribune*, which usually took a stance against the City Council, initially supported the ban of a city in City Creek.

In this the City Fathers are acting nobly, as no one would be willing to drink cesspool water; as well might other cities allow the erection of a town on the boundaries of their reservoirs into which all the filth and excrescence of every kind must, of necessity, find its way. City Creek is to Salt Lake City what reservoirs are to other cities, and from which the principal supply of water comes for culinary and other purposes.<sup>57</sup>

Despite the hesitations of the City Council and the residents of Salt Lake, many miners still flocked to the new mines in the canyon.

Col. John Wiggins returned from a prospecting tour in City Creek Cañon yesterday, and brought with him some fine specimens of argentiferous galena. Many locations have been made, and some of them are already showing large bodies of ore. Col. Wiggins reports the hills swarming with prospectors, and on his return to this city the road was lined with teams, men on horseback and on foot, all rushing to the new El Dorado. Several mills — whisky mills — have been erected, and altogether City Creek presents the appearance of a prosperous mining camp.<sup>58</sup>

Reamer, Chamberlain & Co. established the first mine in the canyon. Their mine — the "New Jersey" — was reported to have "a very large percent of lead, some iron, apparently a little antimony, and in all probability some silver and gold."<sup>59</sup> Other mines in the area were established including the "Nixon", the "El Dorado," the "Idaho," the "Boston," the "Julia," the "Henry," the "North Star," the "Green Horn," and the "Victorine," most of which were prospecting for iron.<sup>60</sup> The quality of the iron was reported to be extremely good. "The ore is of very fine quality, and

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56*Salt Lake Daily Herald*, June 25, 1873.

57*The Salt Lake Tribune*, June 28, 1873.

58*Salt Lake Daily Herald*, June 22, 1873.

59*The Salt Lake Daily Herald*, June 18, 1873.

60*The Salt Lake Daily Herald*, July 17, 1873.

compares favorably with the celebrated fluxing ore from Russia."<sup>61</sup>

Despite the initial fervor over the new city and mines in City Creek, Marshal McAllister found little when he investigated its supposed filthing.

Marshal McAllister and Captain Andrew Burt visited the proposed site of the prospective new mining town in City Creek Canyon, yesterday. They did not discover, however, that anybody had commenced to put up any buildings there yet. On their way back to the city they were tipped into the creek, down a bank about twelve feet high. They were unhurt, but received a thorough wetting.<sup>62</sup>

*The Salt Lake Daily Herald*, which had reported complaints from miners that the attempts to prevent them from locating a town up City Creek were against their rights, ran a similar story.

The fuss and excitement about the rights and liberties of American citizens being trampled upon by the City Council, because they instructed the marshal to go up the cañon and see if there was danger of the waters of City Creek being fouled, by the building of a town upon its banks, is all buncombe. The marshal found but three men there, and no prospect of a very extensive town just yet.<sup>63</sup>

Even though the marshal found little, the City Council asked him to treat the settlement in the canyon as a "nuisance." *The Salt Lake Tribune* was quick to change their opinion and criticize the council for their decision — stating that mining should be promoted everywhere possible "when so much of our prosperity depends on increasing our ore products ... discoveries like those announced on City Creek ought to be a source of gratification to every business man in the city."<sup>64</sup>

Going off at "half cock" is peculiar to our City Council sometimes, probably owing to the fact that many of its members still think that Councilor Young's suggestions must be carried out whether they can be

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61 *The Salt Lake Tribune*, June 7, 1873.

62 *The Deseret News*, June 26, 1873.

63 *The Salt Lake Daily Herald*, June 27, 1873.

64 *The Salt Lake Tribune*, July 5, 1873.

sustained by law or not ... The action of the Council the other evening in instructing the Marshal to treat the contemplated mining town site as a nuisance seems to us both premature and unwarranted ... It does not necessarily follow that because a mining town is laid out up City Creek, that it will be a nuisance or seriously interfere with the rights of the citizens of Salt Lake City, because sufficient water for the use of miners could be diverted from the main stream, and kept from returning to it again, thus preserving the main stream as pure as at the present time.<sup>65</sup>

In early July, however, the City Council changed its mind again to allow the formation of "Modoc City" in the canyon. But *The Salt Lake Tribune*, still suspicious of every council action, had a theory as to their motivation.

