Castle Valley America

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Published by Utah State University Press

Taniguchi, Nancy.
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Moving in Together, 1905–1909

We landed in New York by boat. . . . they always kind of look you over and they give you a vaccination. . . . then we went directly by wooden train to Sunnyside. . . . [T]hey had the coke ovens, you know, where they burn the coal into coke and a lot of flame [rose high] . . . and my mother . . . said to me, “It looks like we came to hell.”

—Anna Marolt Tolich, Slovenian immigrant

Industrial America often startled newcomers, who embodied the high tide of American immigration—a total of roughly nine million new arrivals from 1901–1910. Many, like the Slovenian Marolt family, had come from green, flower-filled rural districts and had rarely seen a factory or mine. The Marolts settled down in coal-blackened Sunnyside and learned the rhythm of an isolated company town, while around them, older, independent settlements enjoyed private telephones, better roads, and expanding markets. Thrown together in this still-isolated valley, its spectrum of residents seemed to reflect historian Robert Wiebe’s vision of early twentieth-century America: an original “society of island communities” swept up in an urban-industrial river where “men [and women] were now separated more by skill and occupation” than by geography. Castle Valley residents tried to maintain their community balance in the oncoming rush of further industrialization, immigration, and active Progressive reform.

To some extent, modern technology helped break down geographical barriers, whether for good or ill. Many technological changes slid easily into place, grafted on previous successes. For example, Justus Wellington (Wink) Seely spearheaded innovations in his hometown, Castle Dale. Since 1893, he had owned the Eagle Flouring Mill with his brother, Orange, and became sole owner in 1899. He then converted the mill by pulling out the old burrs and putting in a set of rollers for more efficient milling. In 1904, he added a big boiler to help power a new electric light plant, the
first electrification on the eastern side of the Wasatch Plateau. By 1909, his plant had metamorphosed into the Electric Power and Milling Company to supply both Orangeville and Castle Dale with lights and power and to operate the first purely municipal telephone. Seely had also provided his sturdy brick house with electrical wiring (the second man in Castle Dale to do so, after his brother, William), and his wife, Mary Jorgenson Seely, owned the first electric iron in town. In 1918, he even installed an indoor bathroom, including the second bathtub brought to Castle Dale. When Seely strung the telephone line between the mill and his house, he made two immediate impacts. First, his wife could finally plan the size of her dinners. The Seely brothers had long been in the habit of bringing mill customers home to
eat. Now, Wink could call Mary to let her know how many people to expect. Second, his children had a new diversion. They prepared recitations to say over the phone, with one child at the mill and one at home. Neighbors found the new invention just as attractive; some would call the mill just to hear a voice coming over the wire.\(^5\)

At nearby Huntington, the new miller, Olaf W. Sandberg, also turned to electricity. Sandberg, a child of Swedish LDS converts, had emigrated with his family in 1878 at age two, making an eleven-week steamship crossing and arriving in Utah by train once they had been cleared through Ellis Island. Starting at age fourteen he had learned his craft by apprenticeship, growing up in Washington County, Utah, then milling in Idaho, Oregon, and Sanpete County, Utah. While visiting the Bryner family, his wife’s relatives, in Price, he heard that the Huntington mill was for sale. In an increasingly typical technological mix, after Sandberg bought this mill, the family crossed over Salina Canyon in their Studebaker; a friend brought their belongings with horse and wagon. Sandberg immediately made changes in Castle Valley agriculture. At the time, local residents raised “two-crop” wheat from seeds planted in the spring. When little of it grew, farmers would irrigate their fields to encourage a second crop. Appalled by its poor quality, Sandberg shipped in two carloads of hard wheat, picked it up with his wagon at the Price depot, and gave it to local farmers as seed for fall planting. After that, he had almost more work than he could handle.\(^6\) His son, Willard Sandberg, who succeeded him as miller, remembered, “He went to Utah Power and Light. And I think he had to pay $2,500 to have them put a line . . . about two blocks. And he had to sign a guarantee of so much power usage a year. He had to buy the wiring, and he had to buy the transformers.” After that, he could mill year-round. The old Pelton wheel, which had run the mill through water power in the fall, winter (afternoons only, when the creek melted), and spring, was buried in the wheelhouse where it stood.\(^7\)

Today, the profound impact of now-commonplace innovations like electricity and the telephone can hardly be imagined. Electricity, harnessed back in 1879 when Thomas Edison invented the incandescent light bulb, changed the way America lived. No longer did the rhythm of life depend on sunrise, sunset, and the flickering kerosene lamp or hearthfire. Communities became locked into a single power system, as Utah Power and Light Company (UP&L), incorporated in 1912, stretched throughout parts of Utah. As early local companies formed, they passed many expenses on to the consumer, just as UP&L had charged Sandberg to wire his mill. By the early 1900s, builders nationwide generally charged $12 to wire new homes, with an additional fee of $2.50 per outlet (explaining why older homes generally have but a single outlet in each room). Homeowners electrifying existing buildings could select a payment plan that stretched out for as long as two years. For decades, installations remained primitive. To run appliances, for example, residents typically had to unscrew a light bulb hanging from
a ceiling wire, put a plug in its place, and then plug in the apparatus they wished to use. To provide the copper wire needed for all these connections, copper mines and smelters expanded, and needed more coke (such as that from Castle Valley). Households lost their self-sufficiency as people came to depend on an electrical system and a far-away generator for their power. Of course, in isolated Castle Valley, this benefit sometimes took a long time coming. Ranches outside of Ferron and along Miller Creek finally got electric power through the Rural Electric Committee in the 1940s.8

The telephone, too, connected a widening circle of people. When Alexander Graham Bell first patented the device in 1876, he modestly billed it as “an improvement on the telegraph.” Soon, however, his invention fostered a stunning infrastructure of its own, including the first central telephone exchange (serving twenty-one subscribers in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1878); the invention of switchboards, the replacement of the original rowdy male operators (who sometimes used rude language) by more mannerly females, the first publication of telephone books, and the proliferation of hundreds of thousands of independent local exchanges, like the one in Castle Dale. By 1900, Americans owned 1.3 million telephones and would acquire 12 million more by 1920. Castle Valley’s connections, like those elsewhere, were originally do-it-yourself efforts. In 1907, the U.S. Bureau of Commerce and Labor counted over 17,000 separate, private, rural circuits all of which relied on ringing the operator to get a connection. This system gradually faded as the Bell System started buying up competitors, beginning in 1908, and replaced the “hello girls” with machinery, continuing its growth even after a Justice Department challenge to its monopoly in 1913.9

