Castle Valley America

Taniguchi, Nancy

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Between 4:30 and 5 o’clock in the morning I . . . saw about forty-five deputies. They descended upon the sleeping tent colony, dragged the miners out of their beds . . . [without time] to put on their clothes. Shaking with cold, followed by the shrieks and wails of their wives and children, beaten along the road by guns, they were driven like cattle . . . Two days after this raid was made, the stone that held my door was suddenly pushed in. A fellow jumped into the room, stuck a gun under my jaw and told me to tell him where he could get $3000 of the miners’ money or he would blow out my brains.1

—Mother Mary Harris Jones, union organizer

As the twentieth century arrived, America’s Industrial Revolution boomed. According to historian Samuel Hays, all of American history from 1885–1914 was a simple reaction to industrial growth.2 Certainly, Castle Valley fit this model, as coal mining grew in importance. Farmers still struggled to get enough water to raise their crops, and stockmen still tended their flourishing herds, but coal became king. As a handmaiden industry for smelters spewing metals, for locomotives hauling goods nationwide, and for home heating, coal danced to tunes whistled elsewhere. Increasingly, so did Castle Valley’s residents. Their daily lives changed as metals, smelted with coke from coal, were shaped into marvelous new inventions such as sewing machines, electric irons, and the delicate filaments inside light bulbs. Like the rest of the nation, Castle Valley residents wanted these material goods, even if local miners sometimes paid the ultimate price in fueling America’s industry.

The Denver and Rio Grande Western and its Pleasant Valley Coal Company, Castle Valley’s leading industrial complex, made important strides just as the nineteenth century ended. In August 1899, the PVCC opened a new mine, Clear Creek, just south of Winter Quarters. Miners there earned sixty
cents a ton for screened coal—a good price at the time. Those good wages contrasted with problems at the oldest Scofield mine, Winter Quarters No. 1, where in January 1898, coal wagon drivers had struck based on the new eight-hour law. “The drivers came out dissatisfied with going in and out of the mine on their own time,” wrote Gomer Thomas, the state coal mine inspector. “They demanded 25 cents of advance per day, or go in and out of the mine on the company’s time.” After one day out, he wrote, “They decided that they would go in on the company’s time and come out on their own time.” This low-key, civilized negotiation marked the virtual end of gentlemanly agreement in Castle Valley’s industrial disputes.

Industry became institutionalized with Sunnyside’s inauguration in November 1899. Robert Forrester had opened the mines there “in shape to ship coal in less time than any other mine in the West,” bragged Coal Mine Inspector Thomas. “By the middle of November the mine was producing 500 tons per day.” At the beginning of that month, Forrester proudly accompanied D&RGW president William Jackson Palmer and his official party as they steamed up the recently-completed Sunnyside spur to view the workings. Eleven days after Palmer’s visit, the Sunnyside labor force struck, angered at a reduction in pay. Once Palmer had departed, Forrester had replaced the set daily wage of $2.75 and $3 with “tonnage prices, which is five cents lower than Castle Gate and ten cents under the Scofield scale,” reported a Salt Lake newspaper. “The men also claim there are no accommodations there which makes the work further undesirable.”

The company responded by importing foreigners, most of whom could not speak English and were unfamiliar with workers’ rights. The Price paper, for example, reported in November 1899, “About fifteen to twenty Italians have arrived in town, presumably to work in the mines here at Castle Gate or at Sunnyside.” Castle Gate’s new Italians formed the nucleus of Castle Valley’s first Catholic Church, St. Anthony’s, a small frame building erected in 1897 that lasted ten years before burning down. Other nationalities came, too, such as John Vuksinick from Slovenia (then part of the empire of Austria-Hungary, making him an Austrian, in local parlance). He had worked his way across this country, first in Pennsylvania, then in Minnesota, then to California where a Slovenian agricultural colony failed due to the perfidy of the priest in charge. With nowhere else to go, he and his wife, Mary Kokal Vuksinick, also came to Sunnyside in 1899. Numbers of foreign-born residents rose from over six million in 1880 to over nine million in 1890 to some 10,300,000 by the turn of the century. In ensuing decades, it would only rise.

More foreigners came and began the slow process of cultural accommodation. Up at Pleasant Valley, the PVCC imported Finns. Driven out of their sub-Arctic homeland by the suppression of their Russian overlords, many Finns—particularly males subject to conscription in the Russian army—came to America. By 1900, over 200 of them lived in Pleasant Valley,
which somewhat resembled their northerly home. The company segregated them into “Finn Town” or upper camp, at Winter Quarters, where they were considered non-white for their foreignness, not their appearance. Together with their neighbors, they prepared to celebrate their first patriotic American holiday, Dewey Day on May 1 in honor of the Admiral’s recent, glorious victory in the Philippines (the same as May Day, an old European holiday). Other residents, such as the Robert Farish family, must have particularly enjoyed the commemoration; they had named their youngest daughter, born July 8, 1898, Manilla Dewey Farish. Therefore, when an explosion echoed down Pleasant Valley about 10:25 that morning, people thought the party had started early.10

Slowly, people realized that Winter Quarters No. 4 had exploded. At the portal, explosive winds carried young Jack Wilson eight hundred-twenty feet into a gulch. A huge splinter stuck through his abdomen, and the fall crushed the back of his skull. He survived, permanently disabled; his coal-mining brothers, James, Willie, and Alexander, did not. Flames roared through No. 4, raising deadly afterdamp (poisonous gases) that spread relentlessly into No. 1 where the two mines connected at the back. Men started running, some of them right into the No. 4 fire, the shorter way out from the back of No. 1. The burning coal glowed all around the trapped miners; flames ate the wooden ceiling props, and crashing rock and coal dust completely blinded them. Fifteen-year-old Tom Pugh heard the explosion and seized his cap in his teeth to keep his nostrils covered while he ran a mile and a half in complete darkness to the portal of No. 1, where he fainted. He survived; his father died in the mine. Young Willie Davis tried to do the same, but dropped his cap when he stopped to help an older man trapped in the rubble. He was later found dead, his arms locked around the older man’s waist.11

