

Elmo

Between 1904 and 1907 families began filing on homesteads several miles northeast of the town of Cleveland and further out on the Washboard Flat area. They constructed the Eagle Extension ditch of the Cleveland Canal to bring water to the land. These second-generation pioneers reenacted, in large part, the colonizing experience of their parents a generation earlier, living in tents or log shacks on their homesteads while they labored to bring their desert land into production.

By 1908 the town of Elmo was established on two sections of school land which were purchased by Worth Tucker and George H. & Eliza Oviatt. The town was platted into lots and sold to prospective residents for \$10 each. Another irrigation ditch was dug which headed the town on the west and carried water to land within the town district.

There are differing accounts of how the community gained its name, but the prevailing local tradition holds that *Elmo* was formed from the initials of four pioneer families: Erickson, Larsen, Mortensen, and Oviatt. Up until that time, it was simply known as Washboard.

Dancing was the most popular form of amusement in Elmo and some musicians traveled by wagon or buggy from Huntington. The drama was also popular and many plays were produced by the community. Elmo's first social gathering place was a bowery made of tree branches, which was rebuilt each summer.

For town meetings George Oviatt donated a little log cabin, which he had originally built as a granary, for use as a church, school house and amusement hall. By the summer of 1911 the town had grown enough that a bigger building was needed. A group of men in the community purchased the old Cleveland school house, sawed it in two, hitched horse teams to the building and dragged it on log skids from Cleveland to the bowery lot in Elmo. It was reassembled with a new hardwood floor, and a few years later a T-wing was added at the rear. This structure served as a school until the completion of a four-room brick school in 1917. In 1926 the original owners presented the building to the L.D.S. Church for a meeting house. It was used as a church meetinghouse and community center until 1955. A new church was built by the town people in 1955, and was replaced with a more modern one about 30 years later.

A tithing granary was built around 1912 by ward members of the L.D.S. Church. In 1964 it was presented to the Elmo "Lily of the Valley" Camp of the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers. The building was moved to its present site by the town park, repaired, and the roof lowered. It is still used by the Daughters as a meeting house. The ladies pay for its upkeep by cooking breakfast and lunch every year in November for the pheasant hunters.

Elmo became an incorporated town in May, 1935. Electric lights were installed in 1933. People had to buy an electric range and water heater or pay \$90 to get an installation. Telephone service slowly made its way to Elmo. There were six families in town who had their own telephone system and took care of the upkeep on it. It was not connected to a Central. Then a pay telephone was installed in the Hansen store in the 1940's. Ben Hansen was paid to take messages and deliver them for the town residents.

At one time Elmo boasted several stores and a filling station. It now has several businesses, most of which are located in residents' homes. There is also a very nice care center, called Turnquist Retreat, located in Elmo.

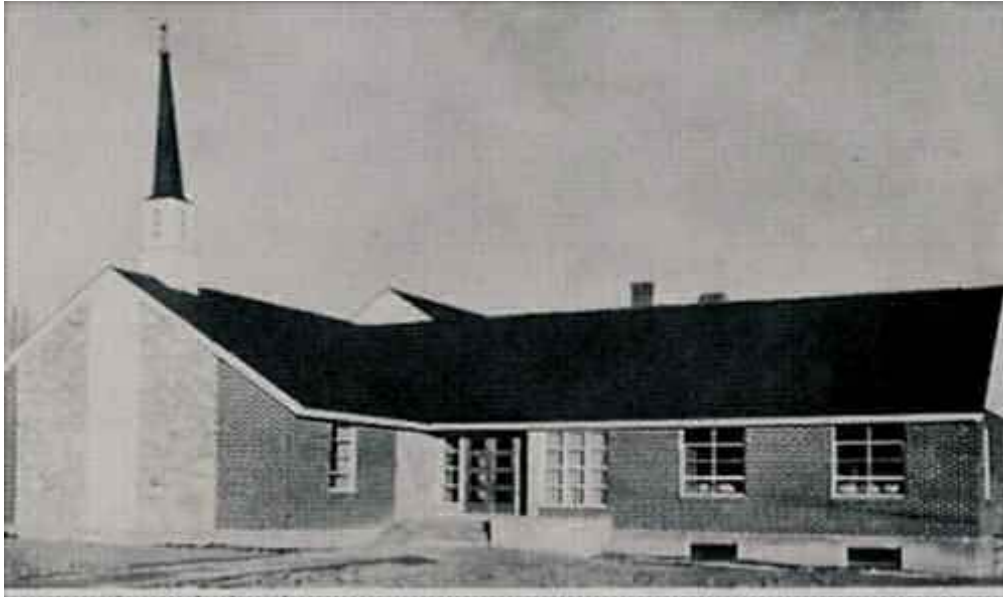
Elmo has always been a farming community. In the early days farm tools used were: walking plow, tooth harrow, wooden leveler, shovel, mower, hay rake, wagon, and team of horses or mules. During the first few years of the settlement the alfalfa and clover seed industry was quite profitable. Today there are many people who work not only on the farm using modern equipment, but in other professions and other towns as well.

