

Southern Utah Oral History Project

The Southern Utah Oral History Project was started in July of 1998. It began with an interest in preserving the cultural history of small towns in southern Utah that border the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. The project was managed by Kent Powell, from the Utah Division of State History, who oversaw the collection of oral histories conducted in Boulder, Escalante, Bryce Valley, Long Valley, Kanab, the Kaibab Paiute Reservation, and Big Water, by Jay Haymond and Suzi Montgomery. Also in cooperation with the state was the Bureau of Land Management and the people of Garfield and Kane counties, with support from the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. The goals of the project were first to interview long-time local residents and collect information about the people and the land during the first half of the twentieth century. In addition, the interviews were to be transcribed and copies of the transcripts were to be made available to the public at the Utah State Historical Society and at local repositories. Lastly, to build a relationship with state agencies and the local communities and provide a medium for the local communities to express their interest in preserving their own history and culture in the areas that are now included in the GSENM. Thank you to everyone who took the time to care and share their memories and stories.

Interview with (Burns O. Ormond)

Interview with: Burns O. Ormund
Interviewer: Jay Haymond, Grant Johnson, Anne Stanworth
Interview number: 1 of 2
Date of interview: 09 July 1997
Place of interview: Home in Boulder, Utah
Subject of interview: Livestock Industry
Transcriber: Lisa Beck
Date: August 10, 1998
Tape No.: 0002
Side No.: A

Burns: This lady came up here from Page, AZ last winter.

Jay: She was with the Parks Service ya say?

Burns: Yes, she was from the Parks Service and she was here and asked me questions, and was here for an hour or so. So then she sent me a copy of all she had wrote down when she got it together.

Jay: That will be good.

Burns: When my leg was bad, and she offered to let me know when she was coming and she offered to take me down in an airplane. I didn't want to go, when you get old you got everything wrong. I didn't want to get up in an airplane. Well I've been over this country in an airplane. There's this guy who come over here a few years ago, and he was talking about buying my place, and this and that. He come and took me all over from Escalante and back and over to Duck Creek and back. And I've been in an airplane a few times.

Jay: Do you recognize things up there?

Burns: Well yes, you just come so fast, you just know where Boulder is. All them rugged canyons. Just hoped it didn't stall.

Jay: Let me introduce my tape.

Jay: OK, you have lived in this country most of your life I presume?

Burns: Yea, I was born here. We used to live up here about where Truman Lyman lives, right over in there. They had an old house in there. I don't know how come my dad didn't buy the land. It was a city lot you know. They sold them to you for a couple of dollars. He didn't buy it. There were a couple of lots in there he bought that went to my brother, and a few things like that.

Jay: What do you remember about your family life? You were born into that family right there in that property. What did you do, what were your first memories?

Burns: Well, herding sheep and herding cows. That was about all. When I was about twelve years old we was starting to build our fence up in Boulder there. We was holding the wire up and the wire broke and went through my hands.

Jay: Ouch!

Burns: Tore the hide out of them. I was kinda glad cause I didn't have to milk cows. [*he laughs*]. I got out of milking cows for a few days.

Jay: The idea of chores around the house in an agricultural operation sorta turns into a full time job.

Burns: Oh yea.

Jay: What else were you doing beside helping stretch wire.

Burns: Well, if you have ever had to herd cows. We had about six or eight cows kept around the ranch. I'd take them down by the ditches on the horse and let them feed all day long. Out there and that, that got tiresome.

Jay: I bet.

Burns: Yep.

Jay: Did you have friends that you visited with to kinda break it up?

Burns: No, everybody was busy. Very seldom you would ever see anybody.

Jay: Interesting. What do you remember about your, well I don't want to call it a serious job, because most jobs are serious, but when you felt like you were part of the operation, what were you doing?

Burns: Well, I got a job over at the Salt Gulch. Over at Marias Hall, and I worked over there for forty five dollars a month. So I felt like I was rich then.

Jay: So that was probably eight hours a day?

Burns: It was twenty four hours a day. You just take care of their stuff for them. I plowed their fields, planted grain. Finally the old team, you know, there was a wild one and you'd pull back on the neck yoke and this was a new plow. I thought nothing can go wrong. Well they finally pulled on it until the neck yoke came loose from the tongue. And away they went. Running down through the field. I tried to hold them but there was no way to hold them. Finally I fell off and the plow run over me and they run down through the field. Fell into the big wash and the plow right on top of them. I finally got them out of there.