On the other hand, despite the telephone’s rapid proliferation nationwide, parts of Castle Valley remained unconnected. This convenience did not reach Lawrence, east of Huntington, until 1952, when thirty-six families could pay the $25 necessary for installation. Well into the 1980s, families in Nine Mile Canyon, northeast of Wellington, had to ring the Salt Lake City operator to make a connection. Using an old hand-crank phone, a caller could ring the operator, give her the number, hang up while the operator made the connection, and pick up again when the phone rang. Since all Nine Mile ranches were on a single party line, each subscriber had a characteristic ring: two short, or three long, or some other combination. Whether they listened in on their neighbors’ calls was pretty much up to them. The telephone line itself remained the old telegraph line strung in 1886–1887 by the Ninth Cavalry at Fort Duchesne on metal poles, installed after the first wooden ones had been cut down, allegedly by Indians for firewood. Yet as Wellington’s Tom McCourt wrote, “[A]nyone with common sense could see that telegraph poles would have made much better building material for settlers than firewood for Indians. Firewood was plentiful. . . . long, straight fence poles and roof beams were in short supply.”10
In Price, telephone connections began early under the leadership of Reuben G. Miller, Emery Stake President and local entrepreneur. Born to an enterprising family, Reuben G. built upon the cattle and sheep empire originated by his father and uncles in the late 1800s. Like so many other Mormon stockmen, the Miller brothers had come into Castle Valley around 1880. They apparently forged a deal with the Whitmores that the Millers would run their stock south of the Price River, while the Whitmore animals grazed north of it. By the twentieth century, the Millers operated in a huge area along the western edge of Castle Valley. A political activist, Reuben G. Miller became a county official upon the creation of Carbon County in 1894, joined the first Utah state senate in 1896, and represented Carbon County in the state house of representatives beginning in 1898. He helped build up Castle Valley after becoming Emery Stake president in 1899, fostering the reopening of Castle Dale’s Emery Stake Academy after its forced closure in the Panic of 1893. In Price, where he lived, he and his family became the major stockholders in the Price Cooperative Mercantile Institution and joined Tobe Whitmore in setting up the First National Bank in Price, both in 1901. In 1902–1903, Miller served one term as Price Town President, purchasing a site for a reservoir, another parcel for town expansion northward, and establishing an official freighters’ campground southwest of town. He simultaneously served on the Price school board, and from 1905–1910, actively promoted the Eastern Utah Telephone Company. His son, J. Rex Miller, later managed the telephone company, which linked the three exchanges (with over 750 stations, or subscribers) at Price, Helper, and Scofield to the Mountain States Telephone line at Vernal. In 1919, the company got permission to extend a line to Green River, allowing the previously-separate Green River Valley Telephone Company’s subscribers to call long distance to Denver and the East.\footnote{11}

Despite his public progressivism, Miller’s life reflected private contradictions. Rolla West remembered that Miller “had quite a little telephone company and [was] doing good, but he forgot about the [Woodruff] Manifesto, and got away from home over in Emery County, and he married another woman and got another family.”\footnote{12} Specifically, he took his first plural wife, Martha (“Mattie”) Nelson, in 1903, and she bore his daughter a year later. Broadening the reach of “the principle,” he apparently encouraged, participated, or acquiesced in the plural marriage of G. F. Hickman, principal of the Emery Stake Academy, to one of the teachers, Chloe Palmer, in 1910. Miller continued in polygamy even after the death of his plural wife in 1912. A year later, with his first wife still living, he married a third woman, Emma Crossland (or Emma Mills). This time, the LDS Church excommunicated him, marking a new public response to an old practice.\footnote{13} As historian Edward Geary wrote, “In spite of the church’s formal renunciation of polygamy in 1890, the period from 1900 to 1910 brought a rash of clandestine plural marriages with the tacit approval (if not the active encouragement) of some
church leaders. . . . More than one plural marriage took place in Emery County during this period."

In many ways, Miller had simply stayed in step with his church, as America discovered to its horror when the Utah legislature elected LDS Apostle Reed Smoot to the U.S. Senate in 1903. Smoot's political opponents remembered the outcome just four years earlier, when polygamous Democrat Brigham H. Roberts had been denied his seat in the U.S. House of Representatives since his second wife had recently borne twins. Exercising its constitutional privilege to vet its own members, the Senate impaneled a Committee on Privileges and Elections to investigate Smoot. They soon heard LDS President Joseph F. Smith testify that he indeed had five wives and had continued living with all of them since the 1890 Woodruff Manifesto. Americans were shocked out of their complacent, monogamous presumptions—that the LDS Church had ordered the abandonment of polygamy before statehood. The New York Times correctly observed that “the law of the land is not obeyed in good faith” by the LDS Church and that “Smoot is also a representative of that institution.” That truth, however, did not make Smoot a polygamist. He was not. Nonetheless, in the 1904 Utah election campaign, the losing Democrats condemned polygamy; the triumphant Republicans (Smoot’s party) ignored it, and the anti-Mormon American party (a resuscitated Liberal Party) took Salt Lake City. When in 1906 the Senate’s Committee on Privileges and Elections voted seven to five to unseat Smoot, the issue then went to the Senate as a whole. But the political tide had begun to turn. Smoot’s Republicans triumphed in Utah elections in 1906, entrenching the Federal Bunch, a Republican political machine which functioned smoothly until 1916. On February 20, 1907, the Senate voted 42 to 28 to expel Smoot, falling well short of the two-thirds (59) needed for his expulsion. After the vote, one senator remarked, “I don’t see why we can’t get along just as well with a polygamist who doesn’t polyg as we do with a lot of monogamists who don’t monog.” Privately, Smoot lobbied his fellow Apostles to end polygamy. As the first generation of Mormon leaders passed away, the LDS Church finally came more into line with American expectations and the issue of Mormon plural marriage faded from the national press. Smoot himself went on to a long senatorial service with significant national ramifications.

