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Honors Thesis

“TO HOLD THE WORLD TOGETHER”: A UINTA BASIN HOMESTEADING HISTORY,
1905-1930

by
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Submitted to Brigham Young University in partial fulfillment of graduation requirements for
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Geography Department
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ABSTRACT

“TO HOLD THE WORLD TOGETHER”: A UINTA BASIN HOMESTEADING HISTORY,
1905-1930

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Geography Department

Bachelor of Science

The Uinta Basin’s history differs from much of Utah. Its early explorer report as a “wasteland” meant Mormon settlers avoided the area, which made an expedient decision to put the land aside as the Uinta-Ouray Ute Indian Reservation. Native peoples were forced to the undesirable desert in the mid-1860s. In 1905, the United States Government opened the Reservation for White homesteading. Homesteading was difficult, and countless anecdotes show the difficulties—many settlers moved away, “selling out” (giving up on their homesteads and selling to another homesteader) their newly-acquired land and returning to greener pastures. There have been few academic studies related to this aspect of the Basin’s demography. This paper finds that land transfer was not a major indicator of these movements. Instead, most homesteaders retained their land titles, even if they didn’t live in the region. Analysis of census data shows the migratory status of many Basin settlers in the 20th Century’s earliest decades. Native and White land use is discussed. Basin settlement is typical of the Great Basin and arid West, creating a legacy that continues today.

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Introduction and Hypothesis

Homesteading is an important part of American historical and geographical scholarship, and it also holds a special place in the American psyche—phrases like “Manifest Destiny” and “O Pioneers” strike a chord for many. While homesteading seems to be a positive example for many Americans, scholars don’t often come to the same conclusions. In scholarly literature, many academics believe that most homesteaders were unsuccessful, took land from Native peoples, and belonged to a system of corruption and greed (Edwards, Friefenld, & Wingo, 2017).

These views of homesteading also apply to the Uinta Basin, an arid depression in Utah’s northeastern corner. Life in the Basin has always been hard, thanks in part to its geography. In 1861, Mormon scouts sent by Brigham Young wrote that “[the Basin is] one vast contiguity of waste, and measurably valueless, except for nomadic purposes, hunting grounds for Indians, and to hold the world together” (Rogers, 2005). For homesteaders in the early 20th Century, that statement seemed especially true. Many family histories recount how homesteading ancestors in the Basin moved on to more productive settlements, only returning later after infrastructure and water projects had improved enough to allow them to cultivate barren lands and achieve better yields (personal communication, 2019 and 2021). My own ancestors experienced the ebb and flow of multiple migrations, originally settling in the Basin in 1905, but roaming to greener pastures across the West until the 1930s, when conditions were better to settle in the Basin for good.

Family and local histories about individuals and families abound, there has been little academic research on homesteading data related to Eastern Utah homesteading (Burton, 1997; Barton, 2006, Fuller, 2006). As cited above, anecdotes recount struggling homesteaders “selling out,” or giving up on their homesteads and selling land to others, while Native populations,

trapped on the local reservation, also struggled (Burton, 1997; Barton, 2006). Basic demographic data supports this view. After homesteading began in the Basin in 1905, populations dwindled until the 1980s (see Table 1).

Year	Duchesne Co. Pop.
1910	--
1920	9,093
1930	8,263
1940	8,958
1950	8,134
1960	7,179
1970	7,299
1980	12,565

Table 1--Duchesne County, established in 1915, shows a population drop from 1920 to 1930, with other demographic shifts later in the century. (Census.org).

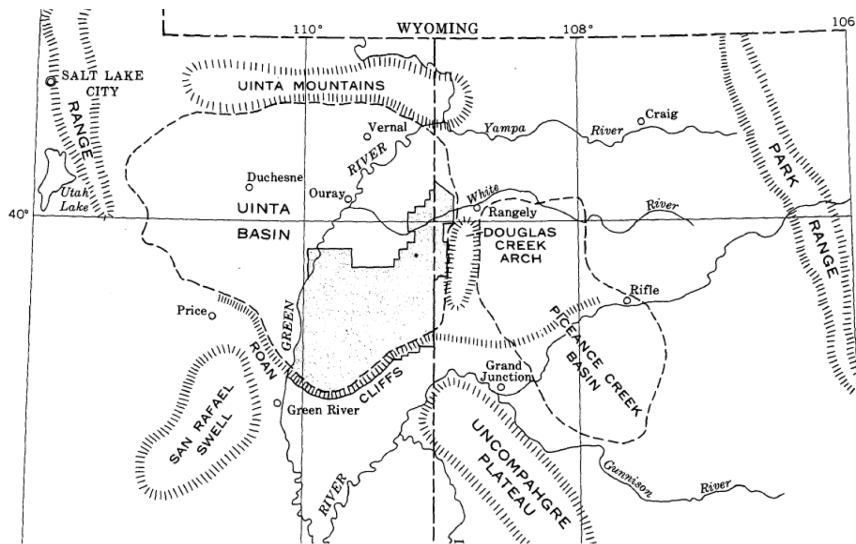
I originally hypothesized that “sell-out,” or land transfer, between homesteaders would be the most important factor in the Basin’s changing demographics. I found that this was not the case: homesteaders retained their land titles even when living elsewhere. This paper discusses the Uinta Basin’s background and analyzes land ownership and census data in three separate townships to tell the story of homesteading in the Basin, exposing inequities between White homesteaders and Native American residents of local reservations in the early 20th century, including their different views of land stewardship and ownership, and proving that, in the end, the Basin may truly only be good “to hold the world together” (Rogers, 2005).

Uinta Basin Background

Uinta Basin’s Geography and Geology

To understand homesteading and its importance in the Basin’s history, it’s vital to understand the underlying geographical and historical factors that influenced the Basin’s past.

The Uinta Basin's topography is defined as a large bowl-shaped depression on the Colorado Plateau. It is bordered on the west by the Wasatch Mountains and on the north by the Uinta



Map 1-Uinta Basin structural map, stretching into Colorado (Cashion, 1967).

range, an unusual east-west running mountain range that isolates the area from Wyoming and the Wasatch Front (Burton, 1997; Barton, 2006). The Basin continues east into Colorado, ringed to the south by the Tavaputs Plateau, colloquially known as the Book Cliffs (Fuller,

2006). The entire Basin's elevation is above a mile high, and its continental climate creates temperature extremes with scorching summers and frigid winter inversions (Barton, 1998). Its location in the Wasatch Mountain Range's rain shadow makes water scarce: it averages less than 10 inches of rain per year, and its only water reserves come from mountain snowmelt and natural springs, which feed the Green and Duchesne Rivers (Peel et al., 2007; Barton, 1998). These rivers and their tributaries have long been attractive to humans, but there are other natural resources below the surface that humans utilize: gilsonite, phosphate, natural gas, and crude oil are important resources underpinning the Basin's economy, supplementing the more traditional farming and ranching culture (Burton, 2006).

Uinta Basin's Earliest Peoples and Early Penetration

Despite lack of written evidence, traces of Native Americans in the Basin date back to 10,000 B.C. (Fuller, 2006). The area's Native American history is rich, and early Fremont and

Anasazi peoples left behind intriguing rock art and settlement sites. After their mysterious disappearance in about 800 A.D., the Basin was used seasonally by various Ute and Comanche bands starting around 1300 A.D. (Loosle & Wilson, 1998; Loosle 2000; Fuller, 2006).

The first Europeans to pass through the Basin were Spanish Fathers Escalante and Dominguez who crossed the Green River near present-day Jensen in 1776 on the search for a trade route from Santa Fe, New Mexico to Monterey, California (Pederson, 1972; Burton, 1996). They found the Green River to have “meadows abounding in pasturage and good land for raising crops, with facilities for irrigation” (qtd. in Arce, 2006). As they traveled across the Basin and into the High Uintas, they were intrigued by the natural beauty and mountain terrain but were the last foreigners to enter the Basin for nearly 50 years (Burton, 1996; Pederson, 1972).