Decided by then it was about noon, I went up to the house to have some dinner. I opened the gate and ran them there into the yard. And I dropped the lines to shut the gate, and away they went again. They wasn't hooked to no plows or nothing but they got hooked to a old tree that was there, broke them all apart. It had the lines that was hooked and holding them together. It drove them apart and one of them was stopped there, one of them went right on down the country so I got on one of the horses went down behind him, finally about after two hours this old horse was standing way over there and I just happened to see him and I went up and got him. And that about ended the day for that days work. I never got them untangled [*he laughs*].

Jay: Sounds like a full day.

Burns: Well they was always running away or tearing stuff up for me. So when my boss came home he went down the Circle Cliffs to tend his sheep for a few days. When he came home he said a hell of a way to see a new plow all bent up, and I said, your god damned lucky to even have a plow.

Jay: Well how was that for a separation of labor? A cowboy ought to be out herding cows.

Burns: I'd herd the cows a lot of the time.

Jay: I wonder if that hurts your pride to be plowing?

Burns: No, cause that's all in a days work. We had to do all kinds of work. When they first started putting the cattle up here, I can remember they used to just run them into the corral and count them, and bush their tails. Just cut the end of their tail off so that they could tell it was supposed to go on the mountain. No, hell we had everything to do, we wasn't just cowboys.

Jay: Well that sounds right, that's the movie version where you just trail.

Burns: Where you just ride horses, and shoot. Well it wasn't that way, it wasn't hardly that way.

Jay: You mentioned you were involved in herding sheep, tell us a little about that sheep operation.

Burns: Well then, when my dad or when my mother died, when her mother died, my grandmother. She had a big herd of sheep, and we inherited about two hundred head and the rights to Bowman Mountain, and we found this little creek down there, this Deer Creek. And if we still had the right to the mountain to feed about a hundred of them then we would put the rest down in there and herded them in the summer.

Lyman's put sheep was down in there with us. Maybe they mentioned something about that.

Jay: Yea, they mentioned something about Deer Creek.

Burns: Well they used to put a few sheep down there with us and we camped down there in the little fork where the creek comes together. And we were down in there two or three summers, yep.

Jay: Would you prefer cows over sheep?

Burns: Well yes. Cows you could turn them loose at night. Sheep you had to be there twenty four hours a day to watch them.

Jay: Seems like the stories conflict between the cowmen and sheep men.

Burns: They didn't do that much here. There were always sheep and cattle, everyone had to have some sort of livestock to live. We didn't have much of that around here. But sheep was quite a job, we figured cows you could always turn them loose at night. But we was bringing a bunch of cattle up the Escalante River and we had one or two wild ones. So we didn't want them to get away at night and go back. So my brother sat up the first part of the night to watch them. And I had the second part of the night. I think he woke me up a little early [*he laughs*]. And I sat up there and watched those cows til' morning. And ol' Robert Owens up here says "I betcha slept all day the next day". And I said yea, we built a corral to put them in, and we slept the next day. So we had to go right on. We had to drive em on home, we weren't about to turn em loose again.

Jay: Usually when your talking about herding cows, there's an area that's designated for you to put the cows in. Do you remember any allotment or anything?

Burns: Well this was before the BLM.

Jay: I see.

Burns: And all this country before BLM was all free. So you just went where ever there was any feed. But we had allotment down there, we kept everybody away as much as we could. Along there by the Escalante River, so we had that pretty much by ourselves for years and years. But every fall the sheep would come across from Escalante desert and feed it all off for us. So we didn't have no private land.

Jay: So there wasn't any regulating agency, but did you move your livestock from the winter to the summer range?

Burns: No, we summered them year around down there on the Escalante River and that, cause we didn't have a lot right up here on the mountain. So my dad was poor.

He didn't take out a permit here. We just stayed down there in what we call the winter range now. We was down there the year round. Yep.

Jay: Was there any conflict with any other livestock people, or did you just do as neighbors do?

Burns: Well they came in there, but we stayed there most of the time. And we kept ours in a certain area.

Jay: Did they leave other herders with their livestock too?

Burns: Well there was a guy down there part of the time yes. But not quite as much as we was.

Jay: Do you remember a name of a herder down there?

Burns: Ralph Thatcher. There was a guy by the name of Dick Thompson. They was kinda working for the guy who had cattle down in there yep.

Jay: What was the big outfit that owned the property for the livestock?

Burns: Kings.

Jay: Oh sure.

Burns: John King's outfit, they had a lot of the stuff, they didn't care. You could turn a bunch of the cattle there. Whether they died, or what happened they didn't care.

Jay: They must have a lot of land too.

Burns: This big ranch right across the creek over here there's about six hundred acres, well they have that. This guy sold it to him for twenty thousand dollars, give him twenty years to pay for it no interest.

