

# BLUFF HISTORY TOUR

## *A Walk Through Time*



Locations on the National Register of Historic Places are marked with an \*.

- 1. Adams House (1890's) \*** - Turn-of-the-century stonemasons used local stone to build a Box Style house, a style common in Utah cities, but infrequently seen in rural areas. This house is the best-preserved Box House in SE Utah. Thick walls kept the structure cool in summer and insulated in winter. During a long state of disrepair, one corner of this house calved away from the rest of the building. Present day owners rebuilt it block by block. Adams House is available for short-term rentals.



- 2. Bluff Cemetery**--For the Bluff pioneers, this terrace above the river offered the most sensible place to bury their dead. Locals from all cultures that shared this corner of the world are buried here. In one instance, a family plot shows the devastating effects of diphtheria. On the edges of the fenced and marked plots are more mounds of river cobbles, the often-unnamed graves of cowboys, Native Americans, and uranium workers.

### 3. Bluff Fort

- A. Barton Cabin \*** - These joined cabins are all that remains of the original Bluff Fort cabins used from 1880 - 1897 to protect newly arrived pioneers from the supposed threat of outlaws and natives. Eventually, the settlers left their rough-cut cabins behind for larger, permanent houses. The well at the Barton Cabin, named for its builder, Joseph Barton, provided the first community water supply.
- B. Co-op** - The building is a replica of the original Co-op which opened in 1882. The Co-op sold goods and supplies to pioneers and traded with the Navajo, and soon began to declare dividends. In turn, the pioneers bought Navajo wool, pelts, and blankets which they sold in Durango, CO. On the return trip from Durango, they brought other freight to be sold in Bluff, thereby making a handsome profit used to help start the prosperous cattle business years later.



**C. Kumen Jones House (1890's)** - The transition from stockade-style fort encampments to 2-story homes in a full-fledged town did not take long. This home showcases the fine craftsmanship that typifies Bluff stonework, evident in the intricate chisel marks and complete corners of this Victorian eclectic, cross-wing structure. Fire destroyed the house causing the collapse of the roof and several walls. Jones dedicated his life to the establishment and success of Bluff.

**4. Bluff Great House (1075 - 1150 A.D.)** - The site of a large, multi-storied, Ancestral Puebloan house excavated by University of Colorado researchers. The Bluff Great House is one of some 200 Chacoan great houses scattered in the Southwest. The location had been in use since 600 - 750 A.D. As with other great houses, the Bluff Great House is in a prominent location on a hill above Bluff where it would have towered over the surrounding community. The site is owned by the Southwest Heritage Foundation.

**5. Bluff School/Jail (1896)** - Bluff's first permanent school was an imposing structure with a belfry, gabled roof, arched windows, and, in the 1930's a hardwood floor you could roller skate on. Much reduced in size and grandeur, the hand-hewn stone building was later used as a tow-cell jail, a library, and town office.



**6. Hunt House (1880's)** - New and old in harmony. You'll see the masonry remnant of the old Hunt House/Twin Rocks Market and Bar incorporated as the northeast corner of this handsome modern home (1997). Formerly Calf Canyon Bed and Breakfast, the house is now a private home.



**7. Decker House (1898) \*** - This grand house was built by pioneers James and Anna Marie Decker and their 11 children. Local folklore has it that the Decker children helped to make the adobe bricks used in construction. The Decker family lost several family members in a diphtheria outbreak. Overall, the house's general structure is the same as in 1898. Once a bed and breakfast, the Decker House is now a private home.

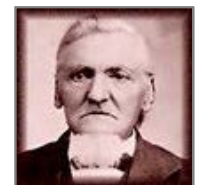
**8. Hyrum Perkins House (1890's)** - A Welsh miner with blasting experience, Hyrum Perkins and brother Benjamin, carved a path through the Hole-in the Rock for pioneer passage. Sarah Perkins Barton, 1896: "I loved my childhood home at the end of the Cottonwood shaded little green town nestled on the sandy banks of the river beneath the red sandstone cliffs that surrounded it. One of the joys of my young life was to tramp freshly the greening fields and cobble-stoned hills to garner spring's first blooming fragrant flowers and myriad colored pebbles, then rest for an hour in the leafy coolness of an over-hanging big limb of a huge tree on the bank of a marshy frog inhabited pool." The house has been lovingly restored by an architect and his wife.