Smoot joined a Congress heavily caught up in its own turmoil, complicated by the president’s push for Progressive reforms. Republican Theodore Roosevelt had won the presidency in his own right in 1904, emboldening his reform efforts. A few months prior to the election, Roosevelt’s second Public Lands Commission had issued a partial report on national land fraud, augmented in February 1905. Both findings went directly to the President, since Congress, especially the Senate, harbored far too many “friends of business.” For example, Wyoming’s Senator, Clarence Don Clark, was the brother of Dyer O. Clark, manager of the Union Pacific Coal Company and
heavily involved in western coal land fraud. In those days, when state legislatures elected U.S. Senators, Clark had essentially purchased his seat with a handful of well-placed bribes. The same could be said of so many others that contemporary journalist David Graham Phillips wrote of “The Treason of the Senate” in his 1906 series of muckraking articles for *Cosmopolitan* magazine. Therefore, President Roosevelt took the public lands report to Congress himself and recommended, among other measures, that it pass a coal land leasing law and halt all sales of the coal-bearing public domain. Congress stalled, demanding a study. Fresh from a judicial victory over the trusts in the 1904 *Northern Securities Case*, Roosevelt used his executive power to send special investigators from the Department of Justice to identify land fraud throughout the West—including Utah.

While this sparring rattled Congress, a slew of capitalists descended on Castle Valley coalfields in the summer of 1905. Utah Fuel geologist Robert Forrester continued lining up false claimants (dummies) to expand the Western’s coal land holdings, working just ahead of federal surveyor Joseph Taff of the Geological Survey (USGS) who, with his crew, meticulously mapped coal-bearing sections and falsely-claimed “grazing” lands on the valley’s heights. Simultaneously, the paper reported plans of the San Pedro, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake Railroad (usually called the San Pedro) to build a line west over the Wasatch Plateau and north through the Castle Valley corridor in direct competition with the Rio Grande. “It goes without saying,” the article noted, “that the Gould interests, who heretofore have practically had a monopoly on Utah coal, will fight the new project to a standstill.” In just one example of local corporate machinations, Huntington Canyon became a tensely-watched battleground. Emery County surveyor William J. Tidwell, secretly working for the Rio Grande, kept up a barrage of reports to his bosses. He described the comings and goings of Huntington’s George M. Miller and his partner, banker George C. Whitmore of Nephi (brother of Tobe Whitmore of Price). They jockeyed for coal land position with Don C. Robbins, a long-time Emery County mining man, and his associates: members of the Filer, Senior, and Freed families. Whitmore, Tidwell reported, held an option for $250,000, payable if the San Pedro successfully developed Huntington Canyon coal. The UP was also trying to bribe its way into the good graces of the Miller-Whitmore-San Pedro partnership by placing “$10,000 to Miller’s credit on condition that he could get or would agree in writing to get titles to the land which he has not yet got.” Miller then proposed to buy Robbins out for $10,000 or jump his claims. Appalled, Whitmore tried to break the partnership. Robbins, meanwhile, refused to sell, and “had men go over to his claims . . . to keep possession or kill Miller’s men.” Tidwell added, “I have Miller watched.” Meanwhile, Walter Filer, son-in-law of Charles M. Freed, unilaterally offered to sell his group’s claims to the Union Pacific Railroad for $75 an acre, a price between the $15 per acre they had paid for “grazing” land and its
real $300 per acre value. In the end, despite all this maneuvering, the San Pedro never built into Castle Valley and the Union Pacific stayed out of Huntington Canyon coal. A major stumbling-block to their success came when President Roosevelt abruptly withdrew all available public lands from entry beginning in mid-1906. In Utah, thousands of acres suddenly became unavailable.

Before the withdrawal, new developers actually managed to open a mine. In 1902, twenty-three-year-old Arthur A. Sweet had entered the coal game by filing an individual claim for land near Sunnyside. Chased off by Rio Grande gunmen, he eventually sold out to the railroad’s agents. Four years later, he was back in company with his brothers Frederick, C. N., and William, armed with new knowledge of local terrain. Spring Glen resident Heber J. Stowell had located a coal outcropping in the ledge above his home in 1904 and told Price’s W. H. Lawley. Lawley contacted neighbor Henry Wade, who relayed the information to his son-in-law, Arthur Sweet. After a brief false start, most of these men cooperated in the well-named Independent Coal and Coke Company (IC&C), meaning they had their own financing, independent of any railroad. They added as secretary and treasurer newly-arrived Spring Glen homesteader, Lucius H. Curtis, who had obtained more of the rocky cliffside using the federal Timber and Stone Act, swearing he intended to sell building stone at Helper (surrounded by its own prodigiously rocky slopes). By 1907, the IC&C had bought the Price Trading Company’s Aberdeen Mine above Spring Glen and had founded its own town and mines called Kenilworth, allegedly because the three high, adjacent cliffs resembled the three towers of Scotland’s Kenilworth Castle. The IC&C shortly began shipping coal in direct competition with the Rio Grande mines (and, thanks to the scrutiny of ongoing federal investigations, using the D&RGW tracks). The new coal company also condemned a railroad right-of-way through Spring Glen for its spur line, the Kenilworth and Helper Railroad Company, and purchased a Shay engine to pull cars up the steep mountain grade. It hired a doctor for the rising company town and attracted a polyglot assortment of laborers: Greeks from the Western’s section gang at Helper, Italians earlier blacklisted from the mines, and locals previously employed in other lines of work.

Throughout the United States, growth meant jobs and jobs attracted immigrants. Over a million arrived in 1905 for the very first time. Although Utah found it necessary to establish a Bureau of Immigration in 1911, hundreds had arrived in Castle Valley well before that. The Japanese, for example, brought in to work the coal in the strike of 1903–1904, replaced striking “dining room girls” at the Rio Grande Hotel in Helper three years later. Their availability as strike-breakers diminished as the pressure of West Coast politicians led to the 1907 “Gentleman’s Agreement,” made formal by the Root-Takahira Agreement in 1908. Japanese laborers could no longer enter the U.S. Other nationalities kept coming. Plenty of other single men made this trip, sometimes accompanied—or later followed—by wives and families. In 1905, the State Coal Mine Inspector made his first report of
These Greek immigrant coal miners (Michael Kontas on the right) posed for their picture, showing off all the tools of their trade: their lunch buckets, shovel, drill, and miner’s caps with attached lights. They would send this picture home to relatives (often illiterate) to show that they were working and prospering in far-away America. Courtesy of Western Mining and Railroad Museum.
miners’ “Nationalities,” listed here from the largest to the smallest groups: Americans (including all white, native English-speakers, including British citizens), Austrians, Italians, Finns, Greeks, Germans, Japanese, Negroes (who weren’t considered Americans), Swedes, Slavs, and Mexicans, with no numbers given for Spanish and Chinese. By 1908, Carbon County had almost one thousand Italian residents (the most of any Utah county), with northern Italians outnumbering their southern brethren by two to one. The paper felt compelled to add: “among them are very many good citizens, in fact they predominate.”

