

The Old Fish Lake Cabin

by L. Glen Anderson
June 1990

I received from Attorney Dan Keller, on official stationery, a summons to write something about the old Fish Lake cabin for the Anderson reunion to be held in Manti in June, 1990. I am writing according to my memory some things as I recall them. I have fond memories of the good times spent at the old cabin.

If I have had a lapse of memory on some things, think nothing of it, but feel free to make any corrections or additions.

The history of the old cabin probably needs a little foreward as to how it came be built. Here are a few facts as I recall them.

Grandfather (Lewis Anderson) seems to be the original member of the Anderson family to know something about Fish Lake. Grandfather was a telegraph operator and because of this he was well informed about goings-ons in the area. He was also working in the Manti Temple so he had contact with many people who visited there. This kept him well informed as to places and events in the area.

I do not recall hearing anyone say just when the first trip was made by family members to Fish Lake, nor do we know the route which was used. Some have expressed that they thought the first trips came from the North through Seven Mile. Later I am sure that they used the South route by way of Burrville.

I recall my father (Lewis R.) telling me grandfather (Lewis) was not well for had some health problems. The doctor prescribed a trip to Fish Lake for recuperation. The medication while there was to wade in Twin Creeks every morning. Apparently grandfather was very careful to follow this advice. It has even been reported that on this occasion wool stockings were used on the hands in order to catch fish from Twin Creeks by hand. I guess grandfather received a complete cure from his ailments because he always loved Fish Lake.

Trips were made to Fish Lake by the family for some years before the cabin was built. The family was well aware of the beauties thereof. The early trips were made by team and wagon and it took three or four days one way from Manti as I understand. They took rod and gun with them so they could sort of live off the land. They could catch a fish or shoot a rabbit or wild chicken.

The road went by way of Burrville then East over the South end of the Fish Lake Mountain. Grandfather (Lewis) would arrange, ahead of time, for a man with a team of horses to meet them at the bottom of the steep mountain.

They would hook the extra team on the wagon to help pull them to the top. Father said the man charged them \$1.00 but that Grandfather gave him \$3.00. the road in some places went along the edge of the Lake in the water.

The Indians were at the lake at this time. A little trading was done, I think mostly for fish. The fish were salted and kept for Winter.

There were lots of wild ducks at the lake at this time and I recall father telling me that they would shoot them in the Fall and take them to Salt Lake to be sold on the open market. I think that the feathers were left on them.

According to Bessie Taylor Allen, grandfather (Lewis) could have bought Fish Lake for ten thousand dollars and that he had the money. Grandfather felt, however, that the beauties of Fish Lake should be enjoyed by everyone and not be restricted by private ownership.

The Andersons had other interests before building the cabin at Fish Lake. Anderson-Dyrenge Co. was organized and managed by Uncle Tom. The Manti Livestock Company was incorporated by Lewis Anderson, Lewis R., Thomas Jefferson, Lee Kenner and Albert Elliott. Albert Elliott lived in Boston and did not have much to do with the corporation other than to invest some money. Manti Livestock Company consisted of the mountain ranch in Salina Canyon with about 12,000-13,000 acres and the Oak Spring Ranch lower down towards Emery which contained 3,400-4,000 acres. They ran registered Hereford cattle and Rambulet sheep.

I mentioned the ranches because prior to going to Fish Lake, we spent portions of our Summers there. The ranches were being built up and improved. When the Sheep Valley Reservoir was being built, father (Lewis R.) was in charge. Clair and I spent the Summer there. I was about seven or eight years old at the time. This reservoir held water for the Oak Spring Ranch.

Lee Kenner was the manager of the ranches. The livestock company was going along pretty well so there was opportunity to become more interested in Fish Lake. At this time Grandfather (Lewis) was President of the Manti Temple. Father (Lewis R.) was buying wool for a Boston firm and Uncle Tom was managing the store. I think that about this time Uncle Tom purchased the interest of Dyrenge and became the sole owner of the furniture store. It was at this point in their lives that father and grandfather decided they should have a cabin at Fish Lake. We had spent a Summer or two at the lake with a tent and a small cabin that was rented. Mary (Sorensen) recalls mother telling her that Mary had whooping cough the Summer they stayed in the tent and she thought that they should have a cabin to stay in. Mary was one or two years old at the time and thinks that it was about 1916 or 1917 when the cabin was built.