**9. Jane Allen House**—Jane Fleming Ferguson Shaw Allen was born in 1840 and moved to Bluff in 1884 with her husband John Allan. Jane Allen was the mother of Agnes Allan Adams, matriarch of the nearby Adams House. Jane died in 1908 in Bluff.



**10. Jens and Elsie Nielson House—Four Gables (early 1880's) \*** - Home of the Nielsons's first wife, Elsie, planter of Bluff's mulberry trees. Jens and Elsie were married in Denmark in 1850. In the 1950's, the second story was removed, leaving the first story as four small apartments. Its current owner used old photographs to rebuild the structure to closely approximate the original Nielson home.

**11. Jens and Kirsten Nielson House (early 1890's)** - Nielson was Bluff's first LDS Bishop and long-lived entrepreneur and patriarch. Of Danish birth, he traveled across the plains to Salt Lake City in a Mormon handcart company. The house was restored by one of Nielson's descendants. Nielson's watchword, 'sticky-ta-tudie' encouraged the pioneer expedition in troubled times.



**12. Jones Farm**- The Jones Farm continues an agricultural tradition dating to Ancestral Puebloan times. To preserve this heritage, in 2001 the Bluff City Historic Preservation Association acquired a conservation easement for the farm, preserving it as agriculture use in perpetuity.





13. **Lemuel Redd House (1890's)\*** - Lemuel Redd was one of Bluff's original settlers and San Juan County's first assessor. The Redd house is one of the largest houses ever built in Bluff. Note the tall chimneys arched windows, and sizeable slab windows. Lemuel Redd used this beautiful home as his primary residence from 1900 to 1910. Current owners fully renovated and modernized the house in 2012, including structural realignment of the home's stone walls.



14. **Lovace House (mid-1890's)** - From rubble in a canyon to the solid walls of grand homes, who crafted the local sandstone into building blocks? Apparently, Nick Lovace, a master stonemason who once lived here. Lovace was not one of the original Hole-in-the-Rock pioneers. His house may have once resembled the Nielson house (map tour 12), but it was rebuilt to present form after a fire destroyed the second story.



15. **Platte Lyman House (1890's)-** Platte Lyman was one of the scouts on the Hole-in-the-Rock Expedition. The generous lot size around this home is a reminder that Mormon township planning called for orderliness, open space, and a roomy one dwelling per gross-acre. Lyman died unexpectedly in 1901 leaving two wives.

16. **Sand Island Petroglyph Panel \*** - Petroglyph panel 4 miles west of Bluff on the San Juan River contains hundreds of images thought to be between 3000 - 300 years old. The site is of ancestral importance to Native Americans.



17. **Scorup House (1904)\*** - John Albert Scorup spent most of his time tending to cattle operations extending from the Abajo Mountains to the Colorado River. While Scorup lived in range camps in the company of cowhands, often six months at a time, this grand house kept the lives of his six daughters behind lace curtains, genteel and civilized. Now the site of the Design Build Bluff, a University of Utah graduate architecture program focused on immersing students in hands-on, cross-cultural experiences.



18. **St Christopher's Mission (1942)\*** - Founded by H. Baxter Liebler, an Episcopal priest from Connecticut, the Mission has embodied a blending of cultures, where Christian and Navajo beliefs accommodate one another. The mission also brought school and health services to the Navajo and played a key role in fighting tuberculosis in the 1950's and 1960's.

19. **Twin Rocks (Navajo Twins)-** Stone masterpieces towering over Bluff named for Hero Twins of Navajo creation legends. The center of social gravity shifted to the base of the Navajo Twins in the A.D. 800's, where villagers introduced red ware pottery, including a type that archaeologists named for its first place of recognition: Bluff Black-on-red. The Pueblo I site is now protected by local nonprofit organizations.



20. **Unknown**—The builder of this house is not known. Despite the modern cinder block additions, the house is a turn of the century lumber house. It is said to have been located nearer the new Bluff post office and moved to its present location which Bluff residents remember it being in this location since the 1930s. Local resident Melvin Gaines remembers that it was also used as a mortuary.

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22. **Willard Butt House (1897)** –Butt, a county sheriff, opened the county's first steam powered sawmill, which may be the reason he built with lumber rather than stone. The home's restorers discovered artifacts of everyday life inside walls and under floors: handmade mud bricks used as insulation, coin tokens from a New York store, war loan pamphlets, jar lids, Christmas tree lights, a tiny metal bell, toys, and loads of buttons.