Nonetheless, Helen Barboglio Leavitt, the child of an Italian immigrant, remembered that her father helped found the Stella D’America lodge “as a protection against the prejudices of other Utahns in the area. It provided small loans to its members in good standing, and aided them with the courts in getting their citizenship.” Stella D’America, founded in Castle Gate in 1898 (and moved to Helper in 1903 during the strike) served the northern Italians, separated from their southern brethren by problems at home. Another lodge, Principe Di Napoli, probably originated among southern Italians, but fused with Stella D‘America in the strike of 1903. Men joined, paid regular dues, and espoused loyalty to America and American ideals. In the absence of any kind of state or national insurance, lodges provided the best guarantee of a decent burial (often photographed, with an open coffin, to reassure families back home of the presence of a priest and mourners) and basic provision for widows and fatherless children.

People known locally as Austrians also had specific lodges for each of their ethnic groups. Slovenians often joined the Western Slavonic Lodge, or the rival Slovenska Narodna Poporna Jednota (Slovene National Benefit Society or SNPJ). In 1909, John Juvan helped found SNPJ Lodge 32 at Winter Quarters, which later established off-shoot lodges. Serbs had the Serb National Federation; Croatians organized the Croatian Fraternal Union. In Sunnyside, disabled miner Tony Krissman swore in new members of the Croatian Fraternal Union, some as young as five-year-old Anna Marolt.

Krissman had arrived in America with his disability, one of the very few immigrants ever to enter the States that way. He had his left leg severed below the knee, and apparently got through immigration thanks to relatives in Colorado who sent affidavits that he would not become a public charge. He moved to Sunnyside in 1905, where people saw him every day, carrying his picks into the mine. Soon, his wife joined him. Later they sent for their six children, who traveled with their grandmother across the Atlantic. Ellis Island was a whole new world to eleven-year-old Mary Krissman Topolovec. Officials separated women and men. Mary’s brothers had all their belongings, including her grandmother’s sack with whiskey in it. Afraid at the separation, the girls kept crying until an interpreter asked them the trouble. He took them up on a balcony rimming the grand entrance hall to look for their brothers. The girls spotted them, selling Grandma’s liquor
and circling an old African American to see if, as they had been told on the boat over, he really had a tail. The family was reunited, but still had to wait on the island for nineteen days until trains rolled to Sunnyside and back, carrying affidavits from Tony and Anna Verzuh Krissman assuring the support of these dependents.  

Others also came through Ellis Island, including Rose Katalin Brajkovich from Croatia. She remembered that all the women on her ship were forced to strip en masse, and had their clothes bundled up, labeled with their names, and sent out for fumigation. Brajkovich had previously always kept both clean and modest, wearing her petticoat to wash her dress, then changing into her dress to wash her petticoat. But one old Italian lady on the ship had been discovered with lice, she said, so she and many others had to suffer this embarrassment. Mary Zagar Dupin also made the trip through Ellis Island after emigrating from Slovenia in 1910. While the family waited for processing, her mother got her a banana—a new, unfamiliar fruit—and cut it in slices. Mary pointed out that others had peeled theirs first. “Yes,” said her mother, “they peel pears and apples, too, and that’s extravagant” and made her eat it with the peel on. Mary did not eat a second banana for a long, long time.
Immigrants and Americans learned to get along. For example, Slovenian Martin Millarich moved from Kenilworth to Spring Glen late in 1907 and built a saloon, getting a county license a year later. Millarich’s daughter remembered that “[LDS] Bishop [John] Rowley [told her father] . . . that the Mormons didn’t approve of his having a tavern there.” Her father replied, “You know, Mr. Rowley, the road out front runs right past this place, & the door swings open & shut for whoever wishes to enter, but I do not go out into the street & grab people by the arm & force them to come in.’ He had no problems after that.” Often more acculturated children became go-betweens, easing their parents’ transition. For example, Marie Auphand Fidell, who immigrated from France in 1901, often had to translate for her mother. “We all got along even if my mother couldn’t speak very much,” she later remembered. “All the people got along really good.”

To a point, that is. While Kenilworth was under construction, for example, the IC&C tolerated peddler-farmers such as the Saccomannos, established in Spring Glen since 1903, who alternated selling farm produce with mining at Kenilworth. In 1909, however, when Spring Glen neighbors James Rolando and Martin Millarich raised over a hundred dollars by subscription and begun to improve the road between Spring Glen and the now-established camp of Kenilworth, the company objected. Officials wished to confine miners to trading at the company store and obtained an injunction forbidding peddlers from entering its camp. Helper’s John Diamanti, a Greek immigrant, sued. The local newspaper editorialized that the injunction “should be strongly resented by every citizen in and around the camp, and for that matter . . . by every citizen of the state and nation, because it [the injunction] . . . strikes at the very root of our democratic institutions.” The court agreed; the injunction was lifted, and peddling continued.

Northern Italians John Marchello and Gabriella Clerico, Spring Glen neighbors, each had their regular customers among the coal camps. Marchello, raised on an Italian farm, had returned to farming in 1912 when he developed severe asthma and could no longer work in the mines. “He peddled . . . up Spring Canyon to Standardville, Latuda, and to Kenilworth,” remembered his son, Martin, who had accompanied him until he was old enough to go to school.

