

Jewish Artist Visits Pioneer Iron County, 1854

by Jay M. Jones

PART ONE: FREMONT'S 5th EXPEDITION SAVED AT PAROWAN



Portrait of Solomon Nunes Carvalho. From Wikimedia Commons, id 8702084.

On 7 Feb 1854, a lookout in Parowan noted a party of men entering the north end of the valley about 20 miles away. The Walker War, a conflict between Utah settlers and the Ute tribe, was not yet resolved and the Southern Utah settlements were on high alert. It was supposed that the men observed were Native Americans.

As it turned out, the group was led by John C. Fremont on his 5th exploration into the Western United States, this time looking for a viable route for a transcontinental railroad along the 38th parallel.

About two-thirds of Fremont's men were Native American, with eleven Delaware and three Wyandot on the expedition roster.

One of Fremont's party was Solomon Nunes Carvalho, an artist and photographer who was invited by Fremont to join the expedition to document the journey with daguerreotypes, an

early type of photograph. Carvalho also kept a written record of the trip, which he published as "Incidents of Travel and Adventure in the Far West".

Starting at Westport, Missouri, Fremont's group of just over 20 men traveled west through Kansas and Colorado. Carvalho writes about a buffalo hunt on the plains, narrowly escaping a massive grass fire, crossing several mountain passes in the Colorado Rockies and a near freezing crossing of the Colorado River.

After crossing the Green River in Utah, the explorers continued to the southwest through Goblin Valley and Capitol Reef. Although most of Carvalho's daguerreotypes were either lost or later destroyed in a warehouse fire, some paintings had been made from a few of them, including a scene of Wild Horse Butte and another of rock spires in Cathedral Valley.

Fremont chose to make his journey in the winter time in order to demonstrate that travel was possible over the route year-round.

Four days before reaching the Little Salt Lake Valley, Fremont's party was surrounded by very deep snows. On near starvation rations for weeks, some of the horses and mules were slaughtered for food. Two Delaware scouts were sent out to find a good route through the mountains, but they returned without success. Fremont knew of the young settlement of Parowan in the Little Salt Lake Valley. Reaching it was their best hope for survival.

That night Carvalho assisted Fremont in making astronomical observations. Fremont knew that an occultation (likely involving a moon of Jupiter passing out of view behind the planet) would occur that night. By noting the time of the occultation, the longitude of their camp could be determined. With careful observations of the angle to the north star, their latitude could be known.

Knowing the coordinates of their camp and also those of the Little Salt Lake Valley, Fremont calculated the distance and direction they needed to travel to get there. The next morning, he reported to his men that Parowan was three days journey away,

directly over an imposing mountain with deep snow and steep slopes. When one of the men stated that it would be impossible to cross that mountain, Fremont replied, "That is not the point. We must cross, the question is . . . how we can do it."



Monument located on the corner of Main Street and First South in Parowan commemorating the arrival of John C. Fremont's 5th Exploration Party into Parowan in February 1854. Jay Jones Photo.

The exhausted and frost-bitten men followed Fremont over the mountain. A day before reaching Parowan, Oliver Fuller, the assistant topographer, succumbed to the rigors of the journey.

Carvalho describes the emaciated condition of the whole party and his own feelings of reaching Parowan. He then reports, "I was conducted by a Mr. Heap to his dwelling, where I was treated hospitably." He continues, "When I entered Mr. Heap's house I saw three beautiful children. I covered my eyes and wept for joy to think I might yet be restored to embrace my own."

Mr. Heap was the first Mormon I ever spoke to, and although I had heard and read of them, I never contemplated realizing the fact that I would have

occasion to be indebted to Mormons for much kindness and attention."

After recuperating for two weeks in Parowan, Fremont and most of the men were ready to continue on to California. Carvalho, not sufficiently recovered, stayed behind. In March, Carvalho traveled north to Salt Lake with Henry Lunt and others who were on their way to general conference.

During his time in Salt Lake, Carvalho made some striking comparisons between the doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and his own Jewish faith. He talked with appointed territorial officials and others who opposed church practices, particularly plural marriage.