Immediately, rescue crews tried to scramble over the thick tangle of timbers and a dead horse blocking the entrance to No. 4, but were driven back by the rising gasses. Time and again rescuers forced their way into the mine only to be stopped by the afterdamp. Robert Forrester succumbed on two consecutive tries and almost died. Finally inside, rescuers unrolled yards and yards of canvas and burlap brattice cloth to block off selected passageways, directing the fresh air to one portion at a time. Teams brought the first man to the surface: John Kirton, first believed to be Harry Bettersen, so burnt that he was unrecognizable. He died in agony a day later. Mine cars began rolling out of No. 1 piled high with the dead, up to twelve in a car. Superintendent Thomas Parmley found the body of his brother, William, the No. 4 foreman, deep inside where the fire had been worst. Only William knew where each of his men had been stationed; with him died the chance of finding them all.12

In the midst of the horror, miracles still happened. The first afternoon, six horses galloped out of No. 1 still in their harnesses and frolicked down
the hill to the stable. Two men were found three and a half hours after the explosion in the depths of No. 1, unaware of the disaster. Soon, hope for further survivors dwindled. As one rescue team member later described the scene inside the tunnels: “When a man was caught by the full force of the explosion he was hurled against the wall or floor . . . [like] . . . a piece of dough against the wall.” He added, fighting the urge to “just cry my heart out, [that] when the last body is out of the mine you will see more of us break down . . . very soon.” Once sixty-six men at a time lay ready for identification. That job fell to boyish, twenty-three-year old Clarence Nix, the store clerk. He had passed out the monthly scrip to each miner and knew them all. He passed down the rows of bodies covered by burlap brattice cloth dragged in from the company store. The legs of grown men stuck out to the knees; dead boys revealed only their feet. Uncovering their faces, he eventually identified over two hundred corpses, the last found on August 9.

The Finns maintained that some of their men were never recovered.

Help poured in as Scofield prepared for Utah’s largest mass burial ever. Piles of dirt rose on the hillside as dozens of men dug graves in the hard, cold ground. Coffins came from as far away as Denver. Salt Lake schoolchildren donated flowers which dignitaries tied into bouquets as they rode down on the Pleasant Valley train, its progress watched by silent crowds all along the route. At the spur by the Scofield cemetery, grieving survivors accepted
the flowers for funerals conducted by a variety of clergymen, including a Finnish Lutheran pastor brought in from Rock Springs, Wyoming. Nearby coal camps sent money. So did San Francisco. The LDS Church donated $2,500; the Catholic bishop of Utah welcomed all fatherless children into Salt Lake City’s St. Ann’s Orphanage. President McKinley cabled his condolences and forwarded expressions of sympathy from the President of France. Food poured in from Salt Lake City, and the Pleasant Valley Coal Company wiped out all the miner’s debts for April. The PVCC also gave $500 to the family of each man killed, amounting to a total of $100,000. The D&RGW transported mourning family members free of charge.  

Castle Valley lost more than coal miners that day; it lost a wide array of local talent. Carbon County Commissioner John James, among the first to be found, died in the embrace of his son, George. The dead Evans brothers, Richard and David, had survived an 1882 coal mine explosion in Abercarn, Wales, and had come to Castle Dale, forming a prize-winning orchestra with their parents and brothers. Thomas Farrish, an experienced coal miner from Cleveland, Utah, also died—along with six other farmer-miners from his tiny hometown. This story of loss repeated over and over throughout Castle Valley, the rest of Utah, and the world.

What had happened? Some people scapegoated the Finns, those strange newcomers who had refused (except one) to help search for the dead. In his annual mine report, Inspector Thomas identified no human agent, but stressed his new realization that coal dust itself had proven flammable, not just the gasses previously considered dangerous. In the local communities, some said the company was at fault. Others claimed “it was one of those things over which no man has control, and for which no man or men should be held responsible.” A subsequent grand jury inquest exonerated the PVCC and all individuals involved. Although many of the victims’ survivors sued, the company always won. For years, all Pleasant Valley businesses closed on May 1 to honor the dead. The only practical result of the explosion came in 1901, when the Utah state legislature passed reforming safety laws that mandated sprinkling mines with water to settle coal dust, maintaining sufficient ventilation, and limiting the amount of explosives brought into a mine. None could be stored there.

The 200 dead miners had to be replaced, so the PVCC tried recruiting up and down the Castle Valley corridor. Among those who responded were Teancum Pratt and his eighteen-year-old son, Joseph. Pratt’s earlier, tenuous prosperity had evaporated in the hard winter of 1899–1900 and the following dry spring and hot summer. His coal sales simply could not keep pace with the needs of his devastated farms. In the fall of 1900, after the men went off to the reopened Winter Quarters mine, Annie Mead Pratt took up her husband’s diary: “it was a hard winnter & not much snow, & the water went back on us so we lost all our crop of corn & potatos, & a very nice garden. We seen the crops burn up . . . our means were gone & nothing to
live on. . . So Teancum thought it would be best to go to Scofield & work in the mines for the winter so we could go on the farm in the spring. But the Lord willed it otherwise. . . .”21 On September 8, 1900, Pratt was dead.