John peddled daily, loading his small buggy with “a dozen bunches of carrots, a dozen bunches of beets, a box of live chickens, two to three boxes of peppers, some cucumbers, or whatever was available.” He also sold his second crop of hay in Latuda, to feed the mine’s horses and mules. “Sometimes our wagon would be on one side of the street, and the Clerico’s—or someone else’s—on the other,” Marchello added. Despite old-country traditions that sequestered mothers and daughters in the home, Gabriella Clerico defied the norm. She had joined her coal-miner husband, Battista, in America after cooking for a rich family in northern Italy, near Turin. Consequently, she could make delicious butter and cheese for sale. She also peddled cherries, apples, pears, apricots, and peaches, grown in the
Moving in Together, 1905–1909

relatively sheltered valley of Spring Glen where the family had planted an orchard after a mine accident disabled Battista, driving them back to the soil. They also raised a garden and bred rabbits, remembered her youngest son, Pete, who frequently accompanied her on her twice-weekly trips, mostly to Helper, Spring Glen, and Castle Gate. The IC&C remained disturbed by this seasonal traffic, and, in 1912, again tried to shut out peddlers. The suit, this time decided in Salt Lake City, overturned the coal camp’s prohibition on peddling.45

As the American economy expanded in the early 1900s, other entrepreneurs saw different money-making visions in Castle Valley. Frank Cook and E. T. Merritt took a hard look at Green River and saw a future farming paradise. Merritt, originally attracted by the 1901 oil boom, realized that a lot of disappointed people could not afford the expensive orchard land then for sale in western Colorado and decided to attract them further west. He began buying up area ranches in 1904. By 1906, he and Cook had formed the Cook and Merritt Land Company and the Green River Land and Townsite Company.44 To provide water to the expanded townsite, Cook took a spot on the board of the newly-incorporated Green River Canal Company in 1904, which had acquired the holdings of older irrigation associations. Doing his own part for irrigation, Merritt orchestrated what became known as “the forty-two foot lift” of the old dam, facilitating efforts to draw
irrigation water from the river up to the townsite on the bluffs above with giant water wheels (some of which remained well into the 1970s). In good Progressive fashion, Merritt left a place in the new dam for an electrical power plant to be installed later, a plant actually constructed in 1914. The dam itself, completed late in 1906, was only six weeks old when the annual spring ice breakup on the Green River took it out. Undaunted, engineer George Thurman headed up the rebuilding project after stipulating that he be given complete charge and a free hand. Under his direction, the dam rose again and Thurman remained as director, and then president, of the Green River Canal Company for over forty years.\footnote{45}

Starting out from the revitalized town, no longer a rowdy end-of-track, Capt. Frank Summerill, in 1901, had launched the steamboat Undine, a combination freighter and pleasure craft, which lasted a year before founding. In 1905, Capt. H. T. Yokey built the two-deck sternwheeler, Cliff Dweller, and tried to cruise to Moab (site of the old Elk Mountain Mission) on the Colorado above its confluence with the Green River. His craft ran out of fuel before it completed the voyage. Once coal arrived to fire its boilers, the boat chugged back to Green River where it was rebuilt and rechristened The City of Moab. It again failed to reach its destination and was eventually moved to the Great Salt Lake for other pleasure excursions.\footnote{46}

Thus, very early in its history, Castle Valley residents experienced the romance of wilderness, an impulse just taking hold in the eastern United States. The notion of wilderness as romantic originated with some early
mountain men, grew with the writings of Henry David Thoreau, and even inspired scientific observer John Wesley Powell in some of his lyrical descriptions of Castle Valley’s azure cliffs and remote grandeur. By the turn of the century, as cities and farms covered the remotest corners of the West, appreciation of unspoiled nature had become more widespread. The hunter-friendly Boone and Crockett Club, founded by Theodore Roosevelt in 1888, espoused a hairy-chested philosophy which turned city slickers into robust sportsmen through taming supposedly savage nature. The Sierra Club, formed four years later, wanted to preserve nature untamed. Locally, Castle Valley’s widespread practice of Eastering down on the San Rafael Desert to celebrate the end of winter’s cabin fever was well-established by 1910 and persists into the twenty-first century. In short, as the Progressive Era wore on, the general public increasingly experienced the wild outdoors (perhaps even with a sail down the Green River).

Transportation improved in other ways. Cars were coming. As early as 1902, Congress had debated the first specific proposal for federally funded highways, though it was tabled. That same year, private parties founded the American Automobile Association, which cooperated with the National Grange in holding a Good Roads Conventions five years later. Meanwhile, Castle Valley residents struggled and finally succeeded in improving local roads and bridges. By the early 1900s, Emery County was putting every spare cent into roads and bridges, bettering connections to the towns along the skirts of the Wasatch Plateau all the way from Emery to Price, east over the Green River, and across the San Rafael River. When rains and floods in September 1909 washed out every bridge on the Emery-Price road except the one at Huntington, Emery County floated its first bonds to fund steel bridges. Out at Green River, townswomen passed a petition requesting a new bridge and feted the investigating state politicians with songs, banners, and a banquet at the Palmer House. The state then provided Green River with $35,000 of the $45,000 it cost to replace the old ferry with a reliable steel bridge.

This robust town, a magnet for state funding, grew from “the land boom of 1905–08,” Green River resident Una Gillies remembered, when “hundreds of people from the Middle West came here hoping to make a fortune in peaches.” The first peach orchards along the Green had dried up when the dam went in 1907, but Merritt, undaunted, platted a grand townsite, selling land all over the country, including a lot for a livery stable to former outlaw Matt Warner (now gone straight). In August 1906, R. M. Eldred and Frank Cook had opened a new bank. Farmers tried planting melons, building on the hard-won knowledge of John F. (“Melon”) Brown that Green River’s soils and climate were particularly ideal for cantaloupes. In the fall of 1907, Green River settlers had marketed more than ten thousand crates of cantaloupes in Denver and Chicago, and celebrated its first annual Melon Day a year later. Also in 1907, the town had inaugurated its
own local telephone system. In October 1906, a group had gathered at the swanky Palmer House, formed a Presbyterian church building committee, and committed to raising $2,500 for a church building. Green River Townsite Company donated the land and townsfolk celebrated the church dedication a year later.  