Jay: Oh boy!

Burns: So they couldn't go wrong there.

Jay: Those days are gone forever.

Burns: I guess, so.

Jay: Huh, well the idea of regulating came in some place in your experience, that is managing the land so there would be...

Burns: Well that was back in '33 or '34 when the BLM started taken over. And I wasn't around too much longer after that. I had to go in the army, World War II, so when I came back why they had cut everything up.

Jay: It was way different.

Burns: It was different ya.

Jay: The Forest Service regulated grazing in the high country, did you get involved in those grazing operations up there.

Burns: They used to make us run our cows in and put a tag in their ear every summer. And you just had so many to go on the mountain, and they give you that many tags. They didn't have any cattle shutes much or anything like that. We had to build the cattle shute to put the cows in, and tag them when they went in. In fact I have some old tags, see them in that saucer up there, up on that mantle [*he motions in a direction*] Grant, there are some old cow tags there. Isn't there an old cow tag or two?

Grant: It says National Forest 1952.

Burns: Yea, that was a long time ago.

Grant: I found one down on Spencer Flat down there by the river, near Horse Canyon and it was diamond shaped and said Powell 1928, I believe.

Burns: Well that's about when they started to tag them. It was diamond shaped, I had some of them. And '28 that's about when it started.

Grant: I'm gonna have to go look for that.

Burns: See they made em out of aluminum and had the pain of taggers and they clapped them in their ear. And then next year they cut it out and put another one in.

Jay: Tell us about some of your experiences you had with riding cows and having them either get away from you or being spooked from you. What are the possibilities from other critters?

Burns: There was never any herd that big that could spook them or stampede them or anything like that. There was no herd that big around here. That was back when they used to drive a herd up from Mexico up through and up, but we had a lot of cattle to handle and that. We was handling them all the time. But when we had to brand the calves. We had no corrals or anything, we just see one that wasn't branded and build a fire and rope it, and brand it right there. One guy kinda watched the cow, she would stay around there, the other guy would brand the calf.

Jay: You mentioned wild cows. What experience have you had with wild cows?

Burns: There used to be a lot of wild cattle around here. They would run out the year around and when they would come up here in the fall up on the mountain a wild cat used to come up around the Dry Bench they called it around the east end of the Boulder there. And they would go around there in the fall with their dogs and their rifles and go and kill a few beasts and carry them out yep. When I was just a kid going to school about seven or eight, I remember those guys would be going up the road with their packs and their dogs. And it was quite

different than now.

Jay: Remember any names of the guys now?

Burns: Piurce Leavitt was one guy I could remember real well. He lives down where Ivan Lyman lives now. He was quite a guy, he was talking all the time.

Jay: What kind of horse would they ride, they would have to be a tough horse to go wild cow hunting?

Burns: They had a couple a three horses a piece when they would go down there. They would run one out one day and they ride the other one the next day. They would have them all wore out when they'd come back. I remember they told a story about this old steer, they shot him eleven times before they finally got him. So there probably wasn't much meat left.

Jay: Kinda drafty with all the holes [*they laugh*].

Burns: And all that bloodshot meat. There wouldn't be much left.

Grant: Was it 30 30 they would use?

Burns: Uh huh, the 30 30 and the 25 25 and that was the main gun them days yea.

Jay: Where there ever coyote, bear, or cougar? Ever hear any stories about that?

Burns: We used to trap coyote in the winter to make us a little money in the winter. We used to make seven or eight dollars a hide out of the coyote hides. There wasn't a lot of bear those days. There was a few not a whole lot. The cougars, why, there was a lot of cougars. People hunted them a lot but they didn't get very many of them. They had a few hound dogs they would chase them once in awhile. The cougars kept the deer just regulated. There wasn't anybody here to regulate that. They wasn't much thicker than now, no.

Jay: You mean the people in Boulder didn't hunt deer very often?

Burns: Well yea we lived on deer, we had to live on deer. We had to keep the cow to sell to get a little money. But there was no law to amount to anything so everybody was doing the same thing eating deer.

Grant: Any wolf?

Burns: Any wolves, well no. Oh one time my dad and I was taking a sheep up on top of a mountain. He says there was a big coyote, was all I remember, he says that's a timber wolf. That's about all I remember. No I don't think they was ever bothered here by wolves.

Jay: When you were moving livestock, there were ways or paths or trails. What in your experience were the trails that were preferred by the people you worked for?

