

SALT LAKE CITY PFA CHAPTER #90
Theodoros Kolokotronis

COMMUNITY EVENT

On Wednesday, February 19, 2020, the Salt Lake City PFA Chapter #90 hosted a community-wide event. The event was an educational tour of the famous Trolley Square History Museum. We learned a lot!

Utah played a key role in the history of electrical power. While Utah was still a federal territory, in 1880 the Salt Lake Power, Light, and Heating Company was formed. Following London, New York, San Francisco, and Cleveland, in 1881 Salt Lake City became the world's fifth city to electrify with a central station source of electricity.

One of the first main uses of electricity was to run streetcars. The Salt Lake City Street Railway Company in 1872 had started the city's first streetcars pulled by horses and mules. In 1889, Walter P. Read, general manager of the Salt Lake City Street Railway Co., had the idea to turn the street cars into electrified wonders for downtown transportation. Electricity replaced the mule-pulled trolleys, allowing some families to live further from downtown. Ogden, Provo, and Logan, Utah also had electric streetcars.

The first trial run was made on August 8, 1889 with luxurious new street cars to replace the often-unreliable mule-pulled street cars. On August 16, 1889 the electric street cars made their way onto the rail lines for public use in front of Old City Hall. The cars were such an instant success that on their first day launching, a crowd of 500 gathered. A large fist fight within the crowds began between would-be passengers to be the first to ride the trolley cars. Within just a few years the fleet of street cars would grow to 63 and more than 42 miles of rail track were laid throughout Salt Lake City.

By the 1930s, however, Utah Light & Traction Company had peaked and began replacing its trolley lines with bus routes. In 1946, buses had replaced the last trolleys and Utah Traction became Utah Power and Light.

The Trolley Square History Museum exhibits samples of a wooden floor used by the Southern Pacific Railroad construction project. A tragic accident occurred during this construction project that involved the death of 16 young Greek male workers.

Sixteen Utah Greek Workers Die at “Lucin Railroad Cutoff” Construction Project February 19, 1904

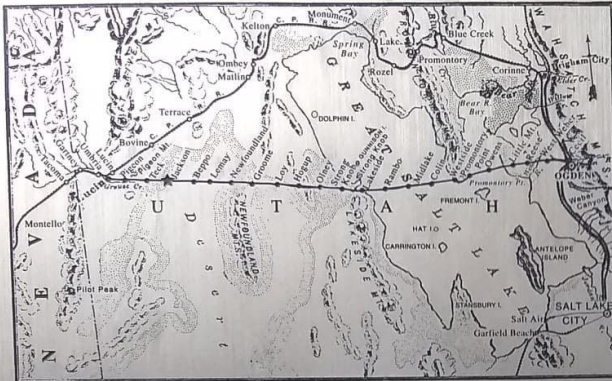


Photo courtesy of the Utah Historical Society

Twenty four construction workers - sixteen of whom were Greeks - were killed February 19, 1904 while working the Southern Pacific Railroad construction project across the Great Salt Lake, northwestern Utah. Two other individuals were killed in the accident.

Identified as the “Lucin Railroad Cutoff,” the project was proposed in 1901 by the Southern Pacific Railroad to reduce the time and distance involved in traveling from Ogden to Promontory, around the north shore of the Great Salt Lake and southwest to Lucin, Box Elder County, Utah and thence westward to Nevada. The proposed cutoff was adopted by the Southern Pacific Railroad and construction began in March 1902.

In the early summer, over three thousand men were working on the project. Considering the magnitude and complexity of the project, good luck attended their work. Other than the collision of trains which exploded a car of dynamite February 19, 1904, there were relatively few serious accidents.

Twelve miles of the cutoff were constructed on a permanent trestle and fill over the Great Salt Lake. When completed, the project was heralded as a “*Miracle Construction Achievement.*” Passenger traffic began on September 18, 1904.

The disaster occurred at Jackson Point, a station on the Ogden-Lucin cutoff, in northwestern Box Elder County, Utah, about 81 miles west of Ogden, when an eastbound train collided with a construction train, parked on a siding, and which contained two carloads of dynamite. The force of the explosion scattered victims hundreds of feet in all directions.

Most of the victims of the Lucin Railroad Crossing, were buried in the Mountain View Cemetery, Ogden. The cemetery is now known as *Leavitt’s Aulorest Memorial Park & Mausoleum.*

This section of the nation’s railroad had especially heavy use during World War I and World War II. It is now owned by the Union Pacific Railroad and is in considerable use.

Of the sixteen Greeks killed at the Lucin Railroad Cutoff tragedy, fifteen were identified. Another was unidentifiable and listed as “*Unknown.*” The names of the victims, as identified and their ages, were:

Apostolopoulos, Nick, age 19
Arsanes, James, age 25
Arsanes, Nicholas, age 20
Arsanes, Peter, Age 19
Fotis, Sam, age 30

George, Louis, age 28
Kochianis, George, age 23
Kergeakes, Kirgiakos, age 47
Kontrumbes, Louis, age 26
Maltezos, Leonidas, age 45
Identity Unknown

Psomas, George, age 19
Psomas, Gus, age 22
Zumbas, George, age 33
Zumbas, Evangelos, age 22
Zumbas, Anastasios, Age 27

Dedicated May 28, 2000

Thanks for letting the Salt Lake City Chapter #90 Theodoros Kolokotronis share this story with the West District membership.

Stay safe and healthy.

Christopher Katis, President

Irene Wallingford, Vice President

Karen Anastasopoulos, Secretary

Yvonne Pauls, Treasurer