The next outsiders to make their mark on the Uinta Basin were fur trappers (Burton, 1996). Settlement was not their goal: these enterprising explorers sought trapping opportunities in the untamed West and were only in the Basin sporadically for a 20-year span (Burton, 1996; Barton 1998). Beginning in 1825, legendary mountain men like William Henry Ashley, Antoine Robidoux, and Kit Carson established forts and trading posts along the Basin’s rivers and enjoyed a few years of prosperous trade until the 1840s when furs lost value and Native American hostility to foreign enterprises increased (Burton, 1996; Pederson, 1972).

The last Euro-Americans (hereafter known as “White”) to make tracks in the Uinta Basin before permanent settlement were government-sponsored explorers and Mormon scouts on the lookout for new colonizing sites (Pederson, 1972; Rogers, 2005). Like fathers Dominguez and Escalante, explorers like John Wesley Powell were in awe of the rivers and their mysterious rock formations but didn’t venture further into the Basin’s interior (Pederson, 1972). Those who actually trekked inland, though, were less enamored by the desert reality. In 1861, Mormon

scouts sent by Brigham Young found the area to be a wasteland and discouraged Young from sending colonists. They wrote in a now-famous line published in the *Deseret News* that “[the Basin is] one vast contiguity of waste, and measurably valueless, except for nomadic purposes, hunting grounds for Indians, and to hold the world together” (Rogers, 2005). These negative reports about the Basin directly affected Mormon settlement in the area and likely prevented it from being a Mormon stronghold for many years (Burton, 1996).

Mormons, Miners, and Gentiles in the Uinta Basin

Basin settlement changed when President Abraham Lincoln set aside a large swath of the area as a reservation for Ute peoples from the Wasatch Front in 1861 (Smoak, 2015). Prior to the reservation, Ute bands used the Basin only as seasonal hunting and grazing grounds but, following the Blackhawk War and Treaty of Spanish Fork in 1865, Mormon settlers forced Native



Figure 1—Two Ute Tribe members on the Reservation, 1870s (<https://www.utahhumanities.org/stories/items/show/293>).

populations from their homes in Utah and Sanpete Counties to live and farm in the arid Basin full-time, both to get them out of their way and in an attempt to “civilize” them (Burton, 1996; Lewis, 1994). The reservation system proved oppressive for the relocated tribes, known as Uintahs, and to exacerbate the difficulties for the Utah Utes, Umcompaghre and White River Ute clans from Colorado were forcibly moved to the 3.5 million acre “wasteland” in the Basin in 1879 following uprisings against White rule in Meeker, Colorado (Smoak, 2015).

As Indian Agents and others attempted to introduce agriculture, Utes protested in various ways by rearing ponies instead of cattle, asking for more help, and ignoring White stipulations about land. Accordingly, Utes did not take well to attempts by federal representatives to slice their land into neat European townships and ranges starting in the late 1880s (Lewis, 1994). Sowsonocutt, a White River Ute, said, “The Indians have lots of cattle and horses. When we take the Government’s little pieces of land, how are we to run our horses inside on little pieces of land?” (Lewis, 1994, p. 56). Ute culture and tradition meant reservation life was a lowly existence for the displaced Uintah, Umcompaghre, and White River tribes.

The first settlers who willingly ventured to the Basin were those whose job it was to “look after” the Utes—Indian Agents like Pardon Dodds, who built cabins and created trading posts for the White cattlemen, ranchers, farmers, and miners that were trickling into the Uinta Basin east of the reservation (Burton, 1996). After his retirement in 1873, Dodds settled on the fertile banks of Ashley Creek (which was not part of the reservation) and established a site for more settlement northwest of modern-day Vernal near Dry Fork (Fuller, 2006; Burton, 1996). Ranchers and other permanent settlers followed, settling near the Green River on the eastern end of the Ashley Valley and Ashley Creek in the west (Burton, 1996).

The first Mormon settlers arrived in 1877 when a polygamist family settled in modern-day Dry Fork in defiance to Gentile settlements on the other end of town near the Green River (Burton, 1996). After hearing about these successful settlers, Mormon leaders ignored the Basin’s “wasteland” reputation and “called” Heber-settled Saints to load up and head east in 1878. Many of the Mormons that came at this time settled near other Mormon families near Ashley Creek in Dry Fork Canyon (Fuller, 2006; Burton, 1996). Despite the land’s potential, some, including Basin settler Mary Brown, were disappointed with the remaining available land: “When we came around

that mountain pass and looked into this valley of sagebrush and rabbitbrush, Oh, how I cried” (qtd. in Tullis, 2010, pp. 161-162). These latecomers had to make do with leftover land from ranchers that had already populated the area. Towns grew, including Vernal and Ashley which both had post offices and general stores (Burton, 1996). Weather, Native peoples, and nearly oppressive lack of water made settlement challenging, but despite the difficulties, by the 1880s, there were enough permanent residents (over 700 people) on the non-reservation portion of the Basin that the Utah Territorial Legislature created Uintah County (Smart, 2008; Tullis, 2010).

In the late 1880s, a less religious and slightly rougher crowd of semi-permanent settlers entered the Basin as mineral exploration and production gained momentum. The discovery of gilsonite (a shiny, brittle mineral used for waterproofing, paints, and polishes) in southern Uintah County brought miners, but greater access to the mineral was prohibited because much of it was found on reservation land (Barton, 1996; Burton, 1996). To overcome this obstacle, the US Congress and Ute leadership agreed to annex a skinny portion of reservation acreage to create “the Strip” in modern-day Fort Duchesne, a lawless area known for loose morals and party atmosphere (Smart 2008; Barton, 2006). The presence of Buffalo Soldiers and other US troops stationed in Fort Duchesne in 1886 did little to quell the lawless situation and might have, in fact, added to it (Foster, 2000). Further mining potential sprang up as prospectors found coal, natural gas, phosphates, and oil in other areas throughout the Basin, giving rise to distribution centers like Bonanza and Dragon in the inhospitable deserts of southern Uintah County (Burton, 1996).

Homesteading and Beyond in the Uinta Basin

Human cultural institutions, including the law, also played a role in determining settlement and growth. Vernal and Ashley grew, but after 1905 the Dawes Act permitted homesteading on the Uintah-Ouray Indian Reservation. (For more information on the many factors that led to the

Reservation's opening, see the excellent dissertation "Land Rush in Zion" by Craig Fuller, 1990). Although homesteading on Native American land was, in hindsight, an inequitable and unfair land grab, it eased population pressures on Vernal and other nearby White communities (Fuller, 1990). Land, no matter its potential, was a valuable commodity, and thousands of hopefuls from Utah and Colorado attended the lottery drawing in 1905 (Fuller,



Figure 2--Evelyn Stoddard on her Altonah Homestead, 1910s (Allred & Tidwell, 1990, p. 302).

1990). After the lottery results were announced in Provo, the 5,772 winners paid \$1.25 and were allotted fourteen months of "residential time" on land they selected themselves, usually 160 acres, or $\frac{1}{4}$ of a township section (Tullis, 2010; Burton, 1996; Barton, 1998). Mormons and Gentiles alike entered the lottery and staked claims on former reservation ground. Homesteaders grew alfalfa, herded cattle and sheep, and did their best to eke a living off the land, but because of the Basin's arid climate, success proved elusive and was certainly less than guaranteed (Allred & Tidwell, 1990; Burton, 1998; Fuller 1990).

Near homestead communities, villages and towns slowly grew, but in different ways and for different reasons. Myton, on the Duchesne River, grew quickly as a river crossing and mail center but lost standing when Duchesne County was created and the city of Duchesne was chosen as the county seat in 1915 (Barton, 1998). Roosevelt was established when one enterprising homesteader, Ed Harmston, used his homestead claim to create a townsite with a post office, irrigation firm, store, and school, and eventually eclipsed Myton and Duchesne (Barton 1998). Its location on the main road from the Wasatch Front to Vernal also helped its growth. Altamont, high up in the Uinta "Upper Country," became an incorporated city when

chosen to be a central location for a school connecting the homesteader villages of Altonah, Mount Emmons, Bluebell, Boneta, Upalco, and Mountain Home (Allred & Tidwell, 1990).