Burns: Well we had to come along the river to Horse Canyon, around Kings Bend, to The Gulch, what they called The Gulch a ways up over to what they called Sand Holler. And then up through the Deer Creek up where Grant lives. And then sometimes they would come right up along the creek and let the cattle browse right up along the creek. Other times we would just drive them along right up through the Boulder.

Grant: One time you said there was less water in Deer Creek.

Burns: Yea, when I was a kid it seems like that stream was only about that wide, [*he motions with his hands*]. It was a grassy little place but not much water. So they are getting more water down that way.

Jay: That sounds like an unusual statement, where is it coming from?

Burns: Well up in the mountains a lot of those springs are dry and they are coming way down the country here. There is one place at the end of Deer Creek Lake up there that they call Blind Springs a big ol' stream of water runs about three or four hundred yards and runs right back down in the ground again. Did you ever see that Grant?

Grant: No.

Burns: It's right down at the east end of Deer Creek Lake.

Grant: By Frisky?

Burns: Yea, by Frisky, there used to be a lot of water there, but not any more either. But we went up there and ditched that out Blind Springs, we got a project and dug that all out and it came down the water and ran out about a mile and then sunk down to the lava's again. So it come out farther down, it's coming out down the creek all the time.

Jay: That lava stuff is pretty porous?

Burns: Golly yea. There's a lake up there they call Green Lake and it's right in the lava's. And you can't see any water running in it or out. But they have fish in it. They have planted fish in it. So it has live water in it. It's right above Deer Creek Lake. Have you seen that? I went up there a couple of years ago. I had forgot where it was. I thought it was down the lake and up over the hill, and so I never ever found it. I asked somebody where it was and they told us. It's up over the hill and in the main draw there, yep.

We used to go up there in the summer we had to swim there. It's so damn cold! All you could do was jump in and grab a rock on the other side and jump out, you was froze. Funny someone didn't drown in there it was so damn cold.

Jay: You are fighting too hard to keep warm.

Burns: I guess.

Jay: When you talk about getting attached to animals even cows, certainly horses. Do you ever remember getting those feelings about a horse or a cow?

Burns: Yea, in my later years I had about two hundred head of cattle and I knowed every one of em. And I would bring them in here in the spring and bring em where they're out in March. And every two hours I would get up to see if one of em was going to have a calf or not. During that time they was calving. So I used to work with them a lot. And my horses, I used to have certain ones that were favorites, some better than the others some they learnt faster.

Jay: I remember reading some old stories down in Texas, and he used to have a horse he called Beauty, that was a helper.

End side 1, begin side 2

Burns: --well they just naturally know it. We are just bread to know it. Some of them have hardly even looked at a cow. I used to have a horse that when he looked at a cow he would whirl and go the other way. He didn't like cows. See there is my old chaps hanging up there [*he motions in a direction*], my old spurs, my old branding iron. That old vaccine needle that was made before they had vaccine. They would put pills in the cows.

Jay: So they would put it under their hide?

Burns: Yes, you know Black Leg disease? When a calf or a big fat cow would get that we would have to vaccinate them.

Jay: Describe some of those other implements up on that wall there. Is that a trap I'm seeing there?

Burns: That is a spur.

Jay:: Oh yea.

Burns: And them others are can openers, beer openers.

Jay: I've heard them referred to as church keys.

Burns: Yea I guess so. I figured some day we wouldn't have those any more. See those spur rowls up there. After about two years those pins would work its way out

of them and fall out. See those spurs there [*he motions in a direction*] those are Mexican spurs. And see those up there, those are the ones that I wore for years and years. I ordered a stamp brand but never used them much. That was the stamp brand that I used over there [*he motions in a direction*].

Grant: What was your brand?

Burns: 7HD.

Grant: What does it stand for?

Burns: Seven hundred devils.

Grant: Did you ever have to straight iron that brand.

Burns: Well yea, I used to have this electric one that we would use when we would have to build a fire and put it on the old running iron. We spent more time running back to the fire than branding.

Jay: My mother-in-law would get those electrical implements working by plugging them into a current bush. Is that what you did with your irons?

Burns: Well no we didn't have any electricity here in Boulder until the 50's. Well when we got electricity up here I built me a milk house away from the house and I wired it up there so that I could have a brand iron.

Jay: Those are some wonderful artifacts from your cowboy days.

Burns: Them up there are some grindstones. My uncle chopped a hole through so he could put some wood through. And turn it to sharpen his knives and stuff. That knife that is sticking out there is a elk jaw. A guy made me that knife.

Jay: That is a handy knife.

Burns: Yea, it's made out of a jawbone of an elk for a letter opener or whatever.

Jay: That's a beauty!

