

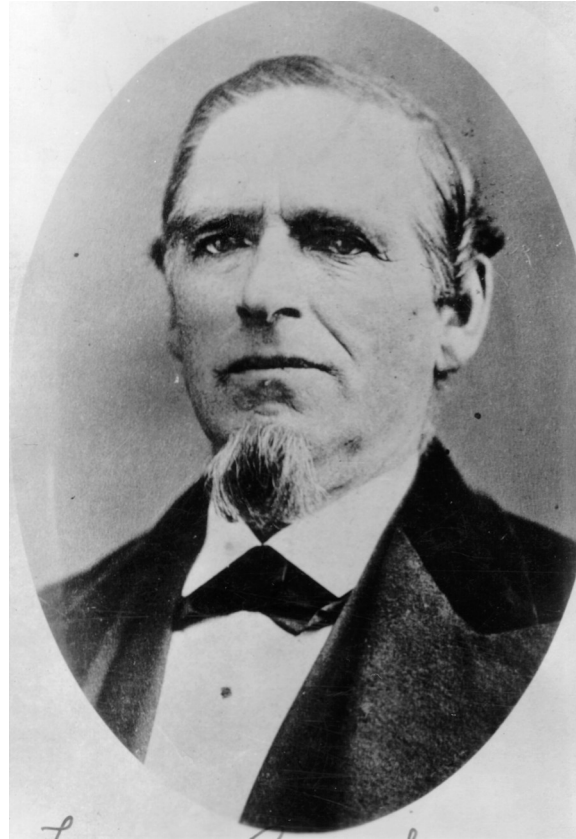
Historical Threads

Lorenzo and Susannah Roundy, Southern Utah Pioneers

by Jay M. Jones



Susannah Wallace Roundy, 1820-1892. Photo courtesy SUU Special Collections.



Lorenzo W. Roundy, 1819-1876. Photo courtesy SUU Special Collections.

Some view Salt Lake City as the end of the trail for many Utah pioneers. For Lorenzo and Susannah Roundy, who arrived in Salt Lake City in 1847, their pioneering work had just begun.

Lorenzo was one of 21 men called to the Southern Indian Mission in 1853, headquartered at Fort Harmony (near New Harmony), Utah. Instructions from Brigham Young, recorded by Thomas Brown, included:

“You are sent, not to farm, build nice houses & fence fine fields, not to help white men, but to save the red ones, learn their language, and you can do this more effectually by

living among them . . . feed them, clothe them and teach them as you can . . . you will soon be able to teach them in their own language, they are our brethren, we must seek after them . . .”

Lorenzo, along with Robert Ritchie and Jehu Blackburn, erected a sawmill at Pine Valley in 1855. With other Indian Missionaries, Lorenzo helped establish the community of Pinto in the fall of 1856. That same fall, he was called to accompany Nathaniel Jones on a lead mining mission to Las Vegas.

In 1857 Lorenzo moved to Centerville (north of Salt Lake), where he took another wife, Priscilla Parrish. In 1865 he moved his families to Upper Kanab [Alton] and then to Kanab. Ongoing Indian troubles caused the temporary abandonment of Kanab. Lorenzo was then called to settle in Kanarraville, where he became bishop.

In December 1872 Brigham Young invited Thomas Kane, with his wife Elizabeth and two young sons, to visit Utah. Thomas, son of a prominent judge, had excellent political connections in the eastern United States and had provided significant assistance in diffusing the Utah War of 1857-58.

Traveling from Salt Lake City to St. George with Brigham Young's entourage, the Kanes stayed with Lorenzo and Susannah Roundy in Kanarraville just before Christmas. A short time later, Lorenzo Roundy was called by Brigham Young to lead an expedition by the Arizona Exploring Company into Northern Arizona in preparation for sending settlers there.

Brigham Young and Thomas Kane were discussing the possibility of establishing settlements in Arizona and Mexico. Thomas' wife Elizabeth was aware of some of these plans, and particularly the part Lorenzo Roundy would play in the Arizona Exploring Company. Mrs. Kane writes:

“The messenger who had brought her husband word that he was set apart for this mission, told me that he arrived in the middle of the night. Mrs. Roundy got up without a murmur, kindled a fire, and prepared a meal for him.

As she watched her saucepan she heard the conversation imperfectly. She raised herself from her stooping position at the fire, and with one hand on her aching back, and the other

suppressing a yawn, said, as quietly as if it were an everyday thing, 'Well, Brother Gunn, I suppose this means another move for the saints? The Lord knows *I'm* ready!'

"I am sure I hope she will be detailed to some settlement, on our own planet, where there are green pastures beside still waters."

The expedition explored and evaluated sites along the Little Colorado River and also the Rio Verde country. In his report, Lorenzo noted the arid, inhospitable nature of the area, but concluded that some locations would be suitable for settlement.

On their return trip to Salt Lake City in February or March, the Kanes again passed through Kanarraville and stopped to see Susannah Roundy. Elizabeth writes:

"A month before, her husband had been detailed to head that exploring mission among the Indians near the San Francisco mountain [near Flagstaff], in Arizona, which caused so much speculation in our Eastern newspapers. She had been ever since shut up in Kanarra, not knowing whether he was alive or destroyed by savages, or starved to death, or frozen down some half-mile-deep cañon of the awful Colorado. I had the pleasure of giving her the first news of his safety."

As indicated by Elizabeth Kane, the national press was interested in these explorations into Arizona. During this time, President Ulysses S. Grant had appointed territorial governors and judges to put an end to polygamy and target Brigham Young for prosecution. What would Brigham Young's response be? Would he lead his people to Arizona, or possibly Mexico? Would a scorched earth policy be implemented in Utah, as Brigham Young had threatened to do during the Utah War 15 years earlier?

Three years later Lorenzo would accompany another expedition to Arizona, this time with tragic results. Jacob Hamblin reported:

"In May, 1876, Brothers D. H. Wells, Erastus Snow and other leading men among the Saints, were sent to visit the new settlements in Arizona. I was sent with them as a guide. The Colorado was

then high, a raging torrent. The current shifted from side to side, and the surging of the waters against the rocks caused large and dangerous whirlpools.”



Joel Roundy at Lee's Ferry, Arizona, at the rock where a rope snagged, causing the sinking of the ferry boat which resulted in his father's death. Photo Courtesy SUU Special Collections.

At Lee's Ferry, some men and horses were successfully transported across the river and the boat returned for more. This time, three wagons, some luggage, and several men were on board. The boat was towed upstream about a mile to improve chances of landing at the proper place on the other side of the river. While towing the boat, the rope snagged in the seam of a rock. The bow of the boat was drawn under water and the rapid current pulled all aboard into the river.

All but one of the men that were swept into the river survived. Lorenzo Roundy, aged 57, was considered a good swimmer, but he was not able to make it to shore. The cold waters from the melted Rocky Mountain snows may have caused cramps to immobilize him. His body was never found.

The loss was especially hard for Susannah. She sold her home in Kanarraville and moved to Widstoe, Utah to be near one of her sons. She later moved to Escalante, Utah, where she lived the remainder of her life. She died at age 72 and was buried in Escalante.

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