



"... a view can be had of this canyon surpassed only by a similar view of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado In my opinion, this canyon should be set apart by the government as a national park."

Leo A. Snow
United States Surveyor
Summer 1909

By Julie Fiducia Hunter

Historical photos provided by the
Zion National Park Archives

On assignment in southern Utah for the United States Department of the Interior, Leo Snow wrote to his superiors in Washington of the startling grandeur that met him while in the northeastern section of Washington County, Utah. His report, along with the rest of the information from his survey, prompted the Interior Department to draft a proclamation under the Antiquities Act and present it to President Taft. On July 31, 1909, just one month after Snow's report, the Mukuntuweap National Monument was born.

Originally named Mukuntuweap from the Paiute Indian word for the canyon, the park later took the name that several of the Mormon settlers had bestowed upon their homesteads in the canyon—Zion. Renamed Zion National Monument in 1918 and then expanded and named Zion National Park the following year, the area now hosts approximately 2.5 million visitors per year.

Long before Leo Snow, the Antiquities Act, or National Park visitors, humans from all walks of life traversed the 146,000+ acres that comprise

Zion National Park—a fact now illustrated and celebrated by the Zion Human History Museum. Former park curator Mark Herberger came to Zion with other National Park Staff tasked with coordinating and creating the museum. "So many visitors were able to get the natural history of the canyon through the geology, tours, literature, and absorbing what's around," Herberger said. "They left without the background or an appreciation of the human stories of the canyon, yet, the human stories are just as impressive and interconnected to the canyon as its natural history."

Human Echoes

Over as much as one thousand years, the canyon has hosted societal groups ranging from indigenous tribes to Mormon pioneers. The attraction for these groups to the canyon, and their interactions with the natural elements within it, are the basis for the Zion Human History Museum.

Opened in June of 2002, the museum was nearly a decade in the making. Meticulous research and innovative planning have



Surveyor Leo Snow posed for this picture, along with an unidentified assistant, in front of his encampment in the future Zion National Park.



resulted in intriguing displays illustrating the tales of human life in this dramatic and even overpowering locale.

Rather than structure the Zion Human History Museum around the traditional timeline organization, researchers and planners crafted presentations around the canyon's four natural elements which drew the groups' interaction: canyon geology, its plants, the animals, and, of course, water. The exhibit features modules built around



From left: A Mormon pioneer family in front of their Zion homestead; many Puebloan artifacts were collected in the park; a Southern Paiute Indian circa 1920; CCC workers in Zion.



those four themes and illustrate the history of human interaction with them through artifacts, photos, drawings, and historical sketches. Visitors are able to learn how the groups lived and interpreted the elements of their lives, as well as their belief systems and how they interacted as a society.

Four primary societal groups of those that had existed in the canyon over the centuries were chosen to draw from for illustration in the human history exhibits. The first of these groups were the ancestral Puebloans. Commonly referred to in the southwest as the Anasazi, this group is more correctly termed the ancestral Puebloans and represents many generations or several centuries of Native American life in the area. Thirty-three contemporary Native American tribes in the four corners area declare ancestral ties to the original ancestral Puebloans. The National Park

Service worked with a core group of six tribes to speak on behalf of the group, and of those, the museum chose the remnants and life stories of the Hopi to demonstrate connections to the larger collection of ancestral cultures.

The remaining three groups consist of the Mormon pioneers who established homesteads in the canyon during the late 1800's, and the Southern Paiute Indians who were living in the canyon when the Mormons arrived, and lastly, the early days of the Park Service and the Civilian Conservation Corps or the C.C.C. workers who labored to

build roads into the park for park service and visitors alike as well as build trails for hiking and viewing the park's scenic wonders.

Humans in the Park Today

As you explore this museum, discover how humans have interacted with the water, animals, geology, and plants of the area and how Zion, in turn, has affected the people who have visited or settled here.

—Museum Mission Statement

Museum visitors are treated to innovative thematic displays that use the lat-

est in modern design, graphics, lighting, and element controls to illustrate the stories of the humans before us while also evoking the

senses the canyon itself can convey—drama and vitality as well as serenity and what many park visitors find to be a fulfilling solitude akin to something spiritual. A central water sculpture finds its way throughout the museum symbolizing the Virgin River's underlying presence in every story of Zion Canyon throughout the ages.

Fascinating remnants of earlier existences from the park's collection can be viewed as well as invaluable elements



Left: Water was one of the four primary draws for human interaction in Zion Canyon. Above: Leo Snow's surveying equipment is on loan to the Zion Human History Museum.



contributed by descendants of the park's early inhabitants. Vivienne-Caron Jake, a Kaibab Paiute tribal member, has loaned many historical items including



Born and raised in Zion Canyon, J.L. Crawford who is in his nineties today, stands at the bottom right.

an elk-skin dress, baskets, beadwork and more to the museum to assist in telling the larger story of the Paiute people, their lifestyle and traditions. Shelly Penrose, granddaughter of Leo A. Snow, loaned a number of Snow's possessions, including his surveying equipment, to the museum to illustrate the early days of discovery, and J.L. Crawford, who was born and raised in the area that is now the park's headquarters, has provided numerous photos and oral histories to help visitors see the park develop from its earliest years.

Modest in size (but large in tale), an hour will provide visitors enough time to partake of the museum's offerings. The modules or displays tell stories via photos, historic graphics, and notes, and one even offers stories recorded by an area pioneer. A vintage lantern slide show offers further stories and fascinating views of the canyon and its history.

The museum has been very well received averaging seven hundred visitors a day in the high-traffic summer months and an average of twelve hundred visitors a day on holidays. —HVM

- Zion National Park is located on State Route 9, accessible via I-15 or State Route 17 in the Hurricane Valley.
- Zion National Park is open year round.
- Zion Human History Museum is open 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM, year round.
- Until April, visitors may drive private vehicles in the park and use designated parking lots available at most major attractions.
- After April, the Zion/Springdale Shuttle System will resume transportation throughout the park and Springdale. Parking is available at the Main Visitor Center just inside the park's Springdale entrance.