Joe had to tell his mother about how the side of the mine room where his father had been working had caved in and how Teancum was crushed against the coal car he had been loading. Death was instantaneous.22 Pratt was buried in the Scofield cemetery, so recently expanded by the victims of the explosion. As the local newspaper noted in his obituary, “He once owned Helper townsit, but fortune never smiled upon him for any length of time and his large family is now left in poor circumstances.”23 Pratt’s name also appeared on the State Coal Mine Inspector’s long list of fatalities and injuries for Winter Quarters in 1900. Aside from the roughly 200 killed in the explosion, nine other fatalities and sixty-three serious injuries occurred in Utah’s mines that year. Of these, the bulk came at Winter Quarters, indicating that the inexperienced replacements fared badly.24

At the corporate level, the Rio Grande system simultaneously weathered a hushed, rocky adjustment. For one thing, the national government took a renewed interest in the legal disposition of its land. In July 1900, government surveyors completed the official survey of the Book Cliffs around Sunnyside, allowing the Western to regularize its shady ownership, which it did through the newly-created Utah Fuel Company. Through a series of complicated legal maneuvers involving corporate giants and two investment banks, Utah Fuel acquired the PVCC and the Western Construction Company. Then, the Rio Grande Western Railway turned around and bought the Utah Fuel Company, further hiding its corporate machinations. Within weeks, the D&RGW itself reorganized. Edward Jeffrey, president of Colorado’s Rio Grande, also became head of the Western, ousted founder William Jackson Palmer once and for all. At the same time, the Gould brothers, George, Frank, and Howard (heirs of the late communications magnate Jay Gould) and Union Pacific owner E. H. Harriman took their seats on the board of the now virtually-consolidated Rio Grande system.25 As a result, Castle Valley’s most lucrative coal mines and its entire railroad network were now cemented to one of the nation’s largest trusts, guaranteeing their accelerated exploitation.

Capitalists branched out into another speculative local investment: oil. John D. Rockefeller of the Standard Oil trust, the refiner of over ninety-five percent of America’s oil (as well as holder of wells, pipelines, railroads, and vast fleets of ships) was already worth over $100 million. Plenty of others wanted to copy his success. So Castle Valley oil companies blossomed, at least on paper. Charles Swasey filed on oil locations, selling some to Mrs. Agnes D. Ireland, widow of the late Marshal Ireland. Others came from far and near, including A. J. Lee, freighter and developer; merchant Louis Lowenstein, one of the Jewish pioneers of Utah; Joseph R. Sharp, superintendent of the Utah Fuel Company; Dr. Andrew W. Dowd, Utah Fuel physician;
Heber M. Wells and James H. Moyle, Utah governor and future governor, respectively; LDS leader George Romney, Sr.; Utah’s hard-rock mining developer Senator Thomas Kearns, and Wyoming’s Senator and railroad promoter Clarence Don Clark, and others. They formed corporations with exotic names, like the Baku Oil Company, (after the capital of oil-bearing Azerbaijan, on the banks of the Caspian Sea), holding almost 10,000 acres in Emery’s Green River field and Carbon’s Colton field, which had yet to sink a well. The more down-to-earth New York-Utah Oil and Mining Company held 35,000 acres in five counties, including Carbon and Emery, and planned to set up two rigs to start drilling in early 1902. By then, Utah’s deepest well, on the San Rafael Swell, went down 1,240 feet. Investments poured in. As late as 1913, Royal Swasey was still pumping oil on the San Rafael Desert, writing to his sweetheart of the seven oil rigs still doggedly, though not very profitably, at work.26

Some of these capitalists made other, more practical investments in Castle Valley. For example, in 1901, Dr. Andrew Dowd teamed with Utah Fuel geologist Robert Forrester; Truman Ketchum, a special agent on the D&RGW, and a “tough gun,” English immigrant Tom Dilly, to form the Patmos Head Land and Cattle Company on Lord Elliott’s old Big Spring Ranch. A year or two later, Dilly killed a man over a range controversy, went to trial, but was not convicted (some said due to his powerful associates). That fall, he agreed to accompany a huge herd of local stock to market, rode off on the train with the animals, and never returned. Superintendent Joseph R. Sharp subsequently bought out the ranch and turned it into a dairy. During World War I, Price’s Lee Bryner, a pneumonia victim, met a nurse named Miss Dilly in an English hospital. Through her, he learned of her father, Tom, who asked after several of his old Utah acquaintances. Selling the cattle, he had prospered, returned to his native land, and settled down, apparently with no regrets.27

Forrester did better with another of his local investments. Together with G. W. Laing he formed the Gardenia Land and Water Company to develop an area just east of Ferron in southwestern Emery County, traditionally known as Poverty Flat. A few families had already settled there, including the Prices. They used to drive their wagon to Ferron down a dugway of blue clay, which, after a storm, would stick so firmly to the wagon wheels that it had to be shoveled off every two rotations. The new entrepreneurs quickly renamed the area Independence Flat, and the new town Rochester, after the hometown of their associate, M. B. Whitney, new head of what in August 1906 became the Emery County Land and Water Company. Not all went smoothly. As the Price family historian reported, “A Mr. Lang [sic] came to Rochester in a smart looking surrey with a fringe on top and talked the farmers into consolidating their water into a company, and they would each benefit with more water. But they were actually receiving less and were forced to sell their holdings because they didn’t have enough water.”28
families who stayed benefited from consolidation of other properties. By 1930, the Rochester precinct contained twenty-one farms with a total of 10,140 acres, far more than the typical amount in Mormon Utah. Under a new arrangement—non-Mormon agricultural development—Castle Valley had continued to diversify.

Changes also marked the nation at large, sometimes tragically. On September 6, 1901, a disaffected anarchist fired two shots, point-blank, into President McKinley, who was visiting the Pan American Exposition at Buffalo, New York. Doctors immediately removed one bullet but decided against using the new, untested X-ray machine on display at the exposition to locate the second. McKinley died eight days later of its poisons. Young Vice President Theodore Roosevelt became President. He spearheaded reforms that would usher in America’s Progressive Era, a time marked by a reliance on experts, general optimism, and a firm belief in progress. Roosevelt, having briefly ranched out on the Little Missouri, knew and loved the “great grazing lands of the West . . . [in] the arid belt,” which he described as “one vast stretch of grazing country, with only here and there spots of farm-land.” He made common cause with Francis J. Newlands, then U.S. senator from bone-dry Nevada. Newlands, elected to the House for the first time in 1892, rose after a tough fight to the Senate. In 1902 he sponsored the Newlands National Reclamation Act to authorize federal construction of reservoirs and highline canals funded through the sale of newly-irrigated public lands in the arid states.