Burns: Yep, it took a lot of skill to make that there knife. And then there's another knife there. Right down there that is hand made. Can you see it? [*motions*]

Jay: That looks like a skinning knife.

Burns: Well this guy made it, he cut it out of a saw blade. I never used it, it's just something to keep to show someone. And he made it he glued that wood in that handle.

Jay: You talked about that grinding stone.

Burns: Yea that wasn't even chipped. When I went to Wyoming I come back and somebody chipped it all up. Didn't want me to have it I guess. Some kid broke that all up chipped it all around. But it had a handle on there so that you could turn it. My uncle's name was Joe Grimes, he had a ranch up there around the

river gulch up there in them hills. He fenced it up but never did get the water up there. He was the guy that came up here to see Amaca Lyman's place. They were kinda friends I guess. Finally Amicee thought he was chasing after his wife, and he shot him.

Jay: Oh dear!

Burns: Shot him right on top of the head, didn't kill him or nothing, but he wasn't ever quite right since that.

Jay: Let me change the subject a little bit, and return to the construction of the grinding stone. How was that hole put in that stone.

Burns: Well he must of had a chisel, but I don't know how he got that rock round like that. But they spent days doing stuff like that. Longer than that probably. Just to think what I used to work for in a month, you can make twice that in a day.

Jay: Yea, those are wonderful artifacts.

Grant: I wanted to ask you about the trails. So I thought I would just start at the top by Deer Creek as far as the desert goes. Did you ever go down to the gorge down by the Deer Creek where the trail takes off to Fend Hollow?

Burns: Yea I was down there one day looking for a place to put a few cattle, and it was the spring of the year. Some deer ran out and came right up the side canyon and by the time I got up there they came right out. So I was always trying to see if I could rope a deer. So I roped on of em. She was running right out of the wind, I throwed the rope and it went right over her head, right in her mouth. I didn't go over her head. As soon as I pulled it tight she laid right down there. I had her.

Well I got down and I had heard all these stories about deer wanting to stomp ya and this and that, so I picked up a rock and hit her over the head [*he laughs*]. Killed her, I probably shouldn't of done that, shouldn't even of thought it. But I thought she was going come out there charging and tromp me, but she never even moved.

Jay: I've heard those same stories, especially if the are jumping over a fence and get caught, and the claim is that you can't even help them because they thrash around so much.

Burns: There were some kids that were taken one out of a fence once. And the deer pawed him and killed him, heard that story once.

Grant: You know where the creek cuts under Durfy Bench there you know. I noticed at the bottom of the draw, right where Deer Creek cuts into Durfy Creek there is a trail there on the right side the drops around and drops in. Remember that

one? It went right into a gorge.

Burns: Well that was called the Liston Holes. You come around and hit some shelves there. We used to hold our cattle there and you could just put up a stick or two and that would hold them. And there is plenty of feed there.

Grant: Do you ever follow Deer Creek right in the gorge to where it meets Boulder Creek?

Burns: Uh huh, that's where I was when I roped that deer was way down in there.

Grant: I found another trail that goes off to the left there, up over to Liston Hole.

Burns: I don't think I ever saw that. I was just down in there that one time.

Grant: I saw where Boulder Creek hits Escalante River. I saw your name, Carter, and Glenn, I believe.

Burns: Name down in there?

Grant: Signed on a rock right below Bolder Creek right by the Escalante River. Do you remember what that was?

Burns: No I don't remember much about that down in there. On a rock you say by Escalante? But I never went down there much with Glenn, my older brother. I went down there two or three times and that was about all. He usually went to herd sheep and this and that. He wasn't around home much.

Grant: Do you remember any trails around Haymaker that went into Boulder Creek?

Burns: Well, no no. But I did find right across on the Spencer Flat, we came right into the creek. My dad and I. It's kinda there by the Brigham Tea trails.

Grant: That's right exactly where those names are. Your name and I can't remember if it's George or Glenn.

Burns: It's probably George. But my dad never ever was a hand to cut his name.

Grant: I think there was a Carter in there too. I think it was in the 30's or '28 or '30. I'm going to go write them down.

Burns: Well that's about when I started going down in there in the 28's, 1928. See I was only about twelve or thirteen years then.

Grant: Well your the only one I ever heard of that knows about that trail. Even Della Fever who runs his cow there didn't even know about it until I told him.

Burns: Uh huh. Well my dad and I went way down on the Escalante desert to herd sheep and we went way down on the Phipps Way and then when we came out we came out by the Brigham Tea.

Grant: Did you know about it or did you just find it.

Burns: Well he knowed about the one.