The Presbyterians had entered the Castle Valley mission field in 1905, starting at Ferron. The town was thriving, due in part to newly planted apple orchards, and more so due to its famous peaches, grown commercially ever since John Lemon hauled in 2,500 trees from Grand Junction around 1900. Rev. J. G. MacGillivray, the head of Presbyterian Sunday Schools throughout Utah, led rousing revivals in a gospel tent near the orchards that summer. By then, greater Utah had accepted Presbyterians as respectable after a rough beginning. They had entered Utah with the transcontinental railroad, but the earliest pastors had faced harassment and the Saints who aided these gentiles suffered stiff LDS discipline. By 1905, however, the LDS Deseret News was complimenting Presbyterian education in Salt Lake City. Consequently, before he left Ferron, MacGillivray selected a local site for a combined church and school and raised $1,000 towards construction. He reported his activities to the Women’s Board of Home Missions, which, in the late 1890s, had assumed responsibility for Presbyterian education—one of those national reforms that saw women’s moral influence spreading from home to the public sphere. The Board approved his efforts, reporting in its 1906 minutes that “Emery county . . . is virgin territory for missionary enterprise. . . . The communities are Mormon through and through but are generally of a more liberal type. A petition has been signed in Ferron by fifty persons—some of them Mormons—asking that we enter permanently in that town.”  

Harmony did not necessarily accompany growth. In 1900, Utah Fuel had installed at Sunnyside new mine pumps, fans, pipelines, and water tanks and improved mining apparatus, housing, and community buildings. A year later the company added 100 more cottages, complete with electric lights and running water. It also built a church, school, hospital, boarding house, and company store for its town, whose population had now reached 1,500. All of this development took water. The company had been drawing all it needed for Sunnyside from two wells by Grassy Trail Creek which ran right through the town. Water trouble had begun in 1902 when rancher
George C. Whitmore sued the Utah Fuel and the Rio Grande Western Railway over their wells. He claimed that so much sub-surface water now flowed into Sunnyside that some of the springs on Whitmore’s range were going dry. He won all rights to the water, which did not stop Utah Fuel. Whitmore sued again in 1905, and legal testimony grew to over 1,500 pages as the case dragged on and on. The same year, the coal company condemned lands for a reservoir, tunnel, and pipeline at Range Creek, just east of Grassy Trail Creek. In the second contest Whitmore won judgment for $12,500 for water illegally taken. Meanwhile, the company set up a pumping station at Range Creek and hired a married couple to tend it. A string of pack mules traversed the trail daily in summer, as the couple stocked provisions to keep them going when winter snow drifts—often ten to twenty feet high—cut them off completely except for a telephone connected to the pump house in Sunnyside. Next, Utah Fuel, now supplied with water from Range Creek, sued Whitmore and associates in 1909, trying to get back the water from Grassy Trail Creek. This litigation continued until 1920, outliving George Whitmore by three years. Unsuccessful in the courts, in 1921, the Utah Fuel Company finally got a private bill through Congress which allowed it a water supply for Sunnyside, allegedly partly for conserving the water and timber on these lands.54

In one way or another, local developments prospered, and the national economy hummed along nicely. Through most of 1907, prices rose on nails, flour, shoes, pianos, and everything imaginable.55 In early fall, an Indiana banker claimed, “We could not if we would stop this onward march of progress, we might as well try to stop the ebb and flow of the ocean tide.”56 Wages rose more slowly, but they rose. In Castle Valley coal mines, each man made from $8–$10 per shift. Utah got more “American” miners (a category which included all native English-speakers, including citizens of the British Isles) as the Wyoming coal mines decreased their hours. The racially-biased Advocate, very much in step with the times, reported that for the first time in twenty-five years the mines would be fully staffed, as whites replaced so-called coolie labor.57

Then, disaster hit. The great New York banks had overextended themselves in keeping up with nation-wide speculation, like the oil, coal, railroad, and irrigation projects that dotted Castle Valley. By mid-October 1907, banks froze assets, tightened credit, and some closed their doors. Another Panic had begun. Roosevelt’s secretary of the treasury cooperated with J. P. Morgan in switching millions of dollars in Treasury funds from one bank to another to keep them open. The president also issued $150 million in Treasury certificates and bonds, putting more paper in circulation to cover over-extended reserves. Congress considered a currency bill based on railroad and municipal bonds, finally passing a much-watered-down version. By December 1907, Castle Valley residents could read in the local newspaper the salient points of President Roosevelt’s up-beat message
to Congress: business was fundamentally sound; an emergency currency was needed; trust-busting should continue; the federal government needed to regulate strikes and lockouts; irrigation must expand; the government should protect the small landholder; the nation needed a Bureau of Mines, and the armed forces should be expanded.\textsuperscript{58} Despite this public optimism, Roosevelt wrote privately of the Panic that “the damage actually done was great, and the damage threatened was incalculable,” predictably crediting the federal government with holding off its worst effects.\textsuperscript{59}

As in the rest of America, the Panic wreaked havoc in Castle Valley, but it did so selectively. Its impact showed clearly which of Castle Valley’s industries connected with other businesses, and in what ways. The railroad mines, largely dedicated to producing coke for the Smelter Trust, felt the weight of plant shut-downs across the West. In early fall 1907, copper smelters closed at Butte and Anaconda, which, in turn, snuffed out 250 Castle Gate coke ovens and then reached out to Sunnyside. The PVCC and Utah Fuel laid off miners and sold their coal within the state. Joyfully, coal retailers, for once, met all their orders and stockpiled coal for what they hoped would be a coming boom. It never materialized. By November, the Panic had hit Utah. The railroad mines began paying partly in cash, partly in checks, while the D&RGW itself gave only checks to its workers.\textsuperscript{60} By early 1908, the Rio Grande’s coal mines had reduced coal prices for the very first time and were turning away two or three men for every job the company filled. The railroad mines worked only four days a week in January 1908, dropping in February to six or seven days for the entire month. George Gould, head of the Rio Grande system and other lines, was accused of sheer meanness as he yanked twenty-five years’ worth of labor advances from his striking shopmen at Denver and Salt Lake City. By the end of the Panic he had earned the name, “The Sick Man of Wall Street” as his railroad empire crumbled.\textsuperscript{61}

