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**Analysis of Significance & Integrity
Orson B. Adams Farmstead
Historic American Landscape Survey**

by

Ladd Schiess

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree**

of

DEPARTMENT HONORS

in

Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning

Approved:

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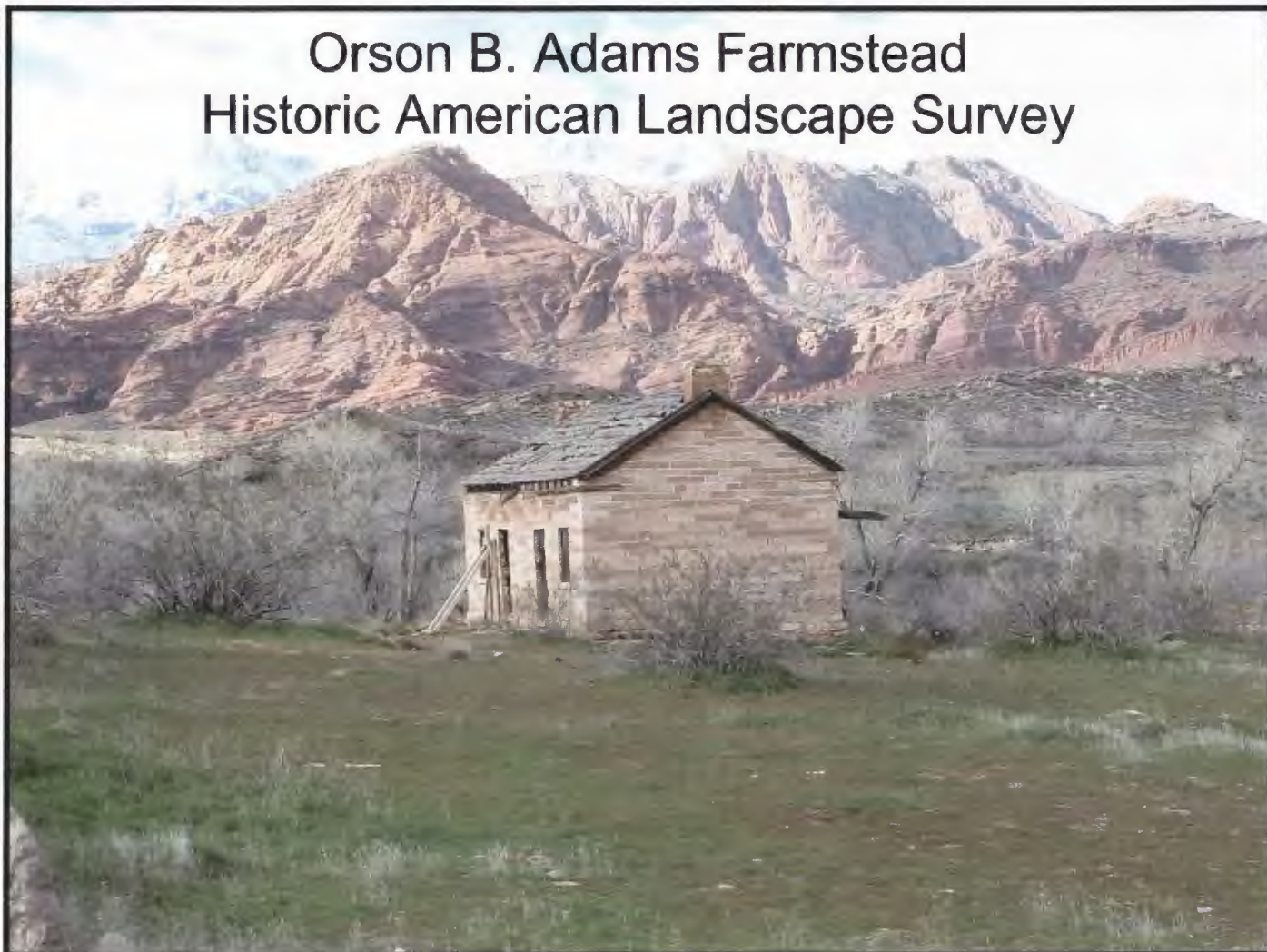
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**UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, UT**

