Stokes Nature Center operates out of a 3,000 square-foot lodge that sits on U.S. Forest Service land, under a lease agreement with the Forest Service. It was constructed in 1924 by members of the American Legion. After the Legion built a new facility in Logan in the late 1980s, they donated the lodge to the Trapper Trails Council of the Boy Scouts. Finding that it didn't fit their needs, the Boy Scouts left it vacant.

Several community members in Logan's First Presbyterian Church and the Bridgerland Audubon Society, seeing a need for nature education in Cache Valley, began to develop the idea of creating a nature center out of the old abandoned building. In August 1996, the church took ownership of the building. Together, the Presbyterian Church and Bridgerland Audubon designated a board to establish a separate organization to develop a not-for-profit nature center.

After being abandoned for over two years, the building was in poor shape. Vandals had kicked holes in the walls, broken nearly every pane of glass, and built fires on the tile floors. Nature had begun to reclaim the space, taking its own toll on the building. Trees grew into the sides of the roof, holes in the ceiling let in the weather, and mice built their nests in the cozy interior. However, the location was just right: only a short drive from Logan, but far enough into the canyon to bring people out into nature. And it was free!

There were challenges, but there was an even greater amount of determination on the part of many people who believed the community badly needed a center for nature education. A crew of over 200 volunteers worked for more than a year renovating the building to provide a safe and welcoming place for learning. Now, all it needed was a name.

Allen and Alice Stokes loved nature and were both active members of the community. Allen was a naturalist and professor at Utah State University, and Alice volunteered her time for many causes. The nature center founders asked Allen and Alice if they could use their name. Reluctantly, the Stokes gave permission, but Allen asked that Alice’s name be put first. He died before the center opened, and Alice switched the names so that his was first. On November 1, 1997, the Allen and Alice Stokes Nature Center was dedicated.

In July 2001, after three and a half successful years of programming, the title to the building was turned over to Stokes Nature Center. Since then, the center has operated as an independent non-profit organization with a mission to provide opportunities for people of all ages to explore, learn about, and develop appreciation and stewardship for our natural world.

Sources:


*Field Notes from the Allen and Alice Stokes Nature Center.* 1.1 (Feb. 1998).