

Blacksmith Fork Canyon

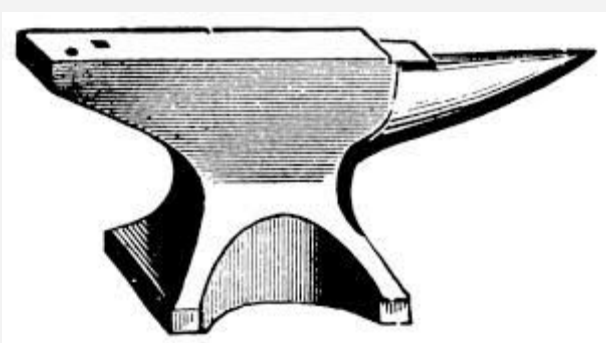
What's in a Name?



Why call it Blacksmith Fork?

Saying “Blacksmith Fork Canyon” can be a bit of a mouthful. Have you ever wondered why the early settlers gave the canyon such a long name? The Canyon earned its name in 1878 when Neils C. Nielsen found an old, roughly made stone blacksmith forge up the Canyon. Fur trappers used the temporary forge to make repairs to their gear and equipment.

Today, everything from the mouth of the canyon to Hardware Ranch is known as Blacksmith Fork Canyon in honor of that stone forge.



Bootleggers Delight:

If you thinking getting alcohol in Utah is difficult now, you would find it interesting that Blacksmith Fork Canyon was a major bootlegging artery for Cache Valley.

On August 1, 1917, the Utah State legislature passed a state prohibition bill which outlawed the production and consumption of alcohol in the state. Two years later, the United States congress adopted the 18th amendment which made prohibition nationwide.

Blacksmith Fork Canyon became a popular route for bootleggers, rum-runners and such, to bring various types of booze into Cache Valley.

A Dam Drama



In 1912, Hyrum City acquired the hydroelectric dam near the mouth of Blacksmith Fork Canyon, after a bidding dispute with Wellsville. Wellsville City offered to buy the plant from the Electric Power and Light Company, however Soren Hanson, a wealthy Hyrum resident, lent the City Council \$6,000 and Hyrum purchased the power plant and its electricity. At the turn of the century, having an electrified community was a source of pride. The residents of Hyrum took pride in their newly electrified town, thanks to the dam's electricity. Wellsville felt just a bit bitter about losing out on the dam and source of power.

Today, the dam in Blacksmith Fork Canyon still produces a small amount of cheap, and renewable energy for Hyrum. In addition to the electricity, the dam and surrounding park, which was completed in 1928, provides many recreation opportunities for local families.



Deforestation?



C. L. Anhder Steam Saw Mill. White Pine area Blacksmith Fork Canyon. From Saw Mill to left—Andrew Andreason, John Swenson, C. L. Anhder, Hiram Larsen, Heber Lauritzen, Charles Shaw, Harlem McBride, Wells McBride, Caroline Anhder.

Early settlers of Cache Valley scraped a living from the land and nearby mountains. The necessity for lumber as both a building material and a commodity led to an over harvest of timber and extensive deforestation in the Bear River mountain range. Very few of the Valley's early settlers understood the importance of maintaining mountain watersheds and over harvested to the detriment of the water supply.



Over grazed section of the Bear River Range, 1925.

Deforestation impaired the mountain range from storing the snowpack, whose spring runoff sustain Utah communities through the state's hot dry summers. In 1903, President Roosevelt created the Logan Forest Reserve which placed restrictions on logging in an attempt to restore the rivers of the Bear River drainage. Today, the Wasatch-Cache National Forest allows for multiple use, but also protects the watershed and water supply of Cache Valley.

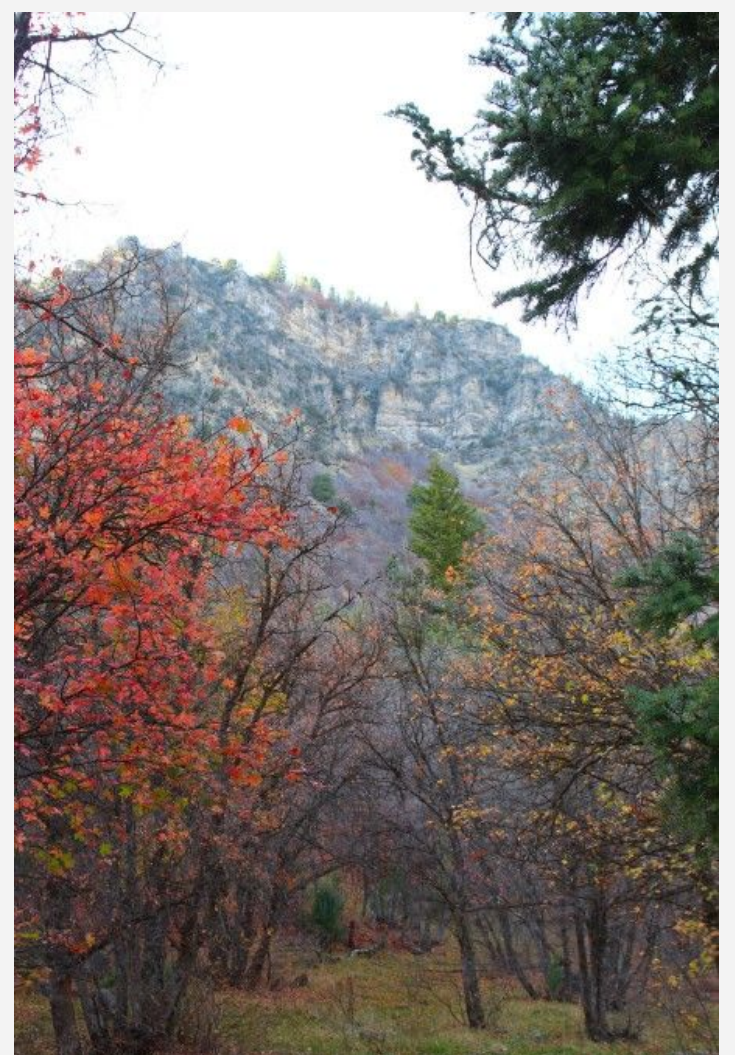


Photo of Blacksmith Fork Canyon today.