Despite the population growth, there were several environmental limits, including water



Figure 3--My great-great grandparents, Joseph and Rebecca Myler, and great uncle Max on their Myton homestead, early 1930s (FamilySearch.org).

scarcity. Canals and diversion dams built in the 1890s by Indian Agents needed development for wider homesteading use, and cooperation between the newly-created Dry Gulch Irrigation Company and Indian Agents helped. However, droughts and water scarcity increased the need for bailouts, and traditional Native lifestyles meant much of the land was unworked.

National bills attempted to help homesteaders and Natives alike but dryland farming in the desert proved difficult (Fuller, 1990). Native people leased their lands

to homestead hopefuls in high numbers. _ Lewis reports that in 1914, Utes retained 6,147 acres of worked land while leasing 7,113 acres and leaving the

remaining 68,869 acres untouched (1994). By 1917, the reservation's superintendent had helped lease 54,000 acres, with another 20,000 resold to Whites (Lewis, 1994). Despite this loss of Native land and net gain for White settlers overall, many homesteading households returned to their former homes in more developed areas of Utah and the West before 1920 (Fuller, 1990; Allred and Tidwell, 1990). The area remained relatively undeveloped, economically depressed, and sparsely settled for much of the 20th century (Burton, 1996).

In the second half of the 20th Century, surviving homesteaders capitalized on oil wells and boom years when petroleum extraction began at high rates in the 1970s to the mid-80s (Barton 2006; Burton 1996). Today, the Basin's economy continues to rely on petroleum and natural gas extraction (Burton, 1996; Barton, 2006). But who were the surviving homesteaders, and how long did they stay in the Basin? Little research has been done on these specific populations, which was the impetus for this study.

Sources and Methods

Sources

My preliminary research showed the existing literature's lack of homestead data analysis, so I hope this project contributes to further research in some way. I collected land ownership data for three separate townships from 1905 to 1930. My primary source was Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land patent records. These records showed each specific land title patent, patent type, patent owner, township location, and, in the case of Native settlers, the patent owner's tribe.

In general, there are five types of land patents split between two categories: patents for White homesteaders and patents for Native peoples. White homesteader patents were divided into two types: 1. Homestead Entry Original land patents legalized by the Dawes Act in 1862 (12 Stat. 392) and 2. Sale-Cash Entry from 1820 (3 Stat. 566). The Homestead Entry Original land patents were what allowed much of the Midwest to be homesteaded in the mid- to late-19th Century (Edwards, Friefeld, and Wingo, 2017). Owners of these patents were granted 160 acres or less, and the land was legally theirs after a certain time period, which changed depending on the decade and area. For the homesteaders in the Uinta Basin, the period was a short 14 months compared to the original five years expected on the Great Plains. The other patent type was Sale-

Cash Entry from 1820 (3 Stat. 566), a relic from the United States' original westward expansion into Ohio that stipulated a one-time payment for settlers purchasing homestead land.

Native peoples could file under several different patents: 1. the Indian Fee Patent of 1865 (14 Stat. 703), 2. Indian Allotment – General of 1887 (24 Stat. 388), and 3. the Indian Partition Without Application (39 Stat. 123). The first, the Indian Fee Patent of 1865, was based off a treaty between Native tribes in Kansas and the US Federal government, granting Native peoples the right to “expressly . . . reside upon and range at pleasure throughout the unsettled portions of that part of the country they claim as originally theirs . . .” This law apparently applied to all Native peoples, not just the Cheyenne and others in Kansas (AccessGenealogy, 2018). The second Native land patent, the Indian Allotment act of 1887, stipulated how much land a Native person could own. However, its stated that each person could choose their own plots and that each patent would be legally binding by the Department of the Interior (US Government Legislation and Statutes). This statute also meant Native landowners could sell or lease their land if they chose. The final patent, the Indian Partition Without Application, allowed heirs of original Native homesteaders to partition inherited lands. Only a few patents were filed in this way, mostly in the 1930s after the original homesteads had been almost all claimed (Legal Information Institute).

The last category of land discussed in this study is indemnity land, or land used as collateral for loans. If a landowner who had used their land as collateral was unable to pay back the loan, their land was auctioned off (Bureau of Land Management, 2003). Virtually all of the indemnified land in the Uinta Basin was Native-owned, showing that Native people took out more loans on their lands than White settlers did (see below). Some indemnified lands on the

reservation were also reserved for the State of Utah in lieu of certain education land grants which were not granted earlier (Bureau of Land Management, 2003).

Methods

Using this data, I selected three different townships in different locations across the Basin to analyze, two that were on reservation land and one that had never been part of the reservation for a comparison. I organized a spreadsheet by the year each patent was filed, then created separate maps for each township starting in 1905 and running until 1930, when most townships had exhausted unclaimed homestead plots. I used ArcGIS for base maps and for outlining the three townships. After outlining my townships, I used the BLM land ownership data and matched each land patent with its corresponding place in the township/range section in a grid on Microsoft Word. I color-coded each of these to show the ethnicity of each patent owner (which was listed on the land title), if the patent was sold, and to whom they sold it. After that, I overlaid each grid onto an ArcGIS base map, effectively showing ownership and transfers over time in each township. Table 2 introduces the different colors used in the maps.

Table 2-Map grid key according to BLM Land Patent Records

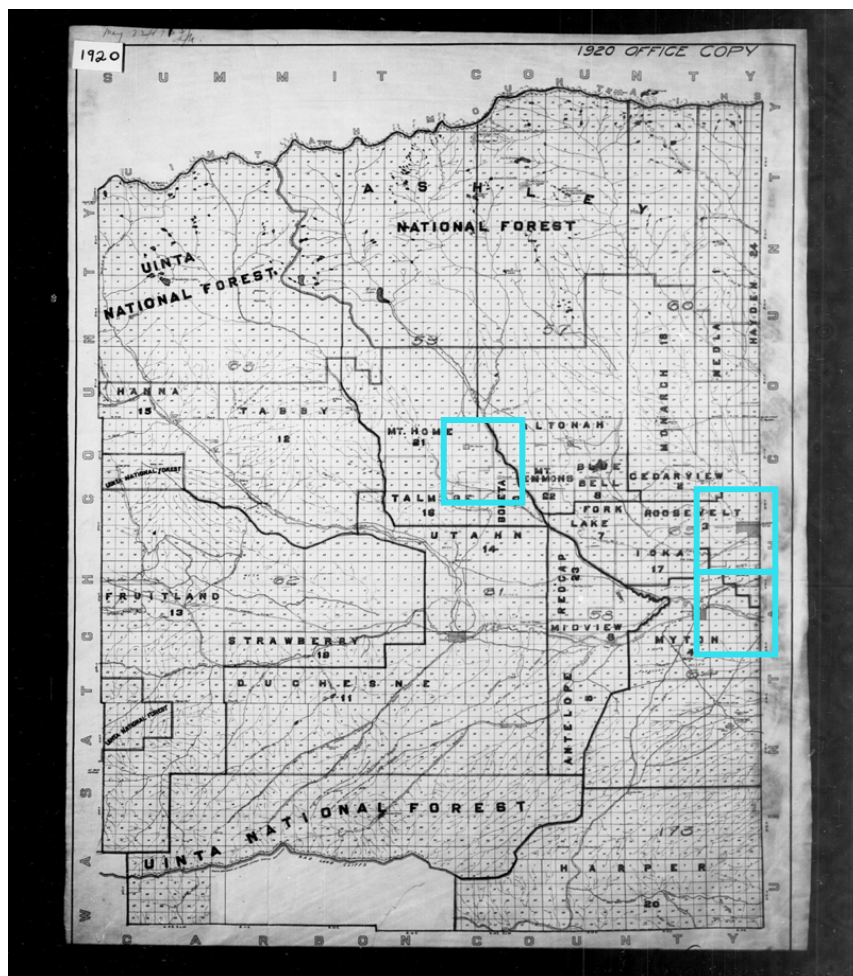
Original Native Plot	Plot allotted to a Native American
White Homestead Plot	Plot settled by a White homesteader
Indemnity as collateral	Indemnified as collateral for a loan
Unclaimed Indemnity	Indemnified land from a federal grant
White/White Transfer	White seller and White buyer
Native/White Transfer	Native seller and White buyer
Native/Native Transfer	Native seller and Native buyer
Purchased Indemnity	Indemnified land purchased by White homesteader

Patent ownership was a good start, but the small percentage of transfer or “sell-out” in the maps revealed something I had missed earlier: ownership does not equal residency, and so I needed to do some further digging. To determine residency, I had to decide which records to use. I could use either LDS ward data or US Census data. LDS ward data proved problematic because not all homesteaders were Church members, and virtually no Native people were (Smart, 2008).