2005

Analysis of Significance & Integrity

Orson B. Adams Farmstead Historic American Landscape Survey



Prepared for the
St. George Field Office
Bureau of Land Management
St. George, Utah 84770

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FOREWARD

In 1862, Orson B. Adams settled in Harrisburg, Utah, a small Mormon settlement in Southern Utah that had been started the previous year. Orson acquired land on the southwest side of town and began to cultivate it. Being on the edge of the Mojave Desert, irrigation was necessary. Orson diverted water from smaller Quail Creek rather than Leeds Creek, which the rest of the town used.

In subsequent years, silver was found in the sand stone of white reef (soon renamed Silver Reef) and people moved up stream to the booming towns of Leeds and Silver Reef. To supply water to the new towns, Leeds Creek was diverted and Harrisburg dried up. With Quail Creek remaining virtually untouched upstream, the Adams farm was able to continue irrigating.

The farm changed hands upon the death of Orson Adams in 1901. William Emmett moved in continued farming much the same as the Adams had previously. The house was abandoned in 1947, three years after the death of William Emmett, and the land continued to be used, but only as pasture land.

The abandoned farmstead and surrounding properties were acquired by the BLM in 2001. It is their intention to develop interpretive displays of the remnant home and surrounding grounds. This study, conducted in the spring of 2005, was done as part of a Historic American Landscape Survey (HALS), to examine the integrity of existing landscape features, to determine the period of historic significance of the site, and to develop a concise statement of significance of the property.



Figure 2 Photo showing the house with the Red Cliffs and Pine Valley Mountains in the background.

EVALUATION OF LANDSCAPE INTEGRITY

The ability of a site to show that it is significant is termed integrity. In order for a property to convey integrity, it needs to show significance which can be outlined through seven criteria: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. While these qualities are essential for a site to retain significance, they might not all be present.

Overall, the Orson Adams homestead has retained its integrity through the Emmett family tenure until the present day. While the site has been abandoned for quite some time, the arid region and abandonment has left much of the farmstead unchanged. The spatial organization of the farm appear to be much the same as they were when it was occupied allowing people today to see methods for settlement in Utah's Dixie as well as showing the irrigation and agriculture practices that lead to settlement in the region.

The Emmett family continued to run the farmstead very much the same as the Adams family did. Therefore, the farm maintained its pioneer atmosphere. Unfortunately, the Emmetts could not afford to keep all the buildings in repair and some of the outbuildings had begun to deteriorate during this time and the barn collapsed.

Unfortunately, some of the integrity has been lost. After the farm was abandoned, the diversion washed out and the ditch ran dry. The remaining vegetation died over the years and signs of the orchards and vineyards vanished as the native vegetation moved into the dry fields.

Ironically, much of the abandonment led to preservation. The agriculture practices were never modernized. There is an absence of modern garbage, waste, or utilities. The carriageway, though paved and widened, follows the original course. Remnants of the original town of Harrisburg are visible west of Interstate 15.

TABLE 1: Summary OF Landscape Integrity for the Orson Adams Farmstead

Aspects of Integrity	Period of Significance: Adams & Emmett Tenure, 1866-1947
Overall	Yes
Location	Yes, location unchanged
Design	No, house, creek, ditch bed, and fields remain, but gardens, orchards, and out buildings are gone, house deteriorating
Setting	Yes, the landscape remains nearly as wild and as rural as the period of significance with exception Interstate 15 and the Harrisburg RV resort
Materials	No, native vegetation has reclaimed the cultivated fields, irrigation ditch flume has been replaced with a corrugated metal structure; besides the house and retaining and fence walls, only foundations remain of out buildings, and the carriageway has been widened and paved
Workmanship	Yes, irrigation and farming practices could resume with the repair of the ditch intake off of Quail Creek
Feeling	Yes, the farm still has much of the remote settlement feel even without current agriculture
Association	Yes, retains association with Mormon pioneers settlements and the period of early settlement in the West

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

As additional consideration to help in determining the integrity of a site, the National Register of Historic Places Program has four criteria of which a site must meet at least one of. The four criteria are:

Criterion A: Association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history

Criterion B: Association with the lives of persons of significance in our past

Criterion C: Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values, or

represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction

Criterion D: Yield or be likely to yield information in prehistory or history

Summary of Themes and Contexts for the Landscape

When examining the Adams farmstead using the four criteria, the farmstead meets three of the four criteria: A, C, and D.