This legislation built on previous federal involvement, begun with the first National Irrigation Congress held in Salt Lake City in 1891. There, delegates had demanded state control over local irrigation, a suggestion rejected by the federal government. In 1894, Congress had passed the Carey Act to provide some federal funding for western water projects. Under its auspices, Castle Valley boosters had excitedly hatched unfulfilled schemes to divert the Green River, to dam the lower San Rafael River, or to bring water from the Wasatch Plateau to the lands between Huntington and Price. Huntington’s Don C. Robbins tried, prematurely, to promote a reservoir in Joe’s Valley, high on the Wasatch Plateau west of his town, not only for irrigation but to generate electricity for a proposed new railroad connecting the Emery County towns with Price. Meanwhile, the Carey Act, implemented largely in Wyoming, proved ineffective. States simply could not afford large scale irrigation projects, even though land, once reclaimed, could be sold to recoup building expenditures. Consequently, Castle Valley residents soon joined other westerners in seeking help under the new 1902 Newlands Reclamation Act. A local irrigation convention met in 1902 and petitioned for federal assistance to reclaim 50,000 acres of dry, alkaline Emery County.

Castle Valley certainly qualified as arid land, and its settlers had a long history of dealing with water problems. For example, the old Emery county
town of Kingsville had been long dependent on an 1896 canal that had
carried water from Ferron Creek. When its lands became alkaline, Stake
President Reuben G. Miller instructed the local bishop, Hyrum Nelson, to
pick a new site. Bishop Nelson, twice plagued with broken singletree clips
on his wagon, decided to stay at the spot he had reached and chose a site
about two miles to the west. While some questioned his choice, most people
loaded their tiny log houses on wheels and moved. As local residents later
explained: “They probably took the wagon box off the wagon and spread
the wheels out enough [on the reach poles] to fit the length of the house,
put the house on the wheels with the reach poles connecting the wheels,
hooked up the team and dragged the house up to the present site.” In
1904, Apostle Rudger Clawson (who had served his prison term but clung
to polygamy, for which he was later ousted from the Quorum), arrived to
organize the ward. In his honor, people called their new town Clawson
“from a visitor of a few hours, who, so far as is known, never returned.”

Further north, the arid valley flatlands seemed to offer new settlement pos-
sibilities, if only they could be irrigated. Thomas Wells had moved his family
six miles east of Cleveland to optimistically-named Desert Lake in 1888.
Soon, members of the Powell, Wells, Thayne, Winder, and Marsing families
and others had started work on an 500-foot earthen dam to create a 300-
acre reservoir for irrigation, dependent on an extension of the Cleveland
Canal. Their Desert Lake Reservoir and Irrigation Company, incorporated
in 1892, went bust when the dam broke four years later, almost drowning
some of the residents. When the community lacked the money to raise a
new dam, the LDS Church provided a thousand dollars. With this, Cleveland
folks also extended the Huntington North Ditch to serve their town, since
the water from Cleveland had begun to go alkaline.

No matter where one settled, irrigated farming would drop the water
table while the ever-present alkali rose, eating into adobe structures and
causing changes in vegetation. As the alkali swamp spread to Desert Lake,
Manassa Blackburn, its school teacher, moved to land about six miles away
and founded Victor in 1896. Although the new town soon sported a school,
church, post office and store, it was gone before World War I due to lack of
water and ever-encroaching sand dunes. Just a few miles to the north, in
1904, a group of men moved from increasingly swampy, alkali Cleveland to
another unoccupied portion of Castle Valley about four miles away. They
helped build the Eagle Extension Ditch from the Cleveland Canal to their
new homesites. In 1912, the town held a meeting to choose a name and,
allegedly, only four men attended: Messieurs Erickson, Larsen, Mortensen,
and Oviatt. Using the first letter of each of their names, the town was
christened “Elmo.” This time, their town did not fall victim to an alkali
swamp.

Some water problems originated with Castle Valley’s increased stock-
raising. Expanding sheep herds typically befouled the watershed over which
they ranged. Recognizing this fact, in 1892 the Utah Territorial Legislature had passed a law prohibiting sheep from watersheds within seven miles of a city in an attempt to keep the water unpolluted. Castle Valley’s notorious Mule Case of 1901 brought the problem home. When a sheepherder’s pack mules fell to their death from a ledge above Huntington Creek, the rotting carcasses made a nasty impact on Huntington’s water supply downstream. The mules’ owner, a young sheepherder, pleaded guilty and was fined $5 and costs of $21. The local newspaper noted, “The people of Huntington, as well as other towns, are growing weary of drinking filth from the sheep and stock on the headwaters of our streams.”

Simultaneous with the Mule Case, the first dispute over rights to Castle Valley’s flowing water reached local courts. Cottonwood Creek, just a few miles south of Huntington Creek, had long supplied Orangeville and Castle Dale through a series of ditches. Town residents and independent users had formed a succession of canal companies, including the Blue Cut Canal, the Star, Mammoth, Clipper, and Great Western. By the turn of the century, the water supply could no longer meet the demand. Therefore, in May 1901, a “friendly” lawsuit by the Blue Cut against the rest of the companies (with other individual users on each side) led to a binding settlement. Court-appointed referees (and LDS leaders)—Emery Stake president Reuben G. Miller and Apostles John Henry Smith and Anthon H. Lund—recommended the application of the established doctrine of prior use (first in time, first in right) to non-Mormon Judge Jacob Johnson of Spring City. In the twentieth-century spirit of Mormon-gentile cooperation, on February 2, 1902, the judge promulgated the Johnson Decree, stipulating that senior users (those who had entered on Cottonwood Creek before 1884) received first-class rights; second-class rights devolved on those who had entered since that year. The Great Western Canal Company, begun in 1884 but not yet completed, was granted both second- and third-class rights due to the tremendous investment already sunk into its construction. The Johnson Decree by no means settled all dissension; neither did it adequately provide for local needs. By August 1902, Castle Dale townsite ditches ran dry, to the desperation of farmers on the newer canals. The stockholders of the Blue Cut and Clipper companies allowed some of their water to flow into the Mammoth and Great Western canals, permitting a harvest. Canal consolidation followed. In April 1903, all of the previous litigants became united in the Cottonwood Creek Consolidated Irrigation Company except for the Blue Cut, which thereby protected its generous first-class rights.