Accordingly, I chose to use US Census data and fortuitously, the 1910, 1920,

and 1930 censuses are indexed on FamilySearch.org. Using the land ownership records I’d gathered from the BLM, I looked up all White landowners that had filed a patent from 1905 to 1930. The land ownership records and census data were tricky to corroborate; census tracts don’t match up with townships (see Map 2), so it was difficult to find exact geographical matches between the three township maps I’d made and the census.

Another issue was the lack of information. For example, I couldn’t find many homestead owners in the census at all; they had moved elsewhere and were unreachable in the census, a



Map 2—The three townships don't match with the census tracts. Shown is the 1920 Enumeration District for Duchesne County with an overlay of the townships in cyan (FamilySearch.org/search/film/007344470?i=628&wc=92VW-3Y9%3A1077261301&cc=2329948).

testament to the mobile nature of early 20th century settler life. However, I was able to find enough information that showed some interesting patterns and trends for each township (see below). Another issue was that there were people in the census in the census that weren't landowners. The nature of homesteading meant that people could live on land without legally owning it, creating a transient lifestyle for many (Edwards, Friefeld, and Wingo, 2017). Land leasing was also popular, and leasers were also not recorded in ownership records. I did not count these people in my estimates because they didn't own the land, but it's important to understand that my population counts are not a perfectly accurate representation of actual population numbers living in my townships because of this. I also did not use the Native census because of time constraints. To explain the complicated population counts found in tables below, a key explaining each label is provided.

Table 3-Key for understanding census data tables in the next section

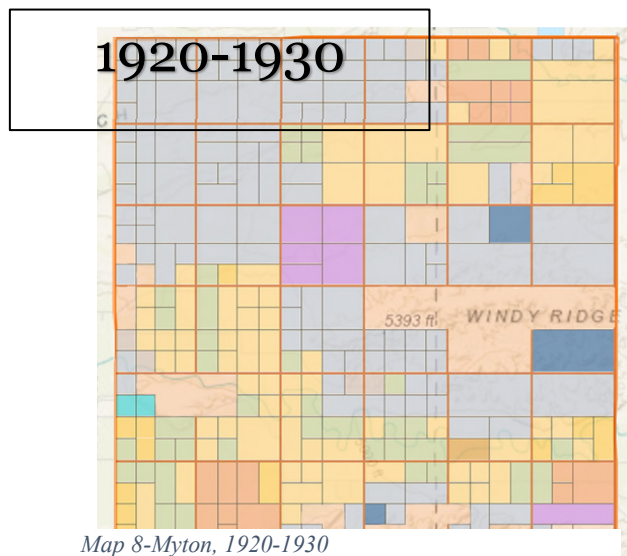
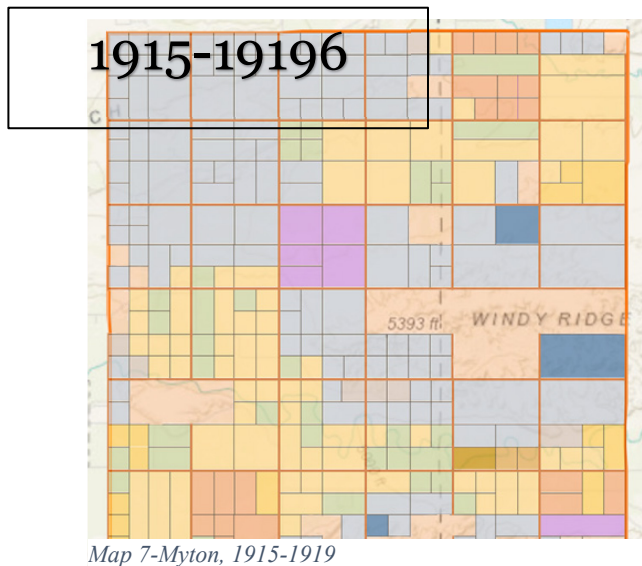
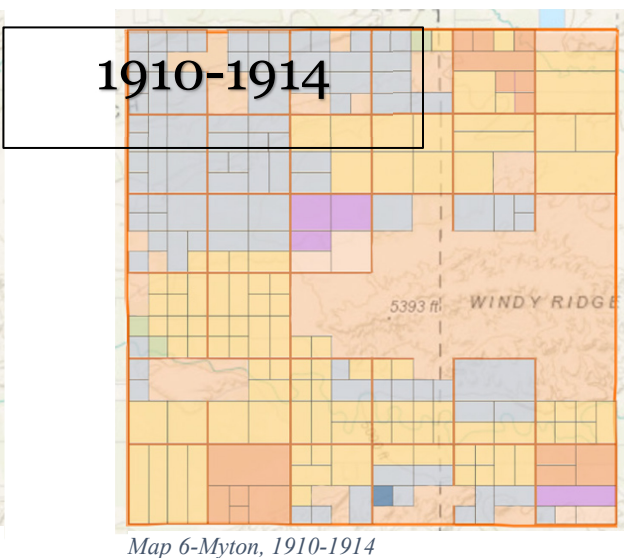
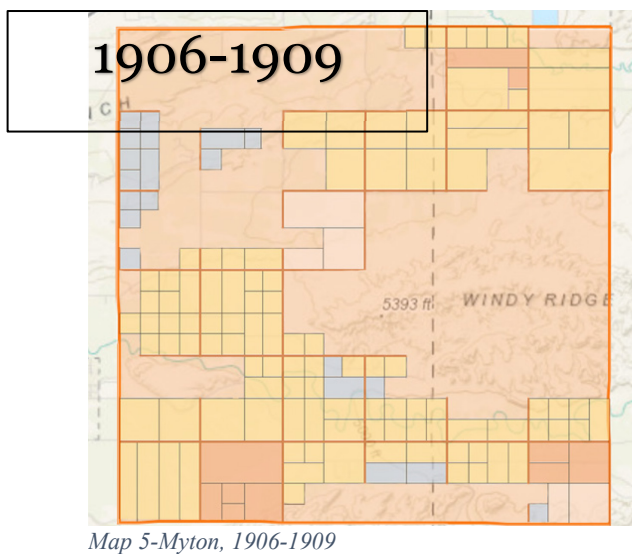
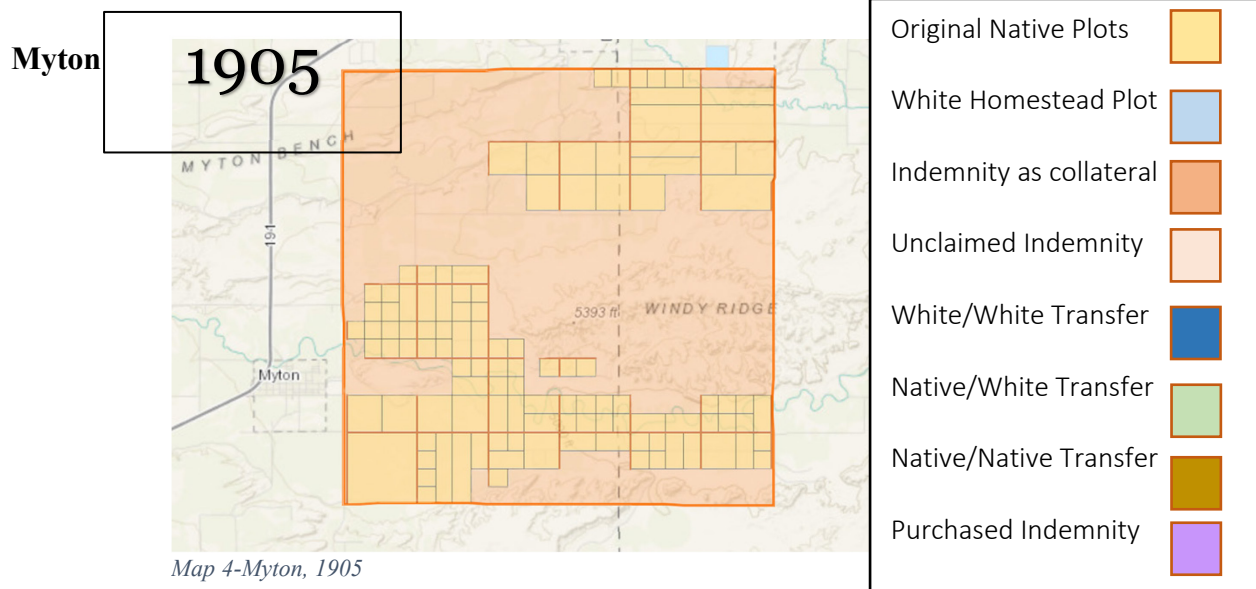
Population	Total number of people found in the census who belonged to a household with a patent owner
Households living there	Patent owners found on their homestead in the census
Households living elsewhere	Patent owners who did not live on Basin homesteaded land, but were found in the census
Households unaccounted for	Couldn't be found in census
New Households	New homestead owners that were found in the area in its respective census year
Households that Left	Had been identified as "Households living there" in previous census (see above), but were found elsewhere in a subsequent census
Total White Owners	Total number of White-owned homestead patents in the BLM Land ownership records