Criterion A: Harrisburg, Utah, was founded by Mormon colonists in the height of their expansion in the west in the 1860s. This particular settlement was in the arid conditions and the methods used to live with these harsh conditions are evident in the site. The remaining Harrisburg area still shows much of the original settlement pattern that was common in that region.

Criterion C: The Adams home shows the pioneer construction which is typical of the homes built in the area at the time. It is called both the Double-Cell plan and the Double-Pen House. It is constructed of smooth cut native sand stone, described as a Greek Revival Style by Carter and Goss in their book Utah's Historic Architecture 1847-1940, A Guide. The home has deteriorated over the years, but has not been altered.

Criterion D: The site is likely to contain remnants of Native American settlement. The Virgin Anasazi and Southern Piute are known to have settled in the vicinity, and remnants have been discovered on and around the site. Additional research could be done on the mining remnants around Silver Reef and around the site. The hill south of the house is covered with dug outs that could be from mining or Native Americans.

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1862-1947

This period represents the time the property was inhabited by the Orson B. Adams family (1862-1901) and followed by the William Emmett family (1901-1947). The Adams are responsible for building and cultivating the farmland they had acquired. They constructed the ditch, the walls, and leveled the fields.

Upon the death of Orson Adams in 1901, his daughter, Susanna, sold the land. It changed owners four times in five months resulting in William Emmett living there. By the 1910 census, William was living at the farm with his brother George and two lodgers. He bought the land on April 2, 1910, then married Katie (Maud) Dodge on November 23, 1910. While living there, they had nine children together plus the two children from William's first marriage. William died in 1944 and the family eventually moved to nearby Saint George in 1947.

EVALUATION OF LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

This section will identify which characteristics do or do not contribute to the integrity of the farmstead and its historical significance. Landscape characteristics are both natural and cultural and will be discussed in their current and historical conditions. Contributing features will demonstrate the integrity of the site relating to the Adams & Emmett period of significance. Characteristics to be addressed include: spatial organization, land use, topography, vegetation, circulation, water, buildings and structures, small-scale elements, views and vistas, and other archeological and historic elements.

SPATIAL ORGANIZATION, LAND USE, & TOPOGRAPHY

The farmstead is located on the southeastern edge of the Pine Valley Mountains in central Washington County, Utah, just south of the convergence of Quail and Leeds Creeks. The Creeks descend from the mountains through red sandstone cliffs of the Jurassic Kayenta and Navajo formations and flow out to the Mojave Desert.

The location of the farmstead is on the western edge of what was a short lived Mormon settlement called Harrisburg. The town was settled in 1861 just south of the convergence of Quail and Leeds Creeks. Currently Interstate 15 is located in what would have been the center of town.

Up stream from Harrisburg, Leeds creek was being diverted to the growing town of Leeds and to the booming mining town of Silver Reef. The water diversions caused all but a few Harrisburg residents to relocate to Leeds. Orson Adams and his family were able to remain using the water of Quail Creek through a long irrigation ditch to the farm. This single ditch allowed irrigation and cultivation of many crops. The land use was dependent on the ditch. All fields were down slope from the ditch providing for easier

irrigation. To preserve precious farmland, the few out buildings were all located above the ditch



Figure 2 Photo showing the relationship between the house and the bluff.

The location of the home on a small bluff above Quail Creek also created natural barriers to hold cattle and horses beneath the bluff in pasture separated from the grain fields, vegetable gardens, and orchards in the upper field. The north aspect of the bluff's slope also created a cooler micro climate that allowed for wetter soils for orchards and vineyards.