We confess being surprised a little yesterday at learning that brother Brigham was preparing to accommodate the miners of City Creek with a town, and that Surveyor General Fox was engaged yesterday in striking out town lots in the immediate vicinity of the saw mill. This will no doubt surprise those of our readers who remember the recent action of the City Council, and its apparent aversion to a town on City Creek.

A second thought on the subject, however, shows us the shrewdness of the operation. Mr. Young we believe owns the land, or rather has had it pre-empted, the whole length of City Creek, and knowing that in the event of mines being struck, a town would be built, he has simply concluded to "take time by the forelocks," and profit by the sale of lots. If the mines should prove a "fizzle," then of course City Creek is no longer defiled, and our shrewd Vermonter "gets away" with the proceeds resulting from the sale of town lots in "Modoc City." Brigham was evidently cut out for a Jay Gould, or a Jim Fisk, but was spoiled when he "joined the Church."<sup>66</sup>

*The Tribune* was only partially correct in assuming Young owned the canyon. Technically he had purchased the rights to the canyon in 1850, but since then Salt Lake had assumed control of the creek as a resource for its citizens. This view was further supported in 1883 when the City Attorney issued an opinion to the council stating that the city had ownership rights to City Creek. "It is the established doctrine of the court that ... the rights of persons who had constructive canals and ditches ... for agriculture irrigation was recognized and bound to protect before the Act of 1866." The United States Congress Act of 1866 — specifically section 9 of

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<sup>65</sup>*The Salt Lake Tribune*, June 28, 1873.

<sup>66</sup>*The Salt Lake Tribune*, July 5, 1873.

the Act — granted the right of a city to protect its watershed. This opinion was further supported by the Supreme Court case *Broden v. Natoma Water Company*.<sup>67</sup> However, the land at the base of the canyon, near the Empire Mill, was still Young's.

Modoc City continued to exist, but remained under the tight control of the council. Today all that remains of the city is a ghost town. "Modoc City, Salt Lake County, was one of the central camps in City Creek mining area about seven miles north of Salt Lake City. A townsite was apparently laid out in 1873, although it was mainly a residential place having no business establishments."<sup>68</sup> The population of the city never exceeded 1,000, and it was reported that the miners were always bothered by the fact that they had to pay the toll at Eagle Gate to Brigham Young every time they used the road up the canyon. "With difficulties arising because of the new boundaries of the Adams Mining District, the new organization folded up in September 1873, after the short life of only about two months."<sup>69</sup>

In November of 1883 the council took up the idea of acquiring the land in the canyon so they could have complete legal control over it — preventing future problems with miners and filth in the creek.

Councilman Ritter stated that he was informed that certain springs in City Creek above the lands recently purchased by the city. He believed all springs in said canyon should be acquired and developed by the city and instead of irrigating lands in the canyons they should be made to irrigate the 18th and 20th [Avenues] Ward benches. The stream could be greatly increased and the water could be taken from City Creek to the bench at much less cost from the springs in Dry Canyon. He suggested this as a solution of the Dry Bench water questions and moved that the watermaster be instructed to live in the canyon and investigate the nature and extent of these springs and ascertain the validity of the claims. The springs that were investigated by the watermaster and are located on property owned by the Union Pacific Railroad. The mayor was authorized and empowered to negotiate with the Union Pacific

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<sup>67</sup>*Salt Lake City's Ownership And Rights To Water In City Creek*, Salt Lake City Corporation, Department of Water Supply and Waterworks, 1975 — page 64.

<sup>68</sup>*The Historical Guide To Utah Ghost Towns*, Stephen L. Carr, 1972, page 169.

<sup>69</sup>*The Salt Lake Tribune*, "Did You Know There Were Ghost Towns In City Creek Canyon?" May 14, 1972, page 23.