Maps and Analysis

For this analysis, I chose three townships, two on former reservation land and one in the same area that was never part of the reservation. The first reservation township (“Myton”) features the Duchesne River and an uplifted mesa known as the Myton Bench. The second reservation township was located in the in the Uinta Mountain foothills near modern-day Altamont and Mountain Home (colloquially known as the “Upper Country”). The non-reservation township is home to modern-day Roosevelt, Duchesne County’s largest city along Highway 40. Roosevelt is directly north of the Myton township, and I thought it would be a good comparison to former reservation land because it had zero Native presence but was in the same area (see Map 3).



Map 3—The three townships are highlighted in cyan, with the Upper Country on the left, and Myton directly south of the Roosevelt township (Base Map: Esri).



Maps 4-8 and Table 3 below, which track this township's total parcel ownership numbers, show that in 1905, homestead plots were claimed by mostly Umcompaghre Utes. Natives received first pick on reservation land before opening up the lottery to Whites, and all of the first Native patents are dated August 2, 1905. As indicated, most homestead plots were centered on the Duchesne River in the bottom half of the township, with a few plots concentrated on the northern bench by Dry Gulch Creek. Settling by the river would have been advantageous for farming.

Table 4-Myton Total Parcels

Years	Total parcels	Native-Owned Parcels Total	White-Owned Parcels Total	Unclaimed Indemnity Parcels	Indemnity as collateral Parcels
1905	114	114	0	0	0
1906-1909	139	105	19	5	10
1910-1914	217	99	99	4	15
1915-1919	278	81	175	2	20
1920-1930	279	82	176	2	19

In 1906, as shown in Map 5, the first set of White settlers (shown in blue) staked claims and finalized their patent ownership by 1908, when their land purchase is dated in BLM records. During the period from 1906 to 1909, 7% of Native-owned land is indemnified, and Native peoples now own 76% of the total homestead plots (see Map 5). There was no sell-out for either Native or homesteaders (see Table 4 below for sell-out tracking).

From 1910 to 1914, White homesteaders purchased homesteads closer to Roosevelt and Highway 40, and the first sell-out (both Native-White transfer, shown in green, and White-White transfer, in darker blue) happened during these years (see Map 6). Purple shows indemnified land re-auctioned and sold to Whites. Native land ownership continued to decline (now 46% of total

land ownership) as White land ownership increased (also 46%), with formerly Native-owned indemnified land rate remaining steady at 7% of all claimed land.

By 1919, White-owned homestead parcels surpassed Native-owned homestead parcels, with Whites owning 63% of claimed homesteads in contrast to a mere 29% owned by Natives (See Map 7). Sell-out remained low. Only 16 Native plots have been sold to other Natives and only 3 white-owned parcels have been sold to other Whites. Something interesting, though is the rate of Native-White sellout, with a relatively high number of 41 total Native sell-outs to White homesteaders. This is, overall, a small percentage of total homestead plots in the township (about 15%), but it does indicate a lack of Native interest in owning land. Indemnified land sold to Whites was also marginal (2% by 1919). From 1920-1930, there was little legal transfer as Natives reclaimed indemnified land and only 6 new Native plots were sold to Whites within the decade (See Map 8).

Table 5-Myton Transfer Totals

Year	Native/native transfer	White/White Transfer total	Native/White Transfer total	Indemnity sold to White total
1905	0	0	0	0
1906-1909	0	0	0	0
1910-1914	0	1	3	4
1915-1919	16	3	41	6
1920-1930	13	3	47	6

Based on few land transfers from 1920 to 1930 (see Map 8), the population should have remained fairly steady during the period. The US Census data, however, told a different story, as shown in Table 6 below.

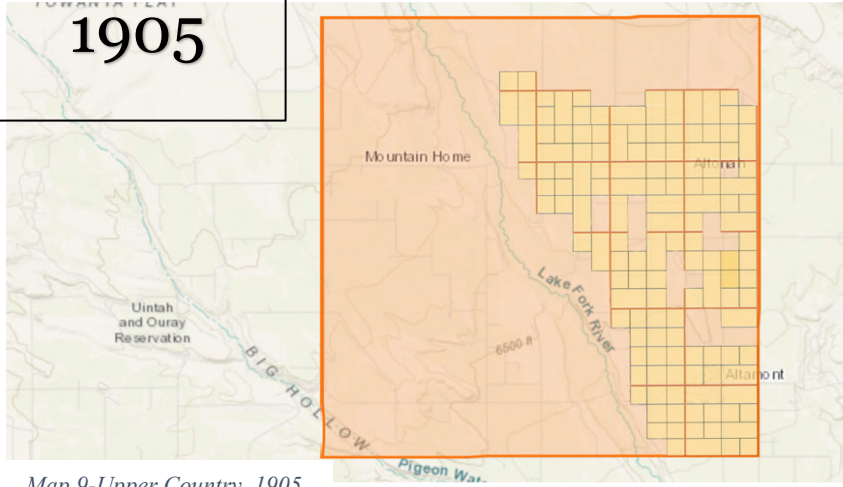
Table 6-Myton Census Data Summary

Year	1910	1920	1930
Population	73	116	82
Households living there	21	25	21
Households living elsewhere	10	13	21
Households unaccounted for	12	64	65
New Households	21	10	1
Households that Left (based on the previous decade)	-	12	9
Total White Owners	20	104	108