Grant: A little further down stream on the Spencer Flats side of the King mesa?

Burns: King mesa?

Grant: King mesa, yea that is what Dell calls it.

Burns: Well I've never ever heard it called King mesa down in there it could be that they have it on the map.

Grant: And there is a trail that I found off from that down to the river. Did you ever hear of that one?

Burns: Well no. The only one I ever heard of was the one my dad come off of by Brigham Tea there.

Grant: Did you go the other side on Brigham Tea?

Burns: No, we come up the river and came home. We was on the way home from herding sheep. We was down on the twenty mile the Cat Well, we had been out long enough. Get home and get something good to eat.

Grant: Did you ever go up that trail by Omar's cabin?

Burns: No I never ever seen that one. We never had no reason to go up there.

Grant: Did you ever go off the Brigham Tea like into The Gulch into the river?

Burns: No, but I have been off the Brigham Tea down into the river off of one of them trails and back. The one cattle used to go in and out of.

Grant: How about further down the trail on the flat side of The Gulch? Doyle Mosley told me about it. A trail where they used to put calves up there. Since it was flat they wouldn't get stuck up in there.

Burns: Farrell Mosley? No Doyle. Well no I don't know much about that.

Grant: Well what about King Bench you know as you move off of King Bench into the river?

Burns: I heard there was a trail down there, but I never did go down there.

Grant: What about the Sheffield's road?

Burns: Well, there was that old Sheffield's road; there was a trail cut around by the rock back in there. But it's been so long that I've been there, I forgot all about it.

Grant: Kinda blasted in the rock?

Burns: Cut into the rocks yea. That's the way I remember it.

Grant: I have to go document those inscriptions too so I can remember, but I think they say Carter's name on that, Georgie Davies.

Burns: Georgie Davis? Yea, old Georgie down in there a lot. And he worked for King.

Grant: What do you remember about him?

Burns: Well, all I remember is that he worked around these guys for nothing. All they give him was a few clothes, and a little to eat, and some tobacco. That's about all he ever made. He had about forty head of cattle at one time. He got his leg broke. He was working for King's at the time and they took his cattle to pay for the doctor bill. So he never ever had anything. There used to be an old guy around here name Harry Ogden, he was an old BS'er. I can remember he came by the ranch one time down from herding sheep in the mountain. And he yelled Hey, George, at my dad. "Come and set the dog on this mule, he won't lead." He was having a hard time lending the mule to lead. The mule didn't want to go on by there. He must of wanted to get something to eat.

Grant: Across the way there is a Bowns Canyon, and that's where you were grazing right?

Burns: We used to up and down that big sand slide there by the middle trail and one winter Carter and I went to up there and it was froze. And so he took his lariat and threw up there, there was some brush up there. And then we would climb up the lariat. If we ever fell we would go to the bottom.

Grant: What did the horses do?

Burns: They could break into the sand to get up there, but we didn't dare to come down that way. We went clear around by the Harris and back around.

Grant: Which way did you drop into the Harris?

Burns: Well up to the head of the Harris there you can go right up to the V and back around.

Grant: When you say the V is that why The Bench is named the V?

Burns: I guess that's what we always called it. Out in the V.

Grant: So on Bowns Bench there did you use the trail that goes up onto Horse Canyon?

Burns: Uh huh. Carter and I was going up there it was in the winter cold there used to be two big rocks there just wide enough for a horse to walk in between. This old horse we had the packs on, we had some home made pack bags on him. He jumped in there and he hung himself. The pack bags held him up and he couldn't get his feet on the ground. So it was cold and we had to unpack him and get him loose and carry the pack bags up the trail. Get them back on him. I'll never forget that he couldn't get his feet on the ground. It was quite the thing.

Grant: Do you know who built that trail?

Burns: No, that was there when I went down there. There used to be some people in

here the name was Meeks. I could hardly remember, but they lived down in there. Then there was ol' man Bown, a guy that built the reservoir around the mountain. They named a lot of stuff after him so he must of been quite a guy.

Grant: The middle trail that was already built, right?

Burns: Yea, and then there was another trail, the lower trail. Whenever we wanted to go to the river in the winter, we would go up over Bowns Bench and down that trail and camp out over Silver Falls or something like that.

Grant: What shape was that spring in? Was there troughs there?

Burns: We just had some little ponds down the canyon there for the cattle to drink in. We just made some little ponds here and a little pond there. There were no troughs or nothing.

Grant: On that trail you mean?

Burns: Uh huh. We took our ax one time. We was going to chop a trough in the rock, down there in the rock. We chopped a little part on that long and about that wide [*show's measurement with his hands*]. Maybe you can still see the marks of it.