When the hard-pressed Rio Grande would only take cash in payment for shipping sheep, the wool trade suffered and the railroad lost money. Wool had previously been a big money-maker, since the sheep industry had flourished in Castle Valley since the 1870s. By the early 1900s, traditional LDS sheepmen like Karl Seely of Castle Dale wintered six thousand head of sheep and one hundred head of cattle on the San Rafael Desert and drove them to the Manti National Forest in summer. Immigrant sheepmen also swelled the wool trade, just as other foreigners had increased mining production. Frenchman Honore Dusserre, dean of the local French and French Basque sheepmen, had begun raising sheep in Castle Valley in 1892 and brought an additional twelve thousand head from California in 1896. Like every other local stockman, he moved his herds seasonally, driving his sheep over 175 miles from winter pasture on the San Rafael Desert to summer pasture in Whitmore Canyon, Scofield, and at Beaver, about 20 miles northwest of Price. He helped a lot of other sheepmen get started, especially fellow countrymen. For example, Honore (Henry) and Pierre (Pete)
Moynier also left California for Price, traveling from Bakersfield in 1898. First working as herdsmen (possibly for Dusserre), they saved up enough money to go into business for themselves in 1903. By 1910, they had purchased a sizable home in Price (now eligible for the National Register of Historic Places). Samson Iriart, originally a member of the Basque Colony at Tehachipi in the mountains south of California’s great Central Valley, had migrated to Price between 1909 and 1911, where he tried his hand at the sheep business. Although he was back in Tehachipi by 1920, his relative, Bernard Iriart, Sr., remained in the wool business in Castle Valley virtually until his death in 1980. Likewise, Basque Gratien Echibarne brought a large herd to Clark’s Valley, northeast of Wellington, in 1910. He actually filed on the land in 1916, and became one of the main promoters of a little town called Kiz, after the first woman to reside there: Kiziah Dimick, the wife of settler Ephriam Dimick.

Most of the sheepmen, native-born Mormons and foreign immigrants alike, joined together at corrals along the railroad for the annual spring shearing. As Seely told a later interviewer, “The shearing is done at the Mounds shearing corrals, at Mounds, Emery Co., Utah. The shearers work for the corral at so much per head doing all the herds that shear there.” Since owners had to pay the shearers cash at the corral, and pay the railroad cash to haul the fleece, and only then receive their own payment in cash upon sale, the sheep wore thicker coats in 1908.

Banks also struggled. Salt Lake banks started issuing certificates to be redeemed later at face value, and allowed depositors to withdraw only $200 per week, later down to $100. In December, the bank at Green River, largely dependent on railroad trade, closed after only sixteen months of service. Before its demise, it paid all depositors in full. With this exception, little changed at Castle Valley banks since “it has never been the policy of the banking institutions of this section of the state, because of local conditions [meaning outlaws], to carry very great sums of cash in their vaults, people generally preferring exchange,” claimed the local paper. Rolla West told a story illustrating this point. Banker Tobe Whitmore allegedly enjoyed Price’s big poker games, and one night he ran short of funds, so went to borrow money from his bank’s vault. Fellow card-player and sometime outlaw Matt Warner stuck with Whitmore, removing cash at the same rate as Tobe himself. Not one to risk being shot, Whitmore let Warner take the money. When the game ended, Whitmore slung his big overcoat over his arm and took the next train to Salt Lake City. Within a few days, Price residents spied a large package at the depot, sent from Salt Lake City and addressed to the First National Bank. Inside was a time vault, which no one could open once the timer was set. It was the first of its kind in Castle Valley.

Within a few months after the first downturn, coal prices started recovering. Since some mines had closed down, the scarcity of coal drove up its price, prompting a Chicago investor to note, “Since the great coal shortage
last fall in the West, no doubt there has been a great effort on the part of capitalists . . . to open up new coal fields . . . [for] commercial channels.”

Kenilworth fit this mold, blossoming as the Sweets pushed development regardless of the economic downturn. In 1907, a hundred miners struck over unequal work on their three shifts. They remained peaceable, and the company offered them “almost anything to return to work.”

Huntington’s George Westover, unsuccessful in his Forest Service exam, hired out with his team to help construct the town, and earned the respect of the foreman when he uncharacteristically refused to move a big rock which the unob-servant superior had asked him to drag downhill, over the top of his horses. By June 1908, the Sweets’ Independent Coal and Coke Company employed 150 men to run the mine at its fullest capacity. Three months later, over 200 men worked the IC&C mines, putting out about 600 tons daily, still below the amount needed to fill orders. Tom Haycock, son of a Mormon farmer in Spring Glen, got the job of engineer on the Shay engine and ran many a fast coal train down the steep mountain grade to connect with the Rio Grande.

The D&RGW remained the mainstay of Castle Valley transportation. By 1900, the Price depot ranked third in Utah (after Salt Lake and Ogden) in volume of commerce handled, and by 1913 only Salt Lake City outranked it. This visible wealth attracted notorious floaters who gathered in Price to eye the depot and relax in the town’s well-developed Outlaw Section. Saloons and bawdy houses stretched along the boardwalk from the old depot (which burned down in 1910) to the old courthouse where the county maintained a jail and sheds for freighters. After the Uinta Basin opened for white settlement in 1905, traffic from Price initially increased, despite the construction of a railroad from Mack, Colorado, to the Basin’s gilsonite mines the same year. Expansion of these mines helped freighters to resume a two-way haul: freight in, gilsonite out. However, a new policy shortly developed that each freighter could only carry for a single supplier. As half-empty wagons pulled over the pass, Armour and Company and the Cudahy Packing Company led the defection to the new railroad as primary supply line to the Uinta Basin, cutting into the freighting business at Price.

