

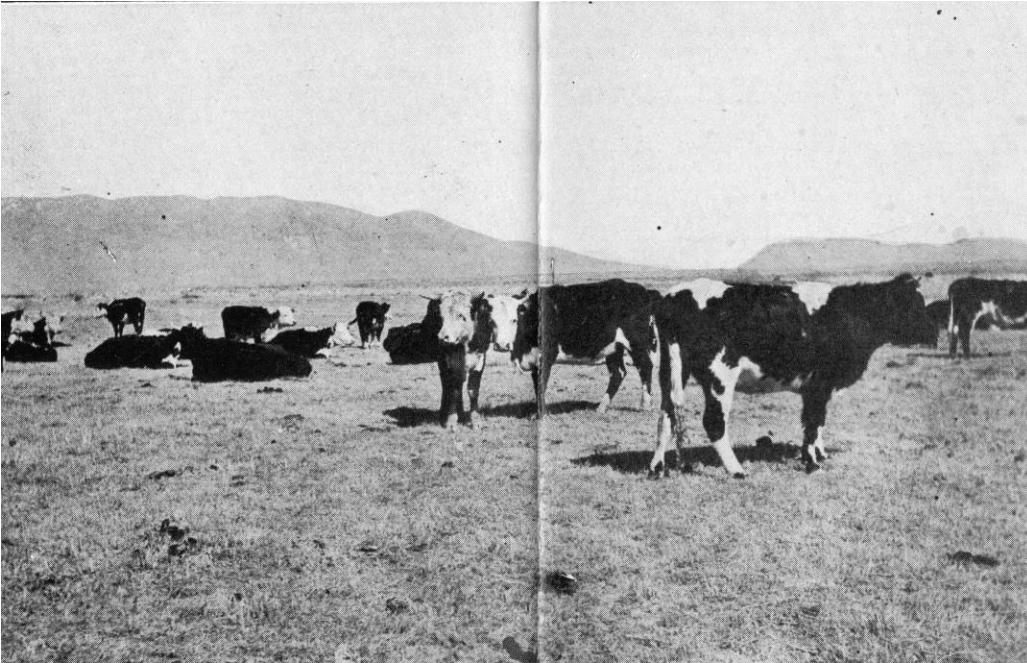
Park Valley, Utah Project Area History
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The Park Valley Project Area is located in the northwestern portion of Utah. Park Valley is rich in the historical themes that have become iconic of European settlement in the West – fur trappers and explorers, overland emigration, railroads and cattle barons, mining, livestock grazing and agricultural development. This history is both lively and vital for developing an understanding of the how the landscape in this project area changed over time. The importance of incorporating land-use history has emerged over the last few decades because of the lasting impacts (or “landscape legacies”) observed in vegetation and soil dynamics in the semiarid West.

The most well studied historic land-use is livestock grazing. Overstocking of the range was most pronounced during the era of the cattle barons in the mid 1880s. Charles Crocker, well known railroad promoter, owned an extensive ranching operation just east of Park Valley with at least 45,000 head of cattle. Settlers in Park Valley also raised cattle and sheep (Figure 1). The hard winter of 1886-1887 had a devastating effect on the cattle in the area. This setback, in addition to an increasing demand for wool during World War I pushed numbers of sheep above cattle for a time in Park Valley (Figure 2). Research has shown that European livestock grazing was instrumental in the introduction and spread of invasive plant species in the Great Basin.