Figure 3 The upper field is still flat and sparsely vegetated.

Today, the upper field remains smooth, the bluff's grape terraces are still intact, and the lower pasture land is still delineated. There are few trees remaining and no sign of the grapes. The smooth fields and the irrigation ditch show signs of their former use.

The larger site still shows remains of the cultivation and irrigation of the Harrisburg area. Just as with the Adams farmstead, the irrigation ditches often was the guide to the land use. The topography

of the site on the rolling hills and bluffs above the creek provided natural barriers and spaces to separate the cattle and grain fields. Much of the town plat is still visible due to these features.

A major change to the area after the period of significance and the construction of the interstate was the filming of the 1950s movie, *They Came to Cordura*. A set was built across the creek from the Adams house and lies in ruins today.

VEGETATION



Figure 4 The lower north field has become filled with rubber rabbit brush due to the high water table. The riparian area contrasts with the dry area around it.

The Mojave Desert has reclaimed much of the once irrigated fields with creosote and other desert plants suited for the harsh conditions of southern Utah. Only a few exotic species remain in the area. In stark contrast, the riparian vegetation along the creek is green and lush. It is a cotton wood forest similar to what existed at the time of occupancy.

Several trees that have come up from seed,

most likely after the period of significance, include a pistachio tree, a pear tree, two locust trees, and a few pepper trees. There are many dead trees on the slopes as well as a dead fruit tree in the terraces. These most likely died when the ditch no longer carried water.

Although there is little that remains today, there were once concord grapes, musk melons, water melons, corn, wheat, barley, various nut trees, several varieties of fruit trees, vegetables, and possibly cotton (for the nearby Mormon cotton mission). The fact that the original sites for growing these plants remain and could easily be restored, show the great contribution this site has in demonstrating the settlement and agricultural practices in the arid Southwest.

CIRCULATION

The carriageway route is still intact, although widened considerably, allowing the original circulation to and from the farm to function as it did during the period of significance.



Figure 5 The remnants of a road connecting the lower fields to the upper field.



Figure 6 Although paved and widened, the current road through the site follows the same alignment as the original carriageway.

The alignment of two earlier access roads on the property is still readily apparent. The road directly below the house shows access to and from the lower pastures and the upper field, while the road on the east side provides access from the lower pastures to the carriageway and continues up the hillside to the top above the carriageway. The roads remain in their original width and character and contribute to the sites integrity.

The larger study area is laced with dirt roads, some following the plat map of original Harrisburg, while others are more recent intrusions from off highway vehicles (OHV) or for access to parcels of land. The biggest change in circulation came with the construction of Interstate 15 that buried a large part of the town.

The access road to the movie set is still useable and is often used by pedestrians and residents of the nearby RV resort.

WATER

Water features on the site consist of both natural and constructed types. The natural element is Quail Creek, which runs along the eastern boundary of the Adams Farmstead, and through the middle of the larger Harrisburg study area. The stream bed follows much the same course as during the period of occupancy, although it carries a higher volume than that time due to the diversion into ditches that no longer exist. Although the creek is largely in its original bed, it has been subject to meander, taking the main flow slightly to the north at the area between the house and the movie set.



Figure 7 The ditch for the farmstead went around the house and supplied water to the upper field.



Figure 8 The house sits on a bluff above Quail Creek.

A major contributing feature is the main irrigation ditch through the farmstead. The ditch appears largely undisturbed from its diversion out of Quail Creek to where it disappears into the landscape on the east of the farm. Changes along the ditch start where the diversion reservoir has washed out and continue where a few gullies have formed along the way. The formerly wooden flume, that carried the water over a gully on the western edge of the farm, has been replaced by corrugated steel in more recent times. That too is now dysfunctional due to washouts.

Across the flume, as it enters the

farm, the ditch has retained its integrity despite years of abandonment.