Meanwhile, as Castle Valley residents waited to hear about their request for help under the Newlands Reclamation Act, they hedged their bets by also applying to the state for aid. In April 1903, state representative Joseph E. Johnson presented the State Land Board with Huntington’s petition for
$30,000 to build a reservoir on Buckhorn Flat. The land board rejected this request after calculating the cost at over ten times the suggested amount.  

The federal government seemed more supportive when, the following September, the National Irrigation Congress met in Ogden. Senator Newlands himself addressed the delegates and stressed the importance of federal-state cooperation. Perhaps aware of Utah’s theocratic history, he proudly noted that the Secretary of the Interior had the right to nominate all candidates for Nevada state engineer. This federal supremacy over public lands and state personnel not only represented, for Newlands, the efficiency of the federal bureaucracy, but addressed his concurrent concerns about the power of monopolies. If the federal government controlled the water, he thought, the trusts would not.  

How well this latter message played in a land where all community resources were once held by the LDS Church can only be imagined. As far as actual water works were concerned, Castle Valley profited little. In fact, a 1904 report by the Department of Agriculture noted that roughly thirty percent of Emery County farmland had recently been abandoned. Perhaps because of these difficulties, in February 1904, Castle Valley farmers invited two professors from Utah State Agricultural College to Orangeville to lecture on farming techniques. They suggested means for dealing with the pervasive local alkali, and encouraged farmers to report on their successes, which often came as a surprise to their neighbors who had been too busy farming their own places to share techniques. As a result of this meeting, the first farmers’ association in Castle Valley was formed.  

Local attempts at improving Castle Valley fit well with another of President Roosevelt’s crusades: to give diminishing federal lands to homeseekers rather than see them fall to monopolies. To meet this goal, Roosevelt established the second Public Lands Commission in October 1903 with wealthy, civic-minded Gifford Pinchot as its secretary. Pinchot had made a unprecedented professional career in forestry and realized that the activities of railroad companies, mines, sawmills, and town building augured a short life for remaining stands of trees. He instead favored conservation for use, a policy he consistently implemented after Roosevelt had appointed him Chief Forester at the head of the newly-created Forest Service in 1901.  

Two years later, the Forest Service entered Castle Valley. In 1903, the federal government set aside the Manti National Forest on the Wasatch Plateau, creating a host of repercussions along the Castle Valley corridor. First, rangers began enforcing stock regulation. For decades, seasonal traffic between Castle Valley’s nearby highlands and the San Rafael characterized cattle raising. For example, Jim Liddell, who got into cattle ranching in 1901, described his yearly cycle to an interviewer in 1940. “He wintered his cattle down in the lowlands around here [Price] and at Woodside, and . . . in the spring as soon as snow was nearly gone the ranchers would have a spring round up to collect the cattle and then drive those that they didn’t sell up to the mountains.” Liddell grazed his herds in Whitmore Canyon,
letting them “graze up into the mountain right behind the snow. In the fall, around October, the ranchers would get together and stage another round-up.” Then, they drove the herds down low again for winter grazing, and to count their “calf crop.” Beef bound for market was loaded at Woodside and sold in Denver. Preston Nutter, one of Carbon County’s most prosperous cattlemen, ranged even more widely. He had started out in Colorado in the 1880s, built up herds on the Arizona Strip, and moved into Nine Mile Canyon in the West Tavaputs Plateau at the northern border of Carbon County in the late 1890s. His ranch headquarters lay to the north in Duchesne County, but he owned range lands stretching south into Castle Valley’s high hinterlands. His far-flung operation, devoted solely to stockraising, was the exception in Castle Valley.

This approach, leaving the herds to fend for themselves between spring and fall round-ups—the Texas method—and was initially incomprehensible to more communitarian Utah farmer-ranchers, according to Clair C. Andersen, who later compiled Castle Valley’s grazing notes. Mormons “first resented it, then tried to understand it, and finally, by increasing their own herds, to compete by ranging in the same manner.” As a result, “the Mormon livestock industry emerged from a subsistence basis into the diversified-irrigated farm-ranch that prevails today.” Much as he described, Emery’s Lew Peterson began working Durham shorthorn cattle for the Ireland Land and Cattle Company in 1885 and saved enough money to start his own business, adding a few cattle (probably unbranded mavericks) to his herd every year, in the locally-accepted fashion. About May 15 he would drive the cattle on to their summer range in the Manti National Forest; in the winter they ran on the east San Rafael Desert. His 200-acre ranch adjoined both ranges, “with his ranch on the dividing line,” where he fed calves during heavy snows. He raised his own silage and hay and shipped steers—mostly two-year-olds—out of Price bound for Denver, as did most Emery County ranchers. Other cattlemen also alternated their stock between winter farmsteads and public lands for summer range. For example, James Allred of Cleveland ran his cattle south of town in the winter but moved his stock to his homestead in the Park, in the Book Cliffs north of Wellington, as the weather warmed.

