

Teton Birds

by Larry Mace

On April 25, 1883, ten men arrived at or near what would become Teton City, Idaho. Among these ten men were Charles W. Bird (this may be Charles Bird, Jr.), Freeman Bird (son of Charles Bird), and Fred Gardner (husband of Eliza Sedilla Bird, who was daughter of John Pratt Kennedy Bird). They had come through Blackfoot, Idaho in a blinding snowstorm and had stayed there in an old barn. They continued north to what is today Rexburg, Idaho and camped just east of town for several days while they looked for a place to settle. On the third day, they crossed the Teton River and camped. They rode on up the Teton River looking for a townsite. They located and made arrangements with the LDS surveyor, Andrew S. Anderson, to survey a town site and a site for a canal to irrigate their subsequent crops. The location they had selected for the townsite was flat, fertile ground with water suitable for irrigation.

The townsite of Teton City was laid out on May 1, 1883. It was called Teton as it was close to the Teton Peaks. The town was divided into ten acre blocks with each lot consisting of 2 1/2 acres. Each family was allowed one lot for the price of seven dollars and fifty cents. That price was to cover the price of surveying and to pay for the town square.

On May 2, 1883, each of the group selected their homestead site. Almost immediately, they started building a canal for irrigation. Nearby ranchers scoffed at them for attempting this venture and said it would never work. The canal was completed in 1885-6 with Charles Bird as its first director.

By the spring of 1884, Martin Bird (son of Charles Bird) also located in Teton. The winter of 1884 was very cold with a lot of snow. During that winter, Freeman Bird along with several others were going to get lumber when they spotted a herd of about 150 elk. They hurried back home, got their rifles and returned to the elk herd. They managed to kill 25 elk. They loaded the elk up and took them to Freeman Bird's place. They took what meat they needed for their families and then invited the rest of the townspeople to come take what they needed. Within two hours, all the meat had been taken. This was very helpful in getting the town through the winter.