Additional ditches exist on the other side of Quail Creek in the Harrisburg site. One ditch appears to be the Harrisburg Ditch that originally carried water from Leeds Creek to the town. One of the remarkable features of this ditch is that it demonstrates the ingenuity of the pioneers of that time. The stream descends down a steep bluff. To prevent it from eroding away, it follows the strata of the reef on which it was carried. Currently, the ditch does not carry water because its diversion has been washed out near the town of Silver Reef. The water coming from Silver Reef that would have gone into Harrisburg is currently the stream in the drainage beneath the bluff.

Other ditches on the Harrisburg site were abandoned earlier when water shares were transferred to Leeds. These are consequently fainter on the landscape. Nevertheless, they contribute to the overall understanding of the vital role of irrigation in this early Mormon settlement.

BUILDINGS & STRUCTURES

The most significant structure remaining of the town of Harrisburg is the Adams Home. It was built, along with the surrounding area from 1862-1864. The house was likely built by a local stone mason, Willard G. McMullin. The home is built with cut white and pink sandstone that is unique, compared to other homes built by McMullin, which are usually made of a different type of stone. The Adams home has two rooms that are



Figure 9 The McMullin house remaining wall.

connected by a door through the interior wall. Each room has a fireplace at opposite ends and a door and window opening on the north and south side of each room. Most of the roof and floor were still intact at the start of the site study. Unfortunately, a rear room and cellar have collapsed.

As for the out buildings around the site, only the foundations remain. The barn collapsed sometime in the 1930s and 1940s. The granary, also used as a chicken coop, is gone, and a few other foundations remain.

In the Harrisburg area, there are also foundations remaining. The only other intact or partially intact buildings are two houses in the RV resort and the ruins of the McMullin house and smoke house. The McMullin house was one of only three two-story

buildings in the town. Currently, one wall remains of the house up to the second story window and most of the smoke house.



Figure 10 Mining claim shelter on Silver Reef.

The set of the movie, "They Came to Cordura," is in ruins with only the southeast corner walls remaining. There are piles of rubble all around that area, but the fountain is still visible.

Another notable structure is near the top of silver reef where a ruined mining shelter stands. Although small, it appears to have been a miner's claim shelter as it is located near many small mining remnants and rock cairns along the reef.

SMALL-SCALE ELEMENTS

The farmstead and greater site are scattered with elements that show the cultural practices of the time and place. All across the area stone walls delineate plots and fields. According to the journal of pioneer Priddy Meeks, the residents had to build rock walls around their land in order to gain possession of it (33).

At the farmstead, the whole northwestern slope of the bluff is terraces. These walls are largely intact and were used for growing grapes and fruit trees. The walls are red sandstone and appear to have been cut and carefully placed, unlike other walls in the area which were stacked using rough stones.

Other walls on the farmstead are retaining walls above and below the fields to help level the fields and slow erosion. Also, remnants of barb wire fences are all over.

Evidence of the mining operations on silver reef and in the hill south of the farmstead are dotted with holes of attempted mining and rock cairns, rock piles used to denote a miners claim.



Figure 11 Rock cairn and wall

VIEWS & VISTAS

Just as it has for thousands of years, the farmstead still offers stunning 180° views to the north of the Red Cliffs, the Yant Flat, the Pine Valley Mountains, and Silver Reef. The views today from the farmstead and around the greater site are nearly identical to views enjoyed daily by the Adams and Emmetts during occupancy.

Unfortunately, views to the south east have been intruded upon by Interstate 15, constructed in the 1960s, which also introduces element of traffic sound, incongruous with the formerly silent quality of the site.



Figure 12 Stunning views to the Red Cliffs and Pine Valley Mountains remain as they did during the period of occupation.



Figure 13 The biggest changes for the area have been the construction of Interstate 15 and the Harrisburg RV Resort.

OTHER

The study area contains a concentration of thousands of years of history in a very small area. A complete story can be told here about the west, and the "mythic west," from the harsh geographical reality, to native peoples, manifest destiny and religious freedom, to the romantic notions of how the west was won. The diverse perspectives portray a comprehensive picture of how people and cultures interact with their environment. With its rich layers of history and natural interest, few places like this exist intact in the Intermountain West. The site is truly unique in these aspects. (BLM, 7)

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