The cabin site was chosen because it was near the lake and there was a small spring of water there. Also the small creek now known as Anderson Creek was close by. I presume that this is how Anderson creek got its name.

The cabin site was inside the borders of the Fish Lake Resort Co. This did not cause any problems at the time with the Forest Service. I think that rent was paid to the Resort Co. for a few years and then later transferred to the Forest Service. Lucile remembers that the Skougards had a one hundred year lease on the property. They decided to sell before the lease ran out.

At this time the Skougards were preparing to expand and buil[d] more cabins and a lodge. They had set up a saw mill at Bowery Creek. This is where the logs were sawed for the cabin. The timber was taken from the mountain to the West and North of the lake.

Arrangements were made for Charles Skougard to build the cabin. I guess that grandfather and father were the architects. The cabin was about 28 feet square, the same as the present cabin. It was made of rough sawed logs. The roof was cedar shingles. The floor was imported matched lumber. There was a knot hole in the porch floor where everyone growing up could drop a string through and learn to fish. It was also used to drop little rocks, etc., through.

The floor coverings were congoleum rugs. These were sort of like linoleum.

The cabin was built on cement footings. There was quite a slope to the ground so the side fronting the lake was high off the ground. This provided room to store the boat during the Winter and also an extra sleeping room.

The cabin was three rooms and a large porch. Grandfather (Lewis) had the Northwest room. It had a door opening outside to the North and one opening onto the porch. An interesting side note is that grandfather kept a "fishing diary on the inside of the North door where he wrote down the dates he was there, the weather conditions, and how many fish he caught. Unfortunately this valuable record got painted over in a subsequent clean-up campaign.

Father (Lewis R.) had the two rooms on the South side of the cabin, with one door opening onto the porch which was on the Northeast corner. Ceilings were put in grandfather's room and the porch at the time of construction. The other two rooms were not finished until later. The cabin was not real tight so that the mice, chipmunks and sometimes the pack rats found their way into the cabin. Lucile remembers that one Summer when the cabin was opened that the rats were there. Father shot one that was up in the rafters with the 410 shotgun right over Lucile while she was in bed.

The plumbing was most modern for those times. There was running water at the spring, a water bucket in the house and a tea kettle on the stove for warm water. Then there was the outside path that led to the one-hole privy.

The lighting system was most up to date. This consisted of a lamp cord with about a forty-watt lamp attached. The back-up light was a wax candle and flashlight.

The Skougards had a little water-powered generator located on Twin Creeks. When Chase Skougard could keep this running we had a little light. As I remember, this light plant was only operated at night.

The high porch on the cabin afforded a magnificent view of the lake. It had two open sides with large wooden steps leading up to it. The two open sides had nails around the sides at the top. They were used to hang the fish on during the night to cool. The fish were taken down in the early morning and wrapped in a blanket to keep them cool during the day.

There were binoculars at the cabin and Lucile could look out over the lake and see when the fishermen were headed for the cabin. Then she knew it was time to get the dinner started.

There were two dairies at the lake at different times. We were able to get fresh milk at Jorgeson Creek for a time. Later on we would go to Eastons at the South end of the lake. This worked pretty good. If it was not too windy we could row the boat there and usually get three or four fish on the way. We would use a light line and stay close to shore. A little copper wobbler would catch those brook trout. We did not bait the hook. The milk was kept in the cold spring water. This was a good cooler.

We were not to go fishing on Sundays so there was a little Sunday School held on the porch. Lucile recalls that one Sunday morning Eric Jorgenson attended our Sunday School. He told this Indian legend: There were two Indian braves who were in love with an Indian maiden. To see which one would be the winner, the braves were to swim across the lake in the widest place. They started to swim and when they reached the middle of the lake, a big monster came up from the deep and devoured one of the braves. I expect that this was "old goldie", the fish big fish that always got away.

The rats and mice were a problem for a time after the cabin was built – they seemed to like the bedding as it was made real good nests. One day a big rat nest was found under the house with spoons, trinkets, lures and other items which the rats had pilfered. This was the way with those mountain pack rats. To protect bedding, etc. a large wooden box was built in one corner of the bedroom. This was tight and so when the cabin was closed in the Fall the bedding was crowded into it.

