

FAMOUS LEES FERRY SOON TO PASS INTO HISTORY

Work has started on spanning the Colorado river by a steel structure, 800 feet in length and 18 feet wide to replace the old Lee ferry which has operated since 1872. The passing of this old ferry recalls some interesting history of the early settlers of Southern Utah and the Mormon church which has had a certain claim upon the ferry all these years.

It was in 1872 that John Doyle Lee arrived at the point where the ferry has since been operated built a cabin and acquired some ferry rights that had been possessed by the Mormon church. Lee built the first ferry and operated it until 1873.

The first real ferry boat was that built by John L. Blythe, on October 15, 1873, a barge 20x40 feet, one that would hold two wagons, loads and teams. It was in this boat that the Jas S Brown party crossed in 1875 and a much larger migration to the Little Colorado in the spring of 1876.

The river at Lees Ferry in January, 1878, was frozen over and many heavily loaded wagons, some weighing upwards of 2500 pounds, crossed on the ice. The river was frozen from shore to shore but above and below a short distance the river was open.

In the summer of 1877, Ephraim K Hanks was advised by President Brigham Young to buy the ferry, but this plan fell through on the death of the president. The ferry later was bought from Emma Lee by Warren M Johnson, as church agent, he paying 100 cows which were contributed by the people of southern Utah and northern Arizona settlements they receiving tithing credits therefor.

In May, 1879, Emma Batchler Lee widow of John D Lee deceased conveyed by warranty deed as follows:

"Know All Men By These Presents

'That, I, Emma Batchler Lee owner of and residing at a place known as Lees Ferry on the Grand Colorado river, for and in consideration of the sum of \$3000 to me paid by John Taylor of Salt Lake City Utah territory certain real property herein described together with all ferry privileges, rights of landing on both sides of the river boats, chains, ropes, lumber, dugways on both sides of the river crossings, fences, houses, cellars, water rights and privileges"

Jeremiah Johnson, who now lives at Lees Ferry, states that the dugway was made in 1898, that an outfit from Utah contracted to build the dugway for \$3000 for the Mormon church.

Evidently there was a dugway commenced, and perhaps some of it constructed prior to 1879 because Mrs Lee in her deed to John Taylor particularly mentions dugways.

Nothing further is found of record until August, 1909, when Joseph F Smith, trustee in trust for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints by a quit claim deed conveyed to the Grand Canyon Cattle Co, a corporation doing business in Los Angeles all interests owned by the church in the property known as Lees Ferry, situated on the Colorado river.

During the intervening years the ferry was operated by the Grand Canyon Cattle Co and later by Coconino county Arizona.

During the year 1923 the board of supervisors employed Al Sims since deceased to build a ferry boat and Mr Sims constructed the ferry which is now used at the crossing.

In 1926 Jeremiah Johnson and Pearly Johnson, his wife, quit claimed to Heber J Grant, as trustee in trust for the church of Latter Day Saints, of the city of Salt Lake Salt Lake, Salt Lake County, Utah, all the land and appurtenances belonging thereto known as Lees Ferry.

The new bridge will not utilize the site of Lees Ferry, as the engineers have selected a more suitable site for the project some six miles below the old ferry crossing.