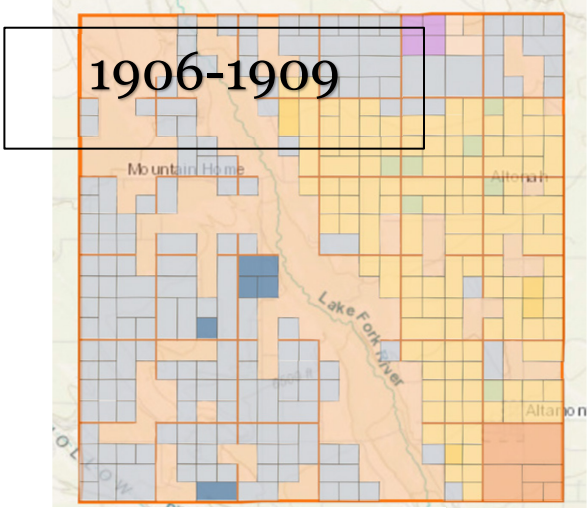
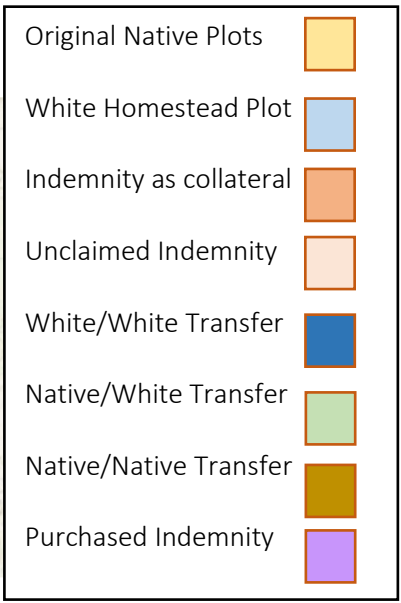
()). Table 6 shows that the countable White population living in the area grew slightly from 1910 and 1920, with a large unaccounted-for population with 64 unaccounted-for households in 1920. It would be helpful to know where these 64 families were, but information is lacking. However, we can see from countable families that movement was steady, both coming in and leaving area—10 new families moved in, while only 12 families moved out. From 1920 to 1930 the accounted-for population dropped about 30%, with only 1 new family moving in versus 9 families moving away. This could also be due to the fact that the township had less available land, but 9 families that still owned townships leaving the area indicates potential hardship (see “Discussion” for further possible explanations).

Upper Country

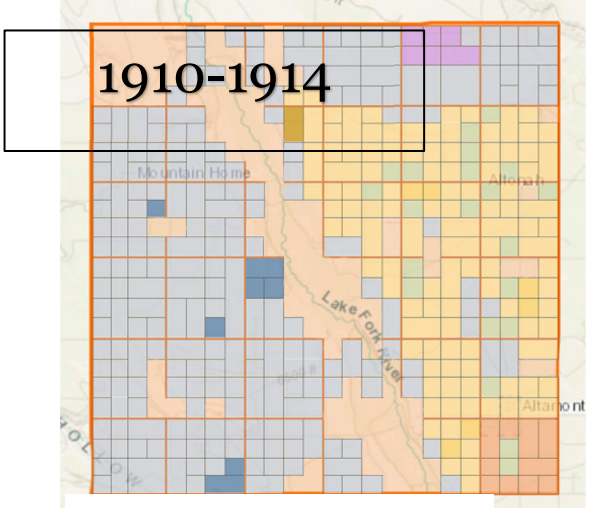
1905



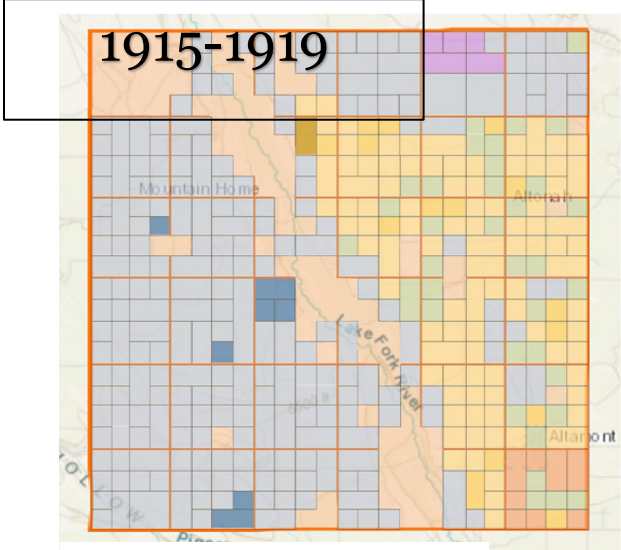
Map 9-Upper Country, 1905



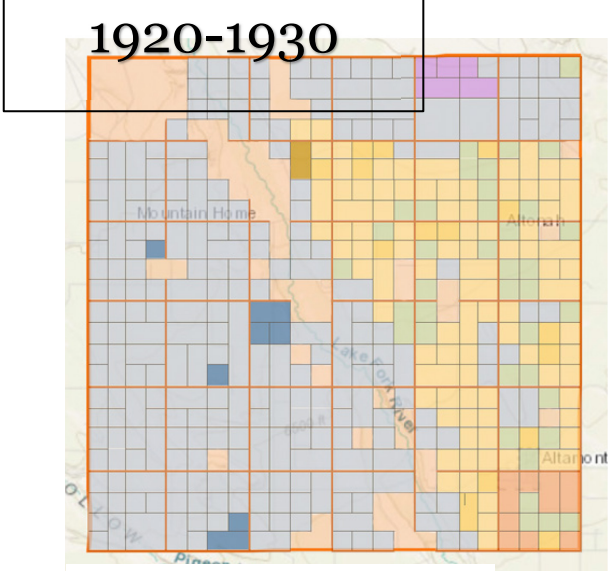
Map 10-Upper Country, 1906-1909



Map 11-Upper Country, 1910-1914



Map 12-Upper Country, 1915-1919



Map 13-Upper Country, 1920-1930

Table 7- Upper Country Total Parcels

Year	Total Parcels	Native-Owned Parcels Total	White-Owned Parcels Total	Unclaimed Indemnity total	Indemnity as Collateral total
1905	136	136	0	0	0
1906-1909	303	125	178	4	5
1910-1914	361	119	242	2	5
1915-1919	395	113	272	0	10
1920-1930	408	103	298	0	7

In 1905, Native peoples settled on the eastern side of a large gully (see Map 9). Most plots in the Upper Country were quite small—a mix of only 40- and 80-acre plots. Native settlers here were mostly Umcompaghre Ute and, like Myton, their patents are dated August 1905.

As in Myton, the first White homesteaders staked claims in 1906 and filed ownership patents in 1908 (see Map 10). In Map 10, there was a clear divide between Native and White settlement, separated by the Lake Fork River and its canyon. The large geographical distance between the two settlement groups can be explained by the unfarmable canyon between the two mesas. Continuing with Map 10, from 1906 to 1909 5% of Native land was indemnified, and Native peoples owned 41% of the total homestead plots. Whites had sold 5 plots, in comparison to a total 11 plots sold by Natives (see Table 7 below). This totals to about 2% of plots resold between Whites, 2.3% from Natives to Whites, and 1% of owned land resold between Native buyers and sellers. It's a small number, but it at least shows there was some sell-out.

From 1910 to 1914, the western side of the bench became almost completely White-owned, with a few White purchases additions on the “Native side” of the township (see Map 11). During this period, homesteaders owned 67% of the township parcels, with Native owners at only about 33%. Indemnity plots did not increase. From 1915 to 1919, White ownership remained steady at about 69%, with Native ownership also remaining at 33% (see Map 12). Map 13, covering 1920 to 1930, shows few new homestead plots compared with the previous decade,

but transfer did increase, with 4% of Native land transferred between Natives, 1.7% transfer between White sellers and buyers, and with 9% of total parcels being sold from a Native homesteader to a White homesteader (see Table 8 below). This is a smaller percentage than Myton (Table 5), but it's the biggest sell-out amount for this township.