All those who had freely used the Wasatch Plateau for summer grazing suddenly encountered federal regulations. Larger stockmen now had to share the range with smaller outfits, and number of head was limited to the carrying capacity of the range. Stock raisers of Huntington, Cottonwood Creek, Emery, and Ferron reacted by forming local livestock associations to improve range conditions through constructing bridges, making trails, maintaining water troughs, and acting as herders, all to improve the quality of their cattle. The federal government continued extending its control over local lands with the creation of the La Sal National Forest near Moab in 1906, combining it a year later with the Manti Forest cov-
ering the Wasatch Plateau west of Castle Valley, and with the Monticello Forest Reserve far to the south to become the Manti-La Sal National Forest.\textsuperscript{55}

While creation of the Manti National Forest stimulated improvement of the livestock industry, it hampered other forest endeavors. Associate Chief Albert F. Potter, taking an informal survey prior to the forest’s formal designation, noted in his diary, “Met. Mr. [Sam] Singleton, merchant of Ferron” who spoke of the “great hardship” as forest personnel shut down sawmills that summer. The settlers were so far from a railroad that they could not get timber, Singleton asserted, so some people could not build. Locals would not object to limited grazing on the Forest, Potter noted, if “the settlers can [still] get the mature timber.”\textsuperscript{56} But everyone realized that, after federal designation, operators could no longer cut where they pleased. Even with limitations, local sawmills persisted. The last on the mountain was removed in the 1960s; as late as 1991 one sawmill still remained in Fairview Canyon west of Castle Valley.\textsuperscript{57}

Likewise, Castle Valley’s dairy industry suffered with the forest’s establishment. Amos and Almira Stevens had begun the first dairy in 1882 on Ferron Creek with a herd of red Durham cattle which they had grazed on Ferron Mountain during the summer. They sold their butter and cheese as far away as Grand Junction, Colorado, sometimes tapping daughter Elmira to drive one of their huge freight wagons. Deprived of free mountain grazing, the Stevens family struggled to maintain the industry, transferring it to Ferron’s Creamery Co-op from 1905–1913. It later passed to a series of corporations, surviving well into the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{58}

On the other hand, the Forest Service provided much-needed jobs for a few Castle Valley residents. One of the area’s first forest rangers was a home-grown boy, George Westover. He had reconnoitered Castle Valley for his Dixie-dwelling family in 1888 and moved there around 1890. Every spring, he had typically sheared sheep for his neighbors, usually in the mountains that bounded it to the north—in the Park near Soldier Summit, near the railroad junction at Colton, or by the mining town of Scofield. Consequently, he knew many of the lands falling under federal forest conservation.\textsuperscript{59} His outdoor life included driving stagecoach from Price to Fort Duchesne in the early 1890s, when once he saved his frozen feet and calves from frostbite (and amputation) only by sticking them through a hole cut in the icy crust of a mountain creek, an old freighter cure. His toughness and experience made him an ideal choice for ranger’s assistant when the forest was first created. After several years the head ranger retired, and recommended George Westover as his successor, following the obligatory federal tests. George passed the oral test brilliantly. Like so many boys of his generation, however, his full outdoor life had left him time for only about three years of schooling. He failed the written test, and the ranger post went to another.\textsuperscript{60}
Without the income from employment on the forest, Westover went back to freighting and working with his team, later involving his whole family. Daughter Roxie Westover Nelson remembered going from Huntington to Price after a load of coal. “We left home at 4 in the morning so we would get there before the other wagons and be one of the first to be loaded.” Her father let her drive: “such an honor,” she remembered. On another occasion, “we camped overnight at a wagon campground and stayed all night under the wagon in a pile of quilts. The next day poppa unloaded the freight and loaded up another and we went back home.”

The freighting industry had long helped unite Castle Valley’s towns. As far back as the 1890s, Ferron settlers such as Chris Nelson and C. R. Killpack had willingly driven their teams and wagons on the six- to nine-day round trip to the mines at Sunnyside to sell surplus crops, meat, eggs, butter, and cheese. They often returned with freight brought in on the railroad. After more than two decades of fighting shifting sands, insects, and frequent home fires (at least one Ferron home burned down each year until the late 1930s), the mines provided what looked to them like a bonanza.

Keeping the farmer-peddlers happy, local mines had recently expanded. In early 1902, one hundred new workers built a bank of Sunnyside coke ovens whose output fueled the growing Utah smelter industry. Many Emery County farmers peppered this workforce, joining the ranks of labor with their teams to earn ready cash. Others, however, were Italian laborers who had just experienced the rise of industrialization in the northern part of their new nation. By the beginning of July, fifty of the two hundred planned ovens were in operation, signaling an expanding market for coal and a consequent need for more labor. Some of those who arrived came from previous jobs in the eastern United States, where President Roosevelt—in an action “absolutely without precedent”—had arbitrated Pennsylvania’s coal strike of 1902. When the union and the owners there had failed to reach a settlement and fuel ran low, the President had forced the parties to the bargaining table, gaining miners higher wages. This success spurred the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) to try organizing the West.