Locally, tensions mounted. In 1905, Carbon County Commissioners hired a new deputy sheriff to help arrest the displaced bums riding in on the Rio Grande. John U. Bryner had previously worked as Price town marshal, crossing swords in that capacity with former Klondike miner and freighter John Millburn, who ran the Oasis Saloon in the outlaw section. On Saturday night, October 7, as the lawman was escorting a drifter to jail, the inebriated Millburn stood outside his saloon, threatened the men, and fired off some shots. Bryner shot him dead. A coroner’s jury ruled it justifiable homicide, but at least one local citizen viewed Millburn as a harm-less, habitual drunk, and the deputy as a sober, deliberate shooter. “It was good shooting. You could cover the holes . . . with the brim of your hat,”
he said. The law of the gun remained a necessity in still-isolated, robust, thriving Castle Valley. The D&RGW, however, took some responsibility for civilized its division point at Helper. Millionaire M. C. Peabody, on the Rio Grande board of directors, reportedly funded the construction of the Helper Railroad YMCA, dedicated in 1906. The Advocate editorialized, “Since the erection of the Young Men’s Christian [A]ssociation building at Helper, that town has had a steady and substantial growth, people feeling that there is now a permanency to the place that did not exist before.” Civic-minded individuals also took the initiative. One major contributor, Louis Lowenstein, a Jewish immigrant from Latvia, had originally come from Salt Lake to Castle Valley seeking oil. He opened his Helper store that same year with a dance for two hundred people held on the upper floor of his regal Lowenstein Building, built of stone from a quarry near where Mother Jones had been imprisoned. His family and that of his sister, the Steins, together with Morris Glassman, who had stores in Castle Dale and Huntington, formed part of the small local Jewish mercantile community. His two nephews, Ben and Sam Stein, managed his two stores in Helper and Price. They remained stalwarts of Castle Valley until they moved to California in 1939, selling the building which still stands on Helper’s historic Main Street.

The kind of permanence Lowenstein Mercantile and other buildings represented stemmed, in large part, from the earlier designation of Helper as the railroad division point. Railroad officials lived at the “Y,” including Julius Sheppard, who served as its secretary and “became one of the best known and beloved characters along the entire system.” In addition, in the 1890s, the D&RGW had built a chapel near their station in Helper, heated by railroad steam and furnished with the aid of the “Inter-denominational Sunday School,” remembered Marion M. Robinson, the wife of Kenilworth’s doctor. “[S]everal denominations held services there,” she added, the Catholics, LDS, Methodists, and Episcopalians broke off to found their own churches around the time of World War I.

As Castle Valley towns became more settled, free-wheeling frontier development still characterized the coal mine industry. With Kenilworth still under construction, the Sweets moved southwest to land they had claimed earlier on the Black Hawk vein at the border of Emery and Carbon Counties. To work it, they incorporated the Consolidated Fuel Company in 1908 and formed the town of Hiawatha. They also proposed the ultimate challenge to the D&RGW: “a railroad to connect with the Denver & Rio Grande at or near Price and Helper.” Moroni Heiner and associates founded the mine and town of Mohrland nearby, its name based on the initials of the principal investors: James H. Mays, Walter C. Orem, Heiner, and Windsor V. Rice (perhaps copying the town of Elmo in this regard). In July 1909 they officially incorporated the Castle Valley Coal Company, and in
August, formed the Castle Valley Railroad, a spur to extend from the Mohrland Mine to Hiawatha. Heiner also became part owner in the Sweets’ new Southern Utah Railroad, and ultimately his company (by then known as the Southern Utah and Castle Valley) owned the rails all the way to Helper. The D&RGW, severely weakened by the Panic of 1907, made its own adjustments. First, as noted, it came to terms with its sister line in Colorado, resulting in an official merger mirroring earlier, informal arrangements. Then George Gould, the new head of both lines, dealt with Union Pacific’s E. H. Harriman to reopen the Ogden Gateway for transshipment from the Rio Grande to the UP and Oregon Short Line. As a result of all these developments, coal from the Castle Valley corridor now flowed all over the Pacific Northwest.

These transformations proved a powerful stimulus to more commercial mines in the cliffs ringing Castle Valley. Laudatory articles in Orem’s Weekly Bulletin and the prestigious Salt Lake Mining Review fanned development fever. Consequently, new enterprises popped up like mushrooms after rain. Moroni Heiner’s relative, Daniel Heiner, attracted backing from Ogden capitalists M. S. Browning (famous for his rifle works), H. H. Rolapp (judge in the Holladay v. Kirker suit), and David Eccles (Utah’s first millionaire) to create the Black Hawk Coal Company and open a mine between
Hiawatha and Mohrland. In a speculative mood, Henry Wade, associated with the Sweets at Kenilworth, even planned “a railroad from Wellington to the town of Emery in Emery county,” thence over Salina Pass to the San Pedro, though it was never built.

This mine development increasingly depended on contract, immigrant labor. Company policy typically segregated ethnic groups within the towns, in part to discourage the cooperation which would foster unions. For example, in 1908, Kenilworth carpenters constructed three nationality houses (bachelors’ boarding houses), providing separate quarters for Japanese, Greeks, and one other group (probably Italians). Kenilworth also added a saloon in early April and the company store in November, just as the mines started winter production. With an increased workforce, Kenilworth’s monthly payroll jumped from $12,000 to $35,000 in the winter of 1908–1909, money sent up to the mine in cash. The company sought to recoup most of it through rents, the saloon and the store—if no one stole it first.

That exact idea occurred to Gunplay Maxwell. After his union-busting at Goldfield, Maxwell had returned to Helper where he had suffered a broken right collarbone in a drunken shootout. He healed up and ricocheted back and forth among Utah, California, and Nevada, getting in trouble all along the way. In 1908, he tried to rob the Kenilworth payroll. Edward Johnstone, the new county deputy and coal camp marshal, foiled the attempt. On August 23, 1909, Maxwell again showed up in Price, “sore on himself” and everybody else, as the paper put it. Drunk, he ran into Johnstone in a bar and insisted that the deputy go drinking with him. The two stepped out on the street, arguing. Maxwell drew his gun and fired, his bullet cutting through Johnstone’s shirt at the waist. Johnstone shot three times. Maxwell died on Price Main Street in a pool of blood. His funeral preparations revealed a problem not in evidence in the 1907 shoot-out at Helper: opium addiction. “His left arm from the wrist to the shoulder and around as far as he could reach was punctured with a hypodermic syringe,” said the paper, “while in his pockets was found a quantity of gum opium.” In later years, locals speculated that Maxwell’s death had more to do with the commercial rivalry between the IC&C that employed Johnstone and the Utah Fuel Company itself than with any addiction. Keeping mum on commercial conflicts, Utah Fuel attorney Mark Braffet eulogized his former bodyguard as “a bad man, but a good servant.” The conditions surrounding Maxwell’s death would soon mushroom, as corporate rivalry moved not only men but mines, political parties, and civic-minded women in an escalating conflict.