Later on the ceiling were put into the two rooms. The inside walls were covered with masonite wall board. This tightened up the house and made it warmer and easier to keep clean.

Eunice, Elliott and myself (Glen) spent most of one Summer at the lake. We had gone there with father and mother and Mary. Mother had to return home and the three of us were left at the cabin with the understanding that father would come for us in a few days. Father got busy and did not come for us for six or seven weeks. Lucile remembers father as saying that we would be all right. We were told when they left us that if we needed something to go to the lodge. We could run a little charge account there. I think that the only thing that we did not pay for was a few loaves of bread. You see, we established a little business. We had a little pond in the creek where we could keep the bullheads which were used for bait at that time. In the mornings when the lake was calm we would catch the bullheads with a little screen net and put them in the pond. Then when the wind would blow and we could not see to catch them Elliott would sell them to those city folks for bait. Elliott was a super fisherman and a salesman. He could sell all we could get for fifteen cents or two for a quarter. With this cash flow we pretty well stayed solvent through the summer.

We had a little fish pond built in the creek where we could keep a few fish. Elliott and I would fly fish in the lake where Anderson creek runs in. We would catch those brook trout which would be about two or three pounds and put them in the pond. When someone would come to visit we could always give them a fish to take home. For a time we gave the extra fish to the lodge if they needed them for a special fish dinner.

Baths were a little hard to come by that Summer so Elliott and I used to row across the lake and strip off and have a little swim. We did not worry about using any soap. Sometimes the bath got cut short if we spotted a fisherman coming our way.

Eunice did the cooking and Elliott and I kept us in wood. We had the old hand saw and we would put the logs on the wooden steps and one of us would sit on the log to hold it steady while the other sawed off lengths just right for the stove.

There were mice in the cabin that summer. They got a little bothersome. They wanted to eat our cheese. We did not have any traps so we had to make our own. We would fill the water bucket about half full of water and angle a little short stick with some cheese on the end and balance it on the edge of the bucket. The mice would go after the cheese and fall into the bucket and drown. Sometimes we would get up and reset the trap and get two or three a night.

Now a word about the old boats: The first boats were locally made. They were not big as compared to the boats of today. There were all wood and rather

narrow. Two people could just sit in the back without fall overboard. They had home-made oars with a half-inch piece of pipe and a leather strap for the oar locks. They would float when they were full of water. A bailing can was standard boat equipment. No one worried about life jackets. The boats would be pulled out on the bank of the lake in the Fall and turned over. A coat of tar was spread on the bottom in the Spring for water proofing.

After a few years we had a little larger boat with factory made oars. This boat would accommodate the air propeller motor. This was the first motor we had and I think thee were about three on the lake like it.

I have to mention the "Mary A" which I presume most of you remember. This was a factory made boat and with it came the water propeller motors. Our first motor was small but was good for trolling. In a heavy wind sometimes the oars could help keep the boat moving. The motors were improved and became larger and, or course, had more speed. This made it possible to get on the mack run without losing a lot of valuable time in the early morning.

Just a little about the fishing: The largest mackinaw I caught was 14 lbs. Clair was at the oars and I had the line. We caught it in front of the lodge and Clair had to sit on it to keep it from flopping back in the lake.

I got a 10 pound rainbow on the fly road in front of the cabin one night. That fish gave me quite a battle. I had the waders on. They were regular boots for fly fishing along the bank. That fish took all the line of my reel and I waded out as far as I could before it finally stopped running. I got it about into the bank when it took off again and I had to repeat the operation. When I finally maneuvered the fish nearly to shore Elliott went to the cabin and got the net as I thought that maybe it might get away trying to pull it up on the shore.

There was a time when we could catch about a 4-8 pound rainbows along the North shore. We would use a light line with a three-strand leader and a no. 2 fly. We would bait the hook with large white grubs that we would get by turning over the cow cakes in the meadows to the North of the lake. We trolled about 150 feet of light line behind the boat. It seemed that the fish would bite those white grubs almost any time of day. Sometimes the wind would blow, making it almost impossible to row against the wind. When that happened we would pull the boat up on the bank and take the fish and walk back to the cabin.