On November 9, 1903, Castle Valley’s miners, many of them Italians, Finns, and Austrians (mostly South Slavs from Austria-Hungary), voted to strike. They demanded an end to the scrip system, in which the company gave men paper redeemable at full value only at the high-priced company store, or at a twenty percent discount at private businesses elsewhere. Strikers also sought accurate weighing scales, the right to choose their own check-weighman, enforcement of Utah’s eight-hour day for miners, a pay increase, and recognition of the UMWA. The November timing offered the best chance of success because it cut off much-needed winter fuel. Italian organizer Charles Demolli arrived in Castle Valley and addressed his countrymen (generally blamed for the strike) in their native tongue. At
the company’s request, Governor Heber M. Wells sent in the Mormon-led National Guard. While the Guard and the strikers warily eyed each other across picket lines, Utah Fuel needed strike-breakers to keep its mines going. Although LDS President Joseph F. Smith carefully avoided any public, partisan announcement in favor of the coal companies, he supported the efforts of Bishop John Potter of Sunnyside and of Brigham Gould to recruit strike-breaking miners from among Emery County Mormons. When these efforts succeeded, the First Presidency sent a congratulatory letter to the Utah Fuel Company. Orange Seely campaigned against the strike, prompting the Castle Dale City Council to pass a resolution denouncing it. Seely went so far as to deliver an anti-strike sermon in the LDS Church at Castle Gate, after which an irate Mormon striker struck him on the head with a revolver, causing a wound that was deep but not serious. National guardsmen remained generally neutral, not necessarily harboring ethnic prejudices, although they objected to the union. The strike dragged on into 1904. Miners were evicted from their camp housing in early January and retreated to tent colonies set up nearby. When no riots occurred, the National Guard withdrew at the end of the month. Arrests of union leaders continued, and in April 1904, the UMWA brought in Mother Jones. The legendary Mary Harris Jones, a long-time union organizer despite her grandmotherly appearance, came to Castle Valley from Colorado, where she had been organizing other striking miners. She roomed with an Italian family in Helper until local officials claimed that she had been exposed to smallpox and sought to isolate her in the hastily-constructed Helper pest house. It mysteriously burned down that night. Jones relocated to the strikers’ tent colony, where she stayed with another Italian family. Allegedly quarantined, she kept on meeting with miners and their families, keeping up their spirits. Coal company officials appealed to Governor Wells to redeploy the National Guard. He declined. Next, they turned to local government for enforcement. The Carbon County sheriff organized a posse of approximately forty-five men to raid the colony of strikers protecting Mother Jones. She had been tipped off by the postmaster that a raid was coming and got the men to bury their guns to avoid bloodshed. Thus defenseless, Italian miners were dragged from their beds before 5 a.m. and herded, shivering in their night clothes, down the road to the nearest rail spur. Gunmen shoved them into a box car to run them down to the Price jail. When the jail proved too small for this sizable crowd, company employees threw up a bullpen, surrounded by a high fence and watched by company guards, to house the strikers. Just after the strikers’ round-up, a ruffian broke into Mother Jones’s room, shoved a gun in her face, and demanded the $3,000 he thought she had. Unafraid, she turned her pocket inside out and showed him all her wealth: fifty cents. He left. She later found out he was a sworn Carbon County deputy and former bank robber, Gunplay Maxwell.
Maxwell, released from prison when the governor commuted his sentence (allegedly for helping stem a prison break), had become Mark Braffet’s bodyguard. A photograph captured the unpopular Utah Fuel attorney and Maxwell at the bullpen, cradling shotguns as they guarded union men, including Charles Demolli. The bullpen remained a semi-permanent Price structure as the strikers’ trials dragged on into May.

That month, Mother Jones left Castle Valley. The Western cheerfully transported her for free, glad to get the trouble-maker out of town. She went to Salt Lake City to attend the concurrent conventions of the Utah Federation of Labor and the Western Federation of Miners (WFM), then considering a merger. Organized in 1893 in Butte, Montana, on the heels of a bitter strike in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, the WFM had led subsequent strikes in Cripple Creek and Leadville, Colorado, in 1894 and 1896, respectively; another in Coeur d’Alene in 1899 and in Telluride, Colorado, in 1901. The WFM had bonded with the Socialists around 1902, which worried Samuel Gompers, head of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), founded in 1886. Friction between the AFL, the United Mine Workers, and the WFM increased as all three competed for western membership. Only the UMWA remained active in Castle Valley.

As spring brought warmth and the usual flood-waters along the Castle Valley corridor, many of the recently-recruited Emery County strikebreakers went home to their farms. Suddenly, more miners were needed, and the solution had not changed. Orange Seely toured southern Utah bearing testimonials about good mining wages and safe working conditions, (both issues in dispute during the strike). While recruiting at Richfield (outside
Castle Valley), Seely had to counter the rumor that coal companies demanded 3,000 pounds of coal to a ton, mirroring the strikers’ demands for their own check-weighman. Seely’s appeals evidently brought fewer men than needed, for coal companies soon employed more foreigners. Although the State Coal Mine Inspector did not yet record ethnicities of miners, his 1904 report did show that Carbon County (more heavily ethnic) had gained forty miners over 1903 (raising the total workforce from 1927 to 1967), while Emery County (persistently Mormon) had lost thirteen of its twenty-eight coal miners. These new foreign miners were generally contracted by English-speaking bosses of their own nationality, some of whom demanded a kick-back from every paycheck to insure that the miner kept his job—the source of a later union grievance, especially by the Greeks. Other nationalities arrived in smaller numbers. Japanese labor contractor Daigoro Hashimoto recruited only eight in 1904, including their leader, Kotaro Nakagawa. Japanese presence in Castle Valley dated back to May 1901, when they had replaced Italian D&RGW section hands for a savings of twenty-five cents an hour. In 1903–1904, strike-breaking recruits also included a few African Americans, widening the ethnic diversity in northern Castle Valley.

Ultimately, the recruitment drive and harassment of strikers brought success to the coal companies. By late July, the strike was winding down. Management wanted any remaining strikers out of town, so about twenty armed guards, duly deputized by the county, rounded up the men left in the tent colony and marched them up to what was known as the dead line. Finally, in November, the UMWA sent $7,000 to a Price bank to defray departure expenses of the final, striking miners who had been blacklisted by the coal companies and would never again work in Castle Valley (at least not under their own names). The strike had been lost, but a new, polyglot population now settled down along the Castle Valley corridor.

Blacklisted Italians who could not get back on the mine payrolls turned to farming, the only other occupation most of them knew. As a contemporary observed, “They have cleared off the land that has been considered of no value whatever, removed tons of boulders and rock, and [are] turning over the soil until they had actually got it to bearing crops.” Among them was James Rolando, a northern Italian from the Castle Gate mine, who first settled farmland in Spring Glen (right next to Teancum Pratt’s old homestead) in 1903. He became the leader for his compatriots who settled nearby, including the Martellos, Formentos, Clericos, and Marchellos, all from the same town, near Forno. Pete Clerico later recalled that his father, Battista, had relied on Rolando: “He was pretty sharp, you know. . . . He knew the law and what was going on.” Southern Italians, a distinctive group (divided from their northern brethren by differences at home) also arrived in the persons of the Saccomanno Family, who were the first immigrants to pay off their Spring Glen farmstead. Pete Saccomanno had arrived in Utah in the mid-1890s from Grimaldi, Calabria, in southern Italy, with
his brother-in-law, Antonio Jachetta. They first worked on the railroad, then ran a produce store in Salt Lake City, and by 1905 Saccomanno had money to put down on a farm in Spring Glen. Pete’s brothers, Frank and Riley (originally Raffaele), joined him and acquired the farm when Pete went back to Italy. In 1907, Jachetta became “managing director of the Utah-Italian Bank and . . . Italian vice consul in Salt Lake City.” His bank helped immigrants send money home to Italy while he facilitated communications between those at home and those remaining in America. Together, they thus created a stable, unique Utah enclave: non-Mormon, ethnic farmers.

