Fur trappers came to Cache Valley in the 1800s in search of beaver. As they explored the valley, they left many place names in their wake. For example, the name Cache Valley comes from the French word “cache” meaning “to hide.” Not wanting to lug their furs around with them, trappers would “cache” or hide their furs in a hole dug into a riverbank to keep them safe until they could take them to market.

The name for Logan Canyon and its river also came from these early explorers. North West Fur Company trappers were the first Euro-Americans to explore Logan Canyon. They came to Cache Valley in 1818, led by Michel Bourdon. When Bourdon was killed by Indians west of Yellowstone, his followers named Logan Canyon's river after him in his honor. Later, trappers renamed the Bourdon River for another dead trapper, Ephraim Logan.

Although Logan's name is well-known, not much is known about his past. The first record mentioning Logan shows him in St. Louis in 1823 joining a fur expedition led by William H. Ashley. He signed onto the expedition at a fixed salary of $200 per year, and traveled to the Rocky Mountains to trap beaver. During the summer and fall of 1824, he trapped from the Bighorn to Bear River, and spent the winter of 1824-25 in Cache Valley. In 1826, he traded his furs at the rendezvous in Cache Valley, and the next summer, he attended the rendezvous at Bear Lake. Later that year, Logan along with 15-20 other trappers set off for the Snake River Valley. Along the way, Logan and three others diverged from the rest of the group to explore some minor rivers. They had planned to meet up with their group in a few days, but mysteriously disappeared. Nothing was ever heard from them again. Accounts differ on what exactly happened to these men, but many agree that they were probably killed by Indians.

In 1828, Logan's friends named the Logan River in his honor. When the Mormon pioneers arrived in the 1850s, they learned the name of the river, but not where the name came from. When it came time to name their city, John P. Wright suggested the name Logan. There are differing accounts about whether this name came from the river on whose banks the city was built or a friendly Indian chief named Logan Fontenelle, who made great efforts to keep peace between his people and the Mormon settlers. Whichever the case, the name Logan was adopted, and now lives on as a city, river, and canyon.

Sources:


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