A few miles to the east of Elmo were its sister towns of Victor and Desert Lake, which became ghost towns in the 1940's due largely to water problems. Desert Lake's inhabitants founded the town of Victor after the dam at Desert Lake broke in 1896 and consequently "soured" the land with alkali over the next 14 years. Victor grew at about the same rate as Desert Lake died. When the drought of the 1930's and other water problems still persisted in Victor, the settlers were forced to abandon the settlement and move to neighboring towns. Most of them moved to Elmo. Nothing much remains of the dreams and toil of those early settlers except their cemeteries and some half-buried logs, foundations, and fences.

Elmo is one of several gateways to the Cleveland-Lloyd Dinosaur Quarry, and to the San Rafael Swell with its array of scenic wonders, colorful past, and ancient history. Here, one can easily imagine dinosaurs roaming the country side, the ancient ones leaving their pictured legacy on rock walls and caves, and the many cowboys and outlaws making their way through Cedar Mountain and the Buckhorn Draw down to their desert hideouts on the Swell and beyond to Robber's Roost and Hole-in-the-Rock. In this land where the wind howls and the sand blows, you can almost hear the ghosts from a bygone era beckoning you to stop awhile and visit them.



Elmo's first church, school, and social hall. It was originally built as a granary, but donated to the town by George Oviatt for a meeting house.



Elmo - LDS Church built in 1950s



In 1896, this school served as a school house in Cleveland. In 1911, it was purchased by several residents of Elmo, sawed in half and the front part moved on log skids to the old bowery site in Elmo.



The building served as Elmo's second meeting house and school. This structure, purchased from the town of Cleveland, served as a school until 1917, and as a church meetinghouse and community center until 1954.



A "T" was eventually built on to the school which gave them room for a stage and two more class rooms on the sides.



Elmo's new four-room school house - built of brick in 1917.



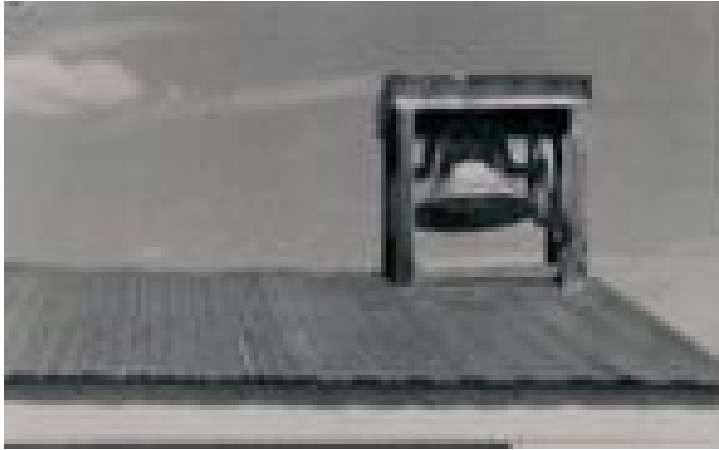
Elmo's tithing granary, built around 1912 by ward members of the L.D.S. Church. It was presented to the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers in 1964, moved to its present site by the town park, repaired and the roof lowered. It is still used by the Daughters as a meeting house.



Elmo: Hansen's Farm



Elmo: Early settlers' cabin



Elmo - Bell on the old school/church meetinghouse which rang to bring the children to school and also to bring the town folk running in an emergency

Elmo - First store in Lillard Tucker's home





Elmo - Just a few miles east of town is the Victor Cemetery, which served both towns of Victor and Desert Lake





The dam at Desert Lake was made by hand - man with pick and shovel, teams of horses pulling plows and tongue scraper. Long hours of sweat, strain and sometimes cuss words. And when the dam broke, it was enough to make a man cry. Charles, Vernal, William and Viri Winder, Henry and Harve Mills are pictured.