Table 8- Upper Country Transfer Totals

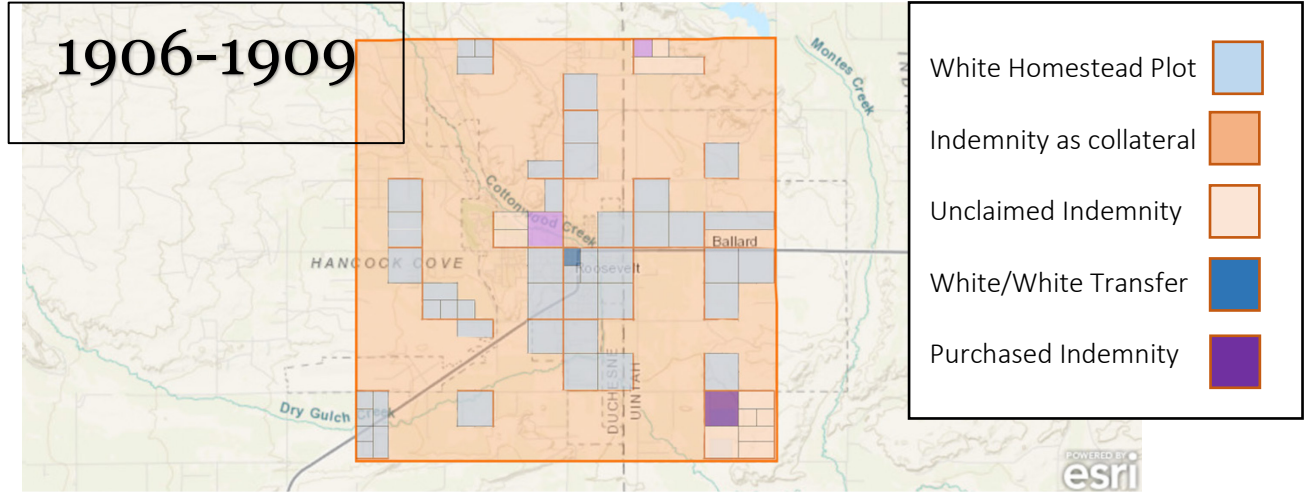
Year	Native/native transfer total	White/White Transfer total	Native/White Transfer total	Indemnity sold to White total
1905	2	0	0	0
1906-1909	2	0	0	0
1910-1914	4	5	7	3
1915-1919	7	7	19	5
1920-1930	16	7	36	5

Table 9- Upper Country Census Data Summary

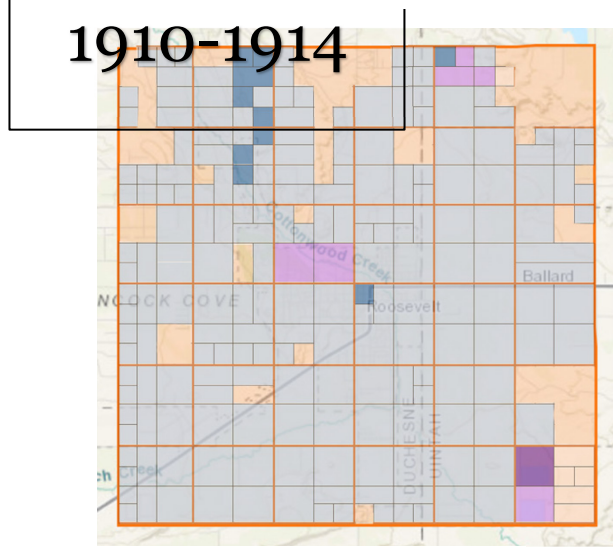
Year	1910 Census	1920 Census	1930 Census
Population	170	355	284
Households living there	15	63	47
Households living elsewhere	17	31	39
Households unaccounted for	18	39	55
New Households	15	40	6
Households that Left (based on the previous decade)	0	5	23
Total White Owners	50	139	160

Just as in Myton, however, census data showed that people *did* leave, but just didn't sell their homesteads. Looking at Table 9, the countable White population living in the area almost doubled from 1910 to 1920, with only 30% of families unaccounted for. Additionally, 40 new accounted-for families in the area between 1910 and 1920, with only 5 families leaving. From 1920 to 1930 to accounted-for population drops about 20% as 23 families left and only 6 new families moved in, with a larger proportion of people unaccounted for as the study period ended.

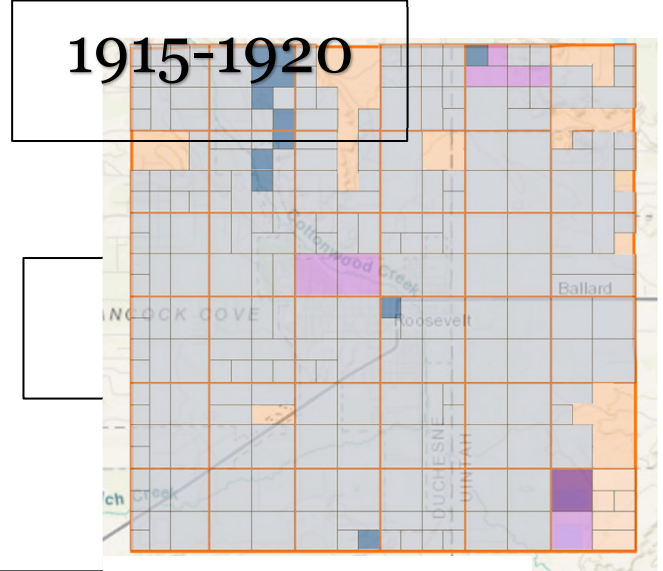
Roosevelt



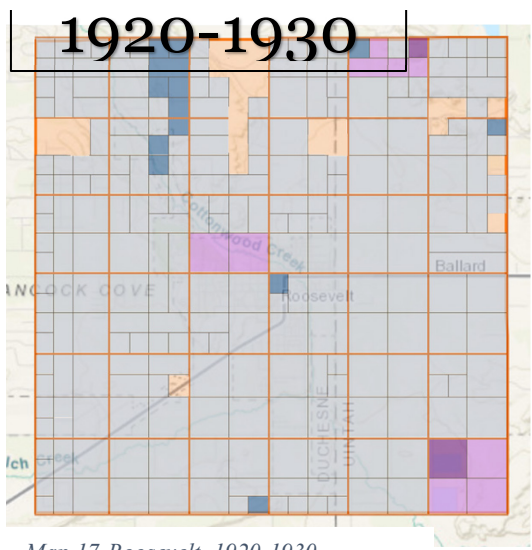
Map 14-Roosevelt, 1906-1909



Map 15-Roosevelt, 1910-1914



Map 16-Roosevelt, 1915-1919



Map 17-Roosevelt, 1920-1930

Roosevelt was never part of the Reservation, and so the first ownership patents were filed in 1906, almost 14 months exactly after the Reservation's 1905 homestead opening date (see Map 14). In Map 14, 160-acre plots dot the central part of the township along the modern road. In the next map, Map 15 showing from 1910-1914, Roosevelt expanded rapidly. Its incorporation as a city in 1912, coupled with the large amount of ownership, shows this growth (Barton, 1998). Between 1910 and 1914, only 5% of land was resold (Map 15, Table 11). Looking at Map 16 showing 1915 to 1919, only 4% of total parcels were resold. That number climbed to 6% of total owned land in 1920 to 1930, but compared to Myton and the Upper country (Table and Table , respectively), the total of transfer is low. In Roosevelt, there are zero "Indemnity as collateral" plots throughout the entire study period (see Maps 14, 15, 16, and 17). By 1930, about 95% of the entire township was claimed and Roosevelt seems to be a bustling metropolis (see Map 17).

Table 10-Roosevelt Total Parcels

Year	Total parcels	White-Owned Parcels Total	Unclaimed Indemnity total	Indemnity as Collateral total
1905	0	0	0	0
1906-1909	57	47	10	0
1910-1914	220	214	6	0
1915-1919	249	244	5	0
1920-1930	255	255	0	0

Table 11-Roosevelt Transfer Totals

Year	White/White Transfer	Native/White Transfer	Indemnity sold to White
1905	0	0	0
1906-1909	2	0	3
1910-1914	11	0	7
1915-1919	11	0	8
1920-1930	15	0	11

Again, however, the census data told a different story from the seemingly robust maps, with a large drop in homesteader population over the 20-year period from 1910 to 1930 and with “Households unaccounted for” growing steadily throughout the study period (see Table 12).