Grant: I'll look.

Burns: Well if you go in there you look. Where they have piped that water in the troughs since then so maybe they have changed it a little or something.

Grant: There are some old metal and wood troughs at the bottom there in that narrow gorge at the base of the seep. Those are filled with sand, and now there's a tank out further with a hose going through it.

Burns: Richard Griffin put them in there I guess. Well I soon have to go to the bathroom again.

Jay: OK , we'll let you go.

Burns: About that trail we had there by Baker's Bench that goes under the rock where you have to take your saddle off. Lead your horse through it and then put your saddle back on [*he laughs*].

Grant: I saw your name there too.

Burns: Well, we didn't use that a whole lot. It was a quick way from the camp there to get back on Baker Bench.

Grant: I saw that trail on Baker Bench and its right across from the very end of, what do you call that Egypt?

Burns: It's kinda by the big point there.

Grant: Last time I was there I noticed there were two big cedar posts and a bunch of tin cans by a little fence right by the river.

Burns: That's where Reed and I camped. One winter we went down there and didn't have any hay up here for our saddle horses. We went down and stayed a month so we didn't have to be without hay for our horses. We went down the last day of January and come back the last day of March. So we stayed the whole month of February down in there. We planned on this, so we had a lot of stuff to carry down there to use. But some of them old places, it's hard to level a place to camp, to put your bed.

Grant: I was wondering if you could tell us about your cabin at the mouth of Silver Falls?

Burns: In the fifties they built a road through there when the uranium boom was on. And so they had this little camp there at the head of Silver Falls. They called it Heinzville. They built several little buildings there and had quite a camp. And so when they left, I went down in there and Reed Jepson was down in there, his brother Neil. So I had them help me load that cabin on the back of my truck. And I took it to the mouth of Silver Falls down there, and back up against a big rock and tied a big chain around it drove out from under it and let it slide. Where it lit there, I just jacked it up and leveled it up a little. I used it there; it was nice to camp in. I had a cover I took down there and nailed it on the wall. It was mouse proof, so mice couldn't get in there. And I had them tin barrels there to keep my grain and bedding in.

Grant: They still use that corral there, that wire corral there.

Burns: Well, we built that corral there. When we'd find a cow or two we wanted to bring home we had a back up there at the wash there and run them down a little gully there and into the truck [*he laughs*]. And yea, things have changed since then. Nobody hardly camps there anymore or anything.

Grant: You told about some old inscriptions there from the pioneers.

Burns: Some old what?

Grant: Some old inscriptions, they wrote their names down there. Do you know where that is?

Burns: Well, it was right below where I had that cabin. Right under the rock there. Oh there is some Carlisle, Baker and some of those guys that used go through there from Escalante, and the Circle Cliffs and out in to the old ranch they have there by Bullfrog.

Interview with (Burns O. Ormond)

Grant: The old Baker ranch?

Burns: You have heard of it haven't ya?

Grant: I used to go there before Lake Powell.

Burns: So they used to take their cattle through there and up and then they'd drive on the Green River, and sell them out to Green River. So they spent a lot of time taking the cows through there.

Grant: Do you remember any old pieces of wagon road between Silver Falls and Sheffield Bend at all?

Burns: Well right there the Middle Bowns Bench trail there is a piece of road that goes right around south of the trail there. Did you ever see that?

Grant: I've seen some pieces, I saw one a short ways below the downstream for the Sand Slide. I saw an old wall for a fill built.

Burns: Well right where you come out of the Harris, they build a place to go up around there. Instead of across the river, they built it right up around the point there.

Grant: On the Harris side?

Burns: On the Harris side. Did you ever see that?

Grant: No.

Burns: Well right where you come into the creek there is an old road where you get off on foot, and walk up there, you would find it.

Grant: I think I know what you mean. It is on a ledge, about ten feet above the wash.

[tape speed is too fast to understand the speaking]

End Tape 1

Begin Tape 2, Side A

Grant: Below Harris Wash aways in the Hole-in-the-Rock side, I found a Charles Hall 1881 inscription.

Burns: Well I never ever seen anything like that. I never looked for a lot of stuff like that. I was just there for taking care of my stuff and that was about it. I do remember that Fence Canyon that Billy Doiel name but we used to camp there, and put our horses up on the bench. Do remember seeing his name there but, that was-- and then Merlin Hall and that was the old place that Neil Jepson had. He was down in there and a guy by the name of OsBurns I guess. They went to go down that Sand Slide in winter and they was froze. And their mules rolled

clear to the bottom and killed them. So they just had to go get their supplies I guess and use them [*he laughs*] and they had to come back with no mules. That was just like rock, when you'd hit that and they went to come from Escalante and come over there and I didn't see it, but my dad was telling about it and they decided to come off there.