The end of the strike also brought other ramifications. Labor’s defeat had exposed the weakness of the American Labor Union or ALU (especially in Colorado) and led the WFM to initiate collaborative conferences, like the one Mother Jones attended in Salt Lake City. Similar meetings followed, culminating in Chicago in 1905, when WFM leader “Big Bill” Haywood joined Socialists and other labor leaders to form “one big union.” Its leaders decided to organize unskilled, industrial workers in competition with the more elite craft unions and “wage unrelenting class war against the capitalists until the existing system of society and government was overthrown.” These militants called themselves the Industrial Workers of the World, soon known as the IWW or Wobblies. The Western Federation of Miners became the mining department of the IWW, and headed to Goldfield, Nevada, to organize miners there. Meanwhile, Gunplay Maxwell, no longer Mark Braffet’s bodyguard, got involved in local mining ventures, some of them with Braffet. When he could not get transportation for his ozokerite (a black mineral wax used for the new Edison records) and saturated the local demand for “Maxwellrite,” his newly-invented, ozokerite-based shoe polish, he, too, fled to Goldfield. There, as Thomas Bliss, he provided perjured testimony to convict two key union organizers of murder, effectively sabotaging the union effort. As the union failed in Goldfield, Maxwell seemingly just slipped away.

The corporations that hired gunmen like Maxwell felt compelled to use any means to power as mergers increased and corporate competition intensified. The stakes also rose. In 1904, the national wealth reached over $108 billion. Fueling some of this growth, in 1905, Utah mines (mostly around Castle Valley) produced the greatest amount of coal per man in the entire United States, according to the USGS. Under this pressure, the railroad system that owned all the commercial mines and sped freight into the national network split asunder. Although Edward H. Harriman of the Union Pacific and George Gould of the Rio Grande had originally shared seats on the Rio Grande board, Gould was secretly planning a new transcontinental line in direct competition with the venerable UP. Since 1902, through a series of front men, Gould had built or acquired short lines running east over California’s Sierra and west from Denver, aiming toward a connection with the Rio Grande main line at Ogden, Utah. While a suspicious Harriman
sometimes queried Gould about his intentions, Gould consistently denied any involvement. This dissembling ended in early 1904, when major investment firms, one of them headed by George’s brother, Edwin, stepped out of the shadows and joined the backers of the recently-incorporated Western Pacific Railway Company (WP). By the end of April 1905, Harriman had resigned from the D&RG board, and Gould had drawn up the infamous Contract B between his publicly-admitted new line, the Western Pacific, and his old Rio Grande system. On June 8, 1905, the Rio Grande board ratified this agreement, which, in broadest terms, made the D&RG and D&RGW liable for the interest on the WP’s bonds and on the building costs to complete it, should there be over-runs. (There were many, often due to corporate machinations.)\(^9\) While the Utah Construction Company pressed on with WP construction, reaching full completion only by 1910, the UP retaliated by closing the so-called Ogden gateway to Rio Grande traffic in 1905. In essence, this action meant that the Rio Grande could no longer transship its goods—including Castle Valley coal—to the UP line at Ogden. Long-time railroad man Fred Voll remembered the specifics: “Poor little old Rio Grande,” he reminisced. “They had to . . . use a part of the switch track with the Union Pacific on it. . . . [T]he Rio Grande built as far as they could one night, and the next night they went back to finish the job and there was a couple of flat cars and a switch engine hooked to them and the UP shoved [them] off the end of the track!”\(^9\) The feisty Rio Grande Western, once heralded as the financial savior of Castle Valley, was sliding into commercial impotency.

In further homage to a passing age, Caleb Rhoades, the pioneer founder of Carbon County, died on June 2, 1905. In a sense, his death was symbolic. He had founded Carbon County some twenty-five years earlier with a handful of devoted Saints willing to strike out into what was then uninhabited wilderness. Partly for this effort, he had been honored as one of Utah’s Mormon pioneers, receiving, as his friend wrote, “the Gold Pioneer Medal 1847–1897 of which he was very proud,” despite the fact that he had been pioneering in California in 1847.\(^9\) His obituary mentioned his early life, his subsequent service to Castle Valley and the Price LDS Ward, and his efforts as “the first man to survey water from the Price river through what is known as Pioneer Water Company No. 2 canal,” when Castle Valley’s all-important irrigation depended on physical strength and cooperative effort. Now, large-scale federal irrigation projects engulfed the nation. So did trusts. His obituary further referred to the machinations of the “asphalt trust”—the interlocking St. Louis Gilsonite Company and the Gilson Asphaltum Company—that had allegedly prevented Rhoades from proving up on his “fabulously rich [gold] mine on the [Uintah Ute] reserve.”\(^9\) These Basin lands actually opened to entry on October 1, 1905, but the Rhoades mine has never been found.\(^9\) He had hidden it well from greedy capitalists, who rapidly sucked up natural and human resources nationwide. Castle Valley’s
physical isolation proved an insufficient barrier to the thrust of new ideas generated by this humming outside activity. Its continuing remoteness, however, meant that newly-introduced foreigners and descendants of old settlers would have to find mutual ways to deal with rising national conflicts.