Carvalho also picked up a paint brush. "I painted several portraits in Great Salt Lake City; among them were two of Gov. Brigham Young; one of Lieut. General Wells, General Ferguson, Attorney General Seth Blair, Apostle Woodruff; Bishop Smoot, Col. Ferrimore Little and lady, Mrs. Wheelock, and several others." A notable Carvalho painting of Chief Wakara is now in the Gilcrease Museum in Oklahoma.

Carvalho would return to Iron County in May 1854 on his way to California.

To be continued.

Historical Threads

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PART TWO: MEETING THE SORROWING HARRISON FAMILY

(Part One last week covered the arrival of the 1854 John C. Fremont expedition to Parowan. Solomon Nunes Carvalho, a Jewish artist and photographer, documented the near disastrous winter journey through the Rocky Mountains and the kindnesses received from the people of Parowan. Part Two covers Carvalho's return visit through Iron County.)



Statue of Richard Harrison, early iron worker in Cedar City, on Main Street in Cedar City. Jay Jones Photo.

In May 1854, Carvalho returned to Iron County in a large caravan which included Governor Brigham Young and other officials on their annual tour of southern settlements, as well as Parley P. Pratt leading a group of 23 missionaries to Hawaii and other Pacific locations.

In Cedar City, Carvalho stayed at the home of Henry Lunt, who was making final preparations for a mission to England. While en route to his mission, Lunt delivered a letter from Carvalho to his wife and children staying in New York.

Carvalho writes: "The morning after my arrival [in Cedar City], I arose very early, and taking my sketch-book along, I sauntered around the city; in the course of my peregrinations, I saw a man walking up and down before an adobe shanty, apparently much distressed; I approached him, and inquired the cause of his dejection; he told me that his only daughter, aged six years, had died suddenly in the night; he pointed to the door, and I entered

the dwelling.

"Laid out upon a straw mattress, scrupulously clean, was one of the most angelic children I ever saw. On its face was a placid smile, and it looked more like the gentle repose of healthful sleep than the everlasting slumber of death.



taken in Mar. - 1854. S. N. C.
Carvalho's sketch of recently deceased Mary Ann Harrison on his 1854 visit to Cedar City.

**Scan by Marriott
Library of University of
Utah. Original in DUP
Museum in Parowan.**

"Beautiful curls clustered around a brow of snowy whiteness. It was easy to perceive that it was a child lately from England, from its peculiar conformation. I entered very softly, and did not disturb the afflicted mother, who reclined on the bed, her face buried in the pillow, sobbing as if her heart would break."

The deceased child was Mary Ann Harrison, daughter of Richard and Mary Harrison of Cedar City. Richard had been superintendent of a large iron foundry in Liverpool, England, and had come to Cedar City to assist in the pioneer iron manufacturing efforts.

Carvalho writes: "Without a second's reflection I commenced making a sketch of the inanimate being before me, and in the course of half-an-hour I had produced an excellent likeness.

"A slight movement in the room caused the mother to look around her. She perceived me, and I apologized for my intrusion; and telling her that I was one of the Governor's party who arrived last night, I tore the leaf out of my book and presented it to her, and it is impossible to describe the delight

and joy she expressed at its possession. She said I was an angel sent from heaven to comfort her. She had no likeness of her child.”

Carvalho evaluates this experience: “I continued my walk, contemplating the strange combination of events, which gave this poor woman a single ray of peace for her sorrowing heart.

“When I was about starting the next day [to California], I discovered in the wagon a basket filled with eggs, butter, and several loaves of bread, and a note to my address containing these words — ‘From a grateful heart.’ “

Carvalho continued his journey to California with Pratt and the missionaries, and then returned to his home on the east coast.

John C. Fremont, the leader of the 1853-54 winter expedition to locate a possible route for the transcontinental railroad, became the Republican nominee for president in the 1856 election, which was won by James Buchanan. With his political activities, the upheaval caused by the Civil War, and the decision to build the transcontinental railroad on a more northerly route, Fremont never did get around to publishing his account of his 5th expedition.

The small sketch of the Harrison child continues to be a local treasure. It was kept in the Harrison family until 1951 when it was donated to the Daughters of Utah Pioneers. It is now housed in the Old Rock Church Museum in Parowan.

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