Railroad the purchase of the three sections.<sup>70</sup>

The land was purchased from the railroad on November 13, 1884. The council in October 22, 1885 again authorized the purchase of two-hundred and seventy-eight acres of land beginning at the junction of First East Street and the canyon road and running north for two miles to the boundary of the acquired railroad property for \$50,000 from J. C. Kingsburg. At the same time the council stated that the city had an obligation to control the land through which city creek flowed.

... the [Salt Lake City] corporation should possess absolute control of the lands occupied by the bed of City Creek, and the waters of said creek, admits of no question. From this source the city looks for pure water for drinking purposes as well as water for extinguishing fires and irrigating portions of the city not supplied by the canal ... For these reasons, the rights of citizens to the absolute control and use of the waters of City Creek not be preserved, we recommend that the property be at once purchased, and that the resolution accompanying this report be acted upon by this council without delay.<sup>71</sup>

Further purchases were made by the city in 1891, 1907, 1911, 1913, 1916, 1926, and the last of the land in the canyon was bought in 1947.<sup>72</sup> The mines in the canyon stopped functioning under pressure from the council and more productive claims in the surrounding mountains. The Federal Government, through the United States Forest Service, purchased land along the rim of the canyon. Together the City and the Federal Government worked to protect the watershed through mutual agreements. The net effect was that the city gained complete control over both water and land rights in City Creek.<sup>73</sup>

#### Some Old Problems, Some New

*Opinion* Despite the city's control of the canyon, the creek was not free from the threat of pollution. In 1949 the city's water supply began to show an dramatic increase in

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70Salt Lake City Council Minutes, November 27, 1883.

71Salt Lake City Council Minutes, October 22, 1885.

72Salt Lake City's Ownership And Rights To Water In City Creek, Salt Lake City Corporation, Department of Water Supply and Waterworks, 1975 — page 67.

73Salt Lake City's Ownership And Rights To Water In City Creek, Salt Lake City Corporation, Department of Water Supply and Waterworks, 1975 — page 68.

the coliform bacteria count. Salt Lake was chlorinating water at the time, but the amount of the bacteria was too large to be treated by chlorine and still be fit for drinking. It was determined by 1952 that human feces were contaminating the stream high in the canyon. City Creek was being used by many of the city's residents for recreation, and after the contamination was found, the canyon had to be closed to the public. In addition to human waste fouling the water, other problems threatened the water supply.

The discovery of two deer carcasses in the stream of City Creek last week end dramatizes the danger of pollution from this source to Salt Lake City's water supply. City Water Department spokesmen pointed out that the carcasses were below the point where water is taken from City Creek for culinary purposes. In other words, they were lying in "surplus" water which does not flow into city mains. This is reassuring, but other elements in the case are not ... City Creek was found so polluted some time ago that it is being closed to human visitors. In our strange society, deer are accorded privileges denied humans and domestic animals ... In view of the heavy runoff and other conditions, some doctors are advising Salt Lake families to take antityphoid inoculations.<sup>74</sup>

As the deer carcasses illustrated, in order to remedy the problem more would have to be done in City Creek than simply keeping it closed to the public. Furthermore, the city had a direct interest in keeping the canyon open as a recreational facility. The solution was the construction of Salt Lake's first water treatment plant.

City Creek Canyon will remain closed to the public again next year regardless of results of a one-year study of the water supply without invasion of the area for recreation purposes. City Commissioner Grant M. Burbidge made that announcement Sunday, pointing out that construction of a water treatment plant for City Creek Canyon is contemplated next summer. Traffic through the canyon would not be advisable while the 15 million-gallon-a-day capacity water treatment plant is under construction, he said.<sup>75</sup>

The plant was advertised as not being merely for the prevention of "water-borne bacteria" contamination the supply, but also "to eliminate objectionable taste, odor and color. For no matter how *safe* water maybe, nobody wants to drink it if it tastes,

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<sup>74</sup>*The Salt Lake Tribune*, April 3, 1952.

<sup>75</sup>*The Salt Lake Tribune*, October 6, 1952.

smells or even has the appearance of being unpalatable."<sup>76</sup> The treatment plant would work on a three part process. First the water "passes through coarse screens for removal of leaves, rocks and the larger debris. At greatly reduced velocity it then passes through 'grit chambers' where fine sands and much silt drop out." Then the water is chlorinated with "much less than one part chlorine in one million parts of water."<sup>77</sup> The fully automatic plant was to be capable of running 24 hours and handling 15 million gallons of water per day.