Grant: The Sand Slide is so steep, I rode up there this spring. I jumped and got bucked and fell off there five times on the way up it. It's so steep the horse would fall down if you try to switch back. I barreled off five times. And then you couldn't walk because it was too deep, couldn't leave because they would run ya over. You get back on-- and that's a rough spot.

Burns: But when we used to go out in the winter, we used to go right around the Harris, and then back down the Harris.

Grant: So it was easier.

Burns: Well it's about the only to get back down it when it is froze.

Grant: Just below Harris Wash, up towards Egypt there is a trail? Have you ever used that one?

Burns: Yea, that's the one that goes into what we call North Egypt. Them guys that run cattle, they had them fenced the cattle would come down a little ways, and there was a spring back in there. They would water and then go back up there.

Grant: The Silver Falls Bench, you ran up there too didn't ya?

Burns: Uh huh.

Grant: Did you use both trails? The one out of Silver Falls canyon?

Burns: That lower one was the one we would take our pack mules up and down there all the time. We used to camp there in the winter a lot.

Grant: Was that spring developed at all at the top of that?

Burns: We had a big hole dug out there, and the cows would walk in there and drink and dirty the water up, and we had to camp out there and drink that water. It didn't taste very good I'll tell ya. And about the only thing we would use it for was to boil it and make a little coffee once in awhile, and a little to wash in that was about it.

Grant: I saw your name at the top of that trail too.

Burns: We used to be down in there a lot.

Grant: Where that trail hits the river, just before it hits the river. Was there a way to cut around Horse Bench above Wide Mouth?

Burns: We used to go around across on that upper trail and down the lower trail and

just before you get to the river there's a shelf up around there. We would go around on the Horse Bench and there's a trail right off into the river right there.

Grant: I saw where you had chalked that out or someone did, Carter's name is there. There is a cave there.

Burns: One time ol' Cecil Alvey and I was down there and I went up to get the horses and I didn't have any bridle. I got on this one old gentle horse let him follow the rest of them down there. When he hit the creek why he decided to run down the creek [*he laughs*]. There I was riding him down the creek with no bridle or nothing. I was kinda scared I fall off and get hurt.

Grant: Can you describe that cave that's there. And all those names there has to be thirty or forty names.

Burns: That's where we used to camp where it spreads out like this [*uses hand motions*] but there used to be more, more sand blows up there now. But we used to make our beds back under there to make it so we could get out of the rain. We used to never have enough money to even have a tent. We camped down there without a tent or anything.

Jay: We got you tangled up a little bit.

Burns: Well I'm about to give out anyway.

Jay: Are ya? Lift this other foot, we'll see if we can get this straightened out for ya.

Grant: OK, we don't want to tire you out.

Burns: Well...I've told you about everything I know.

Grant: I'd like to hear about, if there is any chance we can come back and talk to ya again. I'd like to ask you about--I've seen your name on the river all the way down.

Burns; Well yea, I used to go down there alone all the time and I got in the habit to where I wouldn't even cut my last name, I'd only cut "Burns" all the time.

Grant: I've seen Boo [*he spells B...O...O...*] all the time.

Burns: Yea, my middle name is Owen, so BOO!

Jay: It's a good joke.

Burns: The first saddle my dad ever bought me why, you could have something put on it. So I had them put my initials on the back of the saddle, you know cantled in on the back of it so BOO.

Jay: I have some questions too, but we don't want to make ya weary.

Grant: Maybe we could speak with ya again?

Burns: Well, maybe if you're going be around for a couple of days. I have to go to

Interview with (Burns O. Ormond)

Escalante tomorrow. My boy, on his day off tomorrow, and I'm going to get some tires on my truck tomorrow. We've already bargained for them, so.

Jay: Good, let me unhook you.

Burns: Don't let me get to running with that hanging on me. Well it was nice talking to you guys.

End of interview

Utah State Historical Society
Oral History Program

Interview Agreement and Deed of Gift

In view of the historical value of this oral history interview and my interest in

Utah history, I, Burns O. Ormond
please print or type name

knowingly and voluntarily permit the Utah State Historical Society full use of
this information for whatever purposes they may have, in return for which I
will receive a typed copy of the interview.

Interview Description

Date of interview July 9, 1997

Primary Subject Livestock Industry

Other topics _____

Number of tapes 2

signature Burns O. Ormond
narrators' name

date 1-16-99