Table 12- Roosevelt Census Data Summary

Year	1910 Census	1920 Census	1930 Census
Population	333	348	219
Households living there	74	64	38
Households living elsewhere	14	25	48
Households unaccounted for	32	48	55
New Households	74	11	0
Households that Left (based on the previous decade)	0	20	26
Total White Owners	57	144	160

As shown in Table 12, the countable White population living in the area grew only slowly from 1910 to 1920, with 49% of families unaccounted for in 1920. Additionally, the families that left Roosevelt by 1920 are nearly double the new families, and no new families remained from 1920 to 1930. Another unique aspect of Roosevelt is its high numbers of the unaccounted for in the 1910 census. Many of the patent owners from the early years (1906 and 1907) were nowhere to be found.

Discussion

Sell-out and Indemnification

Within each township, homesteaders claimed plots of various sizes, so using percentages, we can compare sell-out levels between townships, year, and transfer parties. The percentages here are total sold-out land from total owned land.

Table 13- Native to Native Transfer Percentages out of Total Owned Land

	Myton Native-Native	Altamont Native-Native
1905	0%	1.50%
1906-1909	0%	0.67%
1910-1914	0%	1.11%
1915-1919	5.75%	1.77%
1920-1930	4.70%	3.92%

Table 14- Native to White Transfer Percentages out of Total Owned Land

	Myton Native-White	Altamont Native-White
1905	0%	0%
1906-1909	0%	0%
1910-1914	1.38%	1.93%
1915-1919	14.75%	4.71%
1920-1930	18.84%	8.82%

Table 15- White to White Transfer Percentages out of Total Owned Land

	Myton White-White	Altamont White-White	Roosevelt White-White
1905	0%	0%	0%
1906-1909	0%	0%	3.50%
1910-1914	0.46%	1.39%	5%
1915-1919	1.08%	1.77%	4.41%
1920-1930	1.08%	1.72%	5.88%

As shown in Table 14, sell-out is actually highest from Native sellers to White buyers, especially in Myton, with Native sellers and Native buyers the next highest category of sell-out, and White to White transfer the lowest percentage of all sell-out (Table 15). Roosevelt is an exception because the only sell-out possible was between Whites (Table 15). This high level of Native sell-out far eclipses White sell-out in every way.

Another data point showing Native land loss is through indemnified land totals. There was no land indemnified as collateral in Roosevelt, the only township without any Native

landowners (Table 10). Contrasting this with both the Myton and Upper Country tables above (Table 5 and Table 8, respectively), we can see that all land indemnified as collateral belonged to Native landowners, and about 25% of it was auctioned to White homesteaders later on in the period. Again, Native land loss is much higher than White land loss over the 25-year study period.

What can explain this high level of land loss? High rates of Native-owned land transfer is, I hypothesize, due to the Utes' inability and unwillingness to adapt to agriculture brought by White settlers. Before the reservation system, their movements were dictated by the seasons and their animals. They hunted, herded, and gathered across a wide stretch of the Great Basin (Lewis, 1994). But after the 1860s when they were confined to the arid reservation, traditional Native ways of life were quashed under the weight of "productivity" and farming "progress." To them, the land they were trapped on was herding and grazing ground, not farmland. One Native woman reportedly said of the homesteaded Reservation lands, "I look and see what you want is worthless. Ponies cannot live here. The ground will not grow squash or corn or melons. Only the prairie dogs and rabbits use it" (qtd. in Barton, 1998, p.45). This quote symbolizes many Ute attitudes, as well as the inequity of their situation. They were trapped on land that was once theirs, but more than ever, they wanted to leave. Living on small squares of land in the model of new settlers and an oppressive reservation system was impossible for herders and people who had once roamed free (Lewis, 1994). Oppressed by poverty, the Ute Nations were ruined less than 50 years after their forced relocation to the Reservation (Smart, 2008).

When it was possible to sell, many Native landowners, advised by Indian Agents, leased their land and water rights in an attempt to retain some reward for their compromised situation. However, this effort meant little by the homesteading era. Ute people were pushed to their limits,

both physically and psychologically, to an area they didn't want to work. When they were able to, they sold and leased land that hadn't belonged to anybody but themselves for thousands of years (Smart, 2008; Fuller, 1990). Ute population dropped from 1,660 in 1900 to 917 in 1930, their spirits broken and their land cut up into pieces (Lewis, 1994).

Population

This project's major finding was that land ownership records don't tell the entire story when it comes to homesteading. Most people that left the Basin didn't sell their homesteads: either no one wanted to buy them, or the family intended to return later. Evidence supporting this first view is the easiest to find. An anecdotal joke I found in several accounts indicates settlers' true understanding of their harsh surroundings. The story went that a local rancher was selling a quarter section to an outsider. "How much did you sell that feller?" someone asked. "Well, the deed was for 160 acres. But (in a behind-the-hand whisper) I slipped in an extra ten'" (qtd. in Smart, 2008, p. 118). I found it ironic: land was a status symbol and an important investment, but even when the land that was practically free, people still tried to give it away. Land ownership meant little when there were greener pastures somewhere else. My data reflects this as new settlers became scarcer and populations dropped in each homesteaded area over my study's 25-year period. Hardly anyone wanted to buy, and so hardly anyone one could sell.

Another explanation for the lack of sell-out could also be homesteaders' understanding of land as an investment. No matter how dry or badly irrigated the Basin was, homesteaders hoped to return someday. People like my great-great grandparents on both sides of my family moved all over the West, buying land in different areas, homesteading long enough to keep their titles, and then moving on until the time was ripe to return to a previous homestead. That's one possible reason so many people are lost on the census—they left quickly, probably leasing their

homesteads to neighbors or other family members, until a possible return. They, unlike Native peoples, knew how to dryland farm, and maybe their optimism carried over into the way they worked the land in different places.

Further Research

In the future, I'd like to delve into Native population change. The census and its transcription of Ute names was unhelpful and difficult to understand, so finding an expert and tracking population changes like what I did for homesteaders in this project would be a beneficial contribution to Native history. It may be difficult, especially because of the differences in Native herding and nomadic practices, but greater study of Native patterns, especially in the West, is needed and would be important for Native history and for the Ute tribe today.

Another possible study stemming from this preliminary research would be to track specifically where each family came from and went to after homesteading the Basin. Making a map of these journeys would be an interesting foray into early 20th Century life, and I've already done similar personal studies with family records. The census data created a glimpse into settlers' lives, and I loved picturing how far people had come to end up in the dusty Basin. Studying specific families would be an interesting continuation of this geographical population work and would add an interesting spin on homesteading literature as one of the last homesteaded areas in the continental United States.

More future research I'd like to do would be to continue looking at these same three townships, but supplement the BLM records with the Uintah and Duchesne County Recorder's records, determining how agglomeration and sell-out affected people later in the century, especially based on Duchesne County's population nosedive from the 1950s to the 1970s before the oil boom. That may have been when sell-out was more prevalent, because during those

decades, life wasn't as fast and loose as it had been earlier in the Century. Maybe exploring that time period would reveal higher transfer rates that have been passed down over the years to those curious about the Basin's demographics.

Conclusions

This project illuminated much about Native and White land use in the Uinta Basin. Native attitudes toward land focused on the land itself as part of a living, breathing, holistic ground for survival and use. Whites also saw it as ground for survival and use, but their use was entirely different and pushed the land to its limits. Irrigation (or lack thereof) influenced White settlement across the Basin for many years.

Ultimately, the sell-out I saw from White settlers was not as extensive as I originally pictured. Instead, most of the sell-out was from Native people to White people, or Native people having their land indemnified, then taken by the Federal Government for later resale to White settlers. This is unsurprising, but still disappointing: many Whites took advantage of Native peoples' lack of engagement in their arid prison, and even though the land was only farmable after significant investment, it shows inequality in Western expansion as Whites tried to gain as much land as they could. My study also confirms the transient nature of frontier life—settlers' high mobility levels showed how truly impermanent early 20th Century life was.

Originally painted as a place “good for nothing but to hold the world together,” (Rogers, 2005) the Uinta Basin remains isolated and, as ever, dependent on its natural resources. The population remains transient as greener pastures (and higher oil field wages) beckon its people elsewhere. It may barely hold the world together still, but the desert clay, rocky streams, and dusty roads retain memories of all those who have set food there, their spirits rising up to the wide Western sky.

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