The city began construction of the new plant by running 13,705 feet of 18-inch and 3,245 feet of 21-inch pipe up City Creek to the site of the new facility. The piping cost the city \$115,000 and the plant itself was estimated to cost \$532,000.<sup>78</sup> The plant was completed and operational April 1, 1955. August of 1955, the public was allowed in the canyon for the first time in three years.

Picturesque City Creek Canyon, closed for the last three years in the interest of water sanitation, is going to be opened again to the public about the middle of August. City Commissioner Grant M. Burbidge, in charge of water, said Thursday the canyon will be reopened as far up as the new water treatment plant as soon as the canyon road is resurfaced.<sup>79</sup>

In order to accommodate public use of the canyon again, the United States Forest Service built picnic tables and benches in the canyon. Additionally, regular tours of the treatment facility began in October.<sup>80</sup> The public was kept out of the upper half of the canyon until 1966.

City Creek Canyon, virtually closed for 13 years to prevent contamination of city water, will be reopened for recreational purposes next spring ... The present narrow lane winding through the canyon will

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<sup>76</sup>*Welcomel To Salt Lake City's First Water-Treatment Plant: Water for you!* Board of Commissioners, Salt Lake City Corporation, 1955, page 3.

<sup>77</sup>*Welcomel To Salt Lake City's First Water-Treatment Plant: Water for you!* Board of Commissioners, Salt Lake City Corporation, 1955, page 8.

<sup>78</sup>*The Salt Lake Tribune*, July 2, 1953, page 1.

<sup>79</sup>*The Salt Lake Tribune*, July 29, 1955.

<sup>80</sup>*The Salt Lake Tribune*, October 5, 1955.



be widened north of the treatment plant as soon as possible next spring ... With the opening of the canyon, tourists and residents will once again have access to the once-popular Rotary Park and its bowery, built by the Salt Lake Rotary Club in the 1920's. Concrete tables, benches, fireplaces, the bowery and a playground were built by the club which is now "most anxious" to restore the park facilities.<sup>81</sup>

*② Traffic*  
At the same time, increased traffic coming into downtown was causing a problem. Because the lower canyon served as a natural barrier to cars, traffic would regularly be congested in the area of Stat Street and First Avenue. In 1958, Governor George D. Clyde called for a study of bridging City Creek Canyon just east of the State Capitol. The *Deseret News* wrote an editorial supporting the idea:

A bridge to span City Creek Canyon east from the State Capitol is the timely and far-seeing proposal of Governor George D. Clyde ... The proposed super-span would help immeasurably to provide high standard highway connections through the city in the following ways: It would provide a key link to I Street and the new Seventh East Expressway southward through the city. It would relieve the serious traffic congestion that now persists on State Street between the State Capitol and Eagle Gate. It would alleviate largely the jamming of traffic that is certain to result from the construction of the new State Office Building to be erected on the Capitol grounds. It would provide the necessary traffic outlets that will be required when and if Utah's new Federal Building is erected on State Street and North Temple, as has been proposed.<sup>82</sup>

Two different sites for the bridge were proposed — one that crossed at 4th North and connected with 6th Avenue, the other, further north, connected with 11th Avenue. Despite studies done in the 1950's, the issue was still being considered as late as 1974 when the idea met with public opposition from Capitol Hill and Avenues residents. Stephen M. Harmsen, Salt Lake City Streets Commissioner, and Mayor Jake Garn stated that the building of a bridge was not consistent with city policy and effectively killed the project.<sup>83</sup>

The winter of 1982-83 dropped a record amount of snow in Utah's mountains.

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<sup>81</sup>*The Deseret News*, September 28, 1965.

<sup>82</sup>*Deseret News*, April, 5 1958.

<sup>83</sup>*Deseret News*, November 28, 1974.

