

## Snapshot of Iron County, 1880

by Jay M. Jones

A glimpse of life in Iron County in 1880 as it was transitioning from the pioneer era into a more modern age comes from scanning the 1880 census records in combination with other sources.

The more senior portion of the population consisted of pioneers originating from Europe and the Eastern United States. Some leadership roles began to fall upon the younger generation, many of whom were born in Utah.

The total population of Iron County was 4,013 in 1880. But county boundaries were quite different at that time. Garfield County was not created until 1882, so Iron County extended from Nevada on the west to the Colorado River on the east. The southern boundary of the county fell between Hamilton Fort and Kanarraville, which was a part of Kane County in 1880.

Some Iron County families received calls to settle in other areas of the Intermountain West during this time period. Former Iron County residents were a major part of the approximately 240 pioneers that arrived in San Juan County in the spring of 1880, so they just missed being part of the Iron County count for that year.

Parowan was the largest city in Iron County in 1880, with 957 residents. Panguitch, which is now in Garfield County, was second with 846. Third was Cedar City, with a population of 688, followed by Escalante with 623 and Paragonah with 256.

The Native American population in the county was listed as 56, with 46 living in what was identified as the "Indian Village" adjacent to Cedar City. A note was made on the census form that since an interpreter was not available, the census enumerator did the best that could be done under the circumstances (in recording names and ages). It is probable that several Native Americans living in the county did not get included in the count.

One of the most striking features that the 1880 census reveals about Iron County is the age profile. Just over 36% of the population was 9 years old or younger (as of the census date of June 1, 1880). Nearly 24% of the population was over 10 years but under 20 years of age. Certainly, having 60% of the population under 20 in a frontier environment gave Iron County a youthful vigor.

In 1880 it had been 33 years since the settlement of Euro-Americans in Salt Lake City, and 29 years since the Euro-American settlement of Parowan and Cedar City. For those under 30 years of age in the 1880 census, 88% had been born in Utah. Another 4% were born in other places in the United States, and 8% had been born in foreign countries.

It was very different for those over 30 years of age. Only 4% were born in Utah (half of these were Native Americans), 35% were born in other parts of the United States, and 61% were born in other countries.

Of those Iron County residents of 1880 that were born outside of the United States, 468 were born in England. Another 100 originated from Wales, 96 from Denmark, and 53 from Scotland. Other countries well represented were Canada, Ireland, Sweden, Australia, and Switzerland.



*The home of C. Sylvanus Hulet in Summit, Utah. He and his wife Catherine were listed in the 1880 census as residents of Summit with 3 sons and 1 daughter. Sylvanus, aged 54, was a farmer while the occupation of Catherine, aged 50, was "keeping house". Jay Jones photo.*



*Jesse N. Smith home in Parowan, built in 1858. In 1878, Smith was called to settle in Eastern Arizona. He completed his move in April of 1880, thus missing the count of residents of Parowan in the 1880 census. Jay Jones photo.*



*Ruins of a residence at Iron City, now known as Old Irontown. After reaching a peak in population and iron production in the 1870's, the iron producing community declined as the long distance to markets doomed the enterprise. The 1880 census recorded 15 residents of Iron City, including 5 iron miners, 3 farmers, 1 coal miner, 1 woman, and 5 children. Jay Jones photo.*

Farming and livestock raising were the principal occupations for men, with significant numbers of freighters, blacksmiths, carpenters, brick masons, sawyers, milliners and shoemakers. A few clerks, miners, and fishermen were also noted.

"House Keeping" was the principal occupation listed for women, although two of the three doctors listed in the county census were women, in addition to four mid-wives. Other occupations listed for women included dressmakers, seamstresses, weavers, domestic servants and dairy maids.

A total of 15 school teachers were identified to take on the significant task of providing an education for the host of the young.