Now a word about those good old cars: most needed adjustments could be made with a pair of pliers and a screwdriver. There was always a possibility of a flat tire so a box of patches and a tire pump was standard equipment. The tires all had tubes. A hand crank also came with the cars. I recall the first trip to the lake was in one of those cars with 32-inch tires and wooden spokes in the wheels. The road went by way of Burrville, then South toward Loa and North to the lake. This was before the dugway was built. The cars

were a little under-powered so if we got in a tight spot, we just got out to lighten the load, and gave it a little help by pushing. The old Hudsons were an improvement but they were open with a cloth top. They had running boards on the sides and some had a rack on the back. This made a good place to put the extra baggage. It took about four hours to get to the lake from Manti and we would stop along the way and have a lunch, cool the motor and fill the radiator with water for the climb up dugway. Most of the old cars would overheat on the hills.

Mother (Clara) liked to fish. There were some people from Salt Lake that lost their pole and line on the East side of the lake. They were feeling real bad about this. Mother told them that she would fish it up for them. The next time out, she went to the area they had pointed out and hooked onto their line and pulled up the rod. She took it to the lodge and the next time she was in Salt Lake she told them they could pick up their rod and line at the lodge.

Grandfather (Lewis) was quite the fisherman. He liked to catch the mackinaw and eat them. He gave me a little lesson on cleaning the fish. He said not to cut off the front fins as he liked the meat around the fins. I had some good fishing trips with him. The Temple was open three or four days a week. This made it possible for him to go fishing. He would pick me up on an afternoon when he got out of the Temple. I would be the driver and the oarsman and we would have a few days fishing. We had fish for every meal along with bacon and eggs. He also had some hard dry Swedish bread that he liked. I enjoyed my trips with him.

Uncle Tom and Aunt Etta had a cabin at the lake. This was to the North about where the big bend in the shore line terminates in Mackinaw point. One evening they were out trolling and Uncle Tom hooked onto a big fish. This is sort of how I remember him telling about it. It took some time to get the fish up to the boat. When Aunt Etta could see it sort of going around in circles. It looked so big that she told Tom to cut the line and let it go – it was too big. Uncle Tom hung on and said after all the fishing he had done to get a big one, in no way was he going to turn it loose. It turned out to be about a twenty-five pound mack.

I remember father and grandfather would often pay a visit to the guides. This is where they frequently heard the big fish stories. “Stuttering Olie” was one of the guides who always knew just the right fly and the right lure to use. I presume he always told the truth but I’m sure that he made good business for the store selling fishing supplies.

Elliott was a super fisherman. He was on the small side and the waders he used didn’t fit him well. Many is the time he got into deeper water than he should have and he could hardly make shore with the waders filled up with water.

Father had a rule that when the sun went off the East mountain it was time to start fly fishing in front of the cabin. Fishing was always best in the early morning or at night. Silver-bodied flies like the Silver Doctor seemed to be the best catchers.

I need to mention just how good those baked mackinaws and the home-made bread were. Also the elderberry jam. Mother liked the blue elderberries the best. She would have us go pick them for her. We liked to pick a few wild gooseberries and raspberries when we could find them.

Elliott and Melroy Luke were boyhood pals. One day they decided to take off for the lake on their bikes. Grandfather heard about this. Just how I am not sure but he guessed that they would not make it. So he got in the old Hudson and went after them. He caught up with them on the big dugway. They were walking and pushing the bikes. One bike had a broken peddle and both had flat tires. Two tired boys were very glad for a ride and I expect that the all had a day or two of fishing before returning home.

There were special things to be done when we closed up the cabin for the Winter. We pulled the boat up and put it under the house. This took a little manpower. We would put some little wooden rollers under the boat and then sort of roll the boat on them. We set all the mouse traps and tried to get the bedding where the mice could not get to it.

In order to get the cabins away from the shore line, the Forest Service made lots available up on the hill. Father and mother decided that it would be in the best interest of the family to relocate the cabin. This was done near the end of World War II about 1945. The old cabin was razed and the materials used in building the new cabin. George Anderson, a relative from Emery, was in charge of construction. Many family members helped with the work. We're grateful [*sic*] for the thoughtfulness of father and mother and deeply thankful for the fond memories of both the old cabin and the new.

L. Glen Anderson