As late as April, three foot snow storms continued to hammer the Wasatch Front. Through the rest of the country, flooding was forcing hundreds from their homes. And early in the run-off season, Utah streams were already running at record capacity.<sup>84</sup> Compounding the problem, the last week in April temperatures reached into the 90's, quickly melting the huge snow packs still in the mountains. May 28, 1983 *The Salt Lake Tribune* reported on severe flooding across the state. Mud slides closed Emigration Canyon, and the Red Cross had already served 3,000 meals to sand baggers and emergency crew. Despite the fact that all the creeks were flowing 50 percent above "flood stage," Terry Holzworth, coordinator for the Salt Lake County Flood Control efforts, said, "the streams are holding better than before because of all the preparation."<sup>85</sup>

However, the afternoon of Saturday, May 28th, surprised everyone when "floodwaters surged over the banks of Memory Grove ... just as Salt Lake City and county floods officials had begun to relax."<sup>86</sup> When flood waters put too much of a strain on a culvert at North Temple, crews diverted City Creek down State Street.

Thousands of volunteers transformed State Street into another Salt Lake City roadway-riverbed Sunday, as City Creek again surprised officials with increasing flows. The volunteers lined up on State Street to stack sandbags thrown out on the road by city trucks. About 9:30 PM City Creek rushed down State Street from North Temple to drains at 400 and 500 South. Some flooding of businesses was reported at 100 South about 10:40 PM as the water broke through the sandbags.<sup>87</sup>

The run-off in City Creek set a record of 234 cubic feet per second — an increase of 167% over the previous record of 156 feet per second. Motorists were encouraged to take alternative routes, and despite the fact that business downtown was way off, most were happy that the damage was so minimal. Fred S. Ball, Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce president, said that nobody was upset, and in fact he had heard a lot of praise for the way the flooding had been handled.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>*The Salt Lake Tribune*, May 5, 1983.

<sup>85</sup>*The Salt Lake Tribune*, May 28, 1983.

<sup>86</sup>*The Salt Lake Tribune*, May 29, 1983.

<sup>87</sup>*The Salt Lake Tribune*, May 30, 1983.

<sup>88</sup>*The Salt Lake Tribune*, June 2, 1983.

Despite *The Tribune's* editorial cartoon making fun of "River Running on State Street" and sandbagging as "State Sponsored Aerobic Exercises," the residents of Salt Lake rallied together with a true sense of community. Tourists flocked downtown to see the creek and many were reported as saying that the city should keep it above ground. That, however, was not a realistic option, and volunteers worked tirelessly placing sandbags until the "State Street River" finally dried up Saturday, June 11th. Senator Jake Garn said of the effort, "There has never been a time in my public life when I've seen such cooperation between local, state and federal government. I feel staggered by the level of local participation. Most people don't believe you can get 40,000 volunteers. They think that's remarkable. They're not used to having ordinary citizens help."<sup>89</sup>

In 1985 most of the damage from the flood was repaired and the public was again allowed into the canyon. Despite the fact that some in the community wanted to keep it clear of humans, the City Council approved a master plan to emphasize recreational use of City Creek.<sup>90</sup> Still, the canyon was kept pristine by being designated as a nature preserve on Friday, May 23, 1986. Mayor DePaulis said, "Our recreational areas play a major role in enhancing the quality of our lives. It is important that we preserve them for ourselves as well as for future generations."<sup>91</sup>

Well beyond most recreational areas, City Creek has played a vital role in the development of the community. It is clear that its waters were essential to life for the early pioneers. Even today, City Creek provides nearly 20 percent of Salt Lake's water, and is the only source that does not cross a major fault.<sup>92</sup> The canyon and its creek are entwined with Salt Lake's history. It exemplified the ingenuity of the first settlers, was a focus point of conflict between the Mormon and non-Mormon communities, and proved that the desert of the Western United States could be settled and farmed. Without its water, the Salt Lake valley may not have been settled. And so, under its streets flows this city's creek — coming from the canyon that opens into the heart of Salt Lake — and providing the water that gives the city its life.

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<sup>89</sup>*The Salt Lake Tribune*, June 1, 1983.

<sup>90</sup>*The Salt Lake Tribune*, October 9, 1985.

<sup>91</sup>*The Deseret News*, May 29, 1986.

<sup>92</sup>*The Salt Lake Tribune*, October 9, 1985.