European settlement was also accompanied by a great deal of land clearing to obtain homestead patents and for agriculture. Settlement began in Park Valley in 1870s but really took off during the land boom of the 1910s. In addition to homesteading of lands through the federal government land offices, private companies acquired land grant properties from the railroad and sold them to settlers. There were two companies that sold railroad land grant sections in the Park Valley area – Golden West Land Company and the Pacific Land and Water Company (See Figure 3). Companies like these were prone to making outrageous claims regarding the capability of arid lands to support agriculture (See Figure 4). They also helped promote a form of agriculture without irrigation (known as “dry-farming”) that was growing in popularity in Utah and the Great Basin at this time. Although successfully employed in some areas, dry-farming was a disaster for most of the people who tried it in Park Valley and other parts of the Great Basin Desert region. Most of the cleared and plowed dry-farms were abandoned by the 1920s. The fallow fields and cleared lands abandoned by homesteaders were staging areas of disturbed soil that harbored invasive species. These previously plowed areas represent landscape legacies where the trajectory for problems with invasive species may have been set almost a century ago.

Figure 1



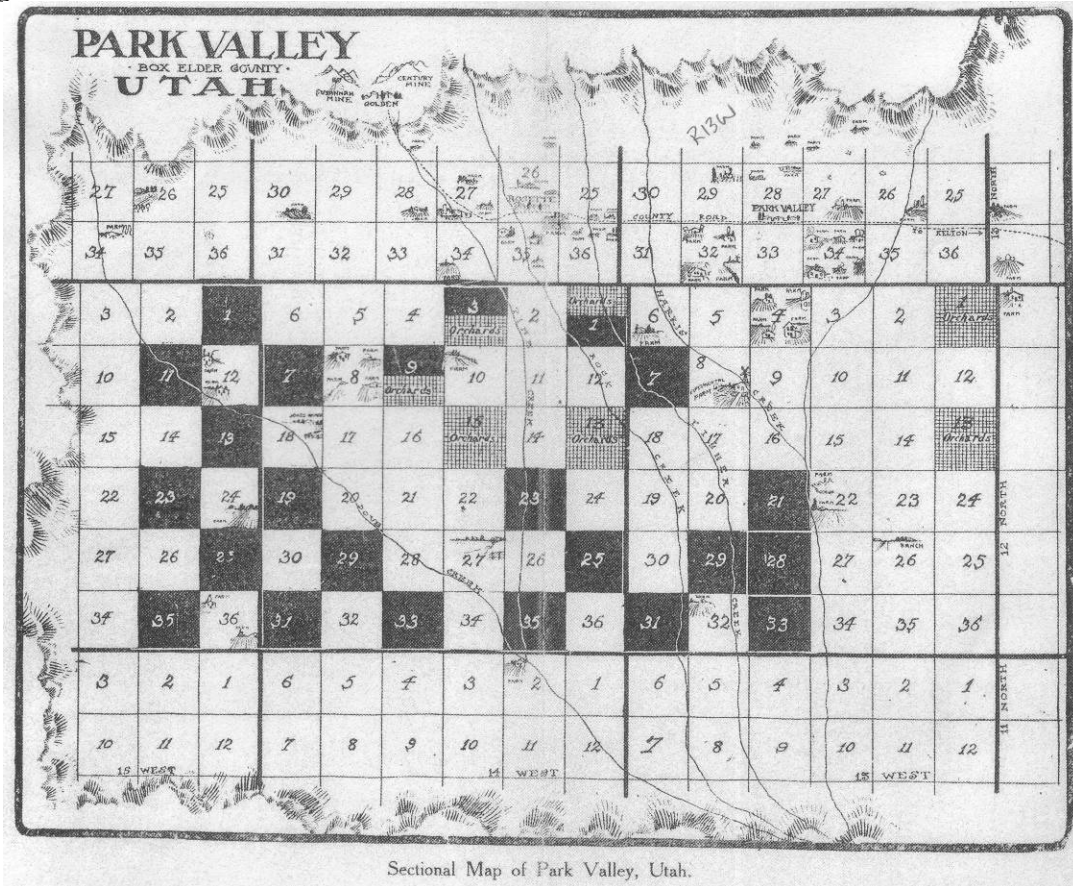
Cattle in Park Valley, ca. 1911 (Photo used by permission, Utah State Historical Society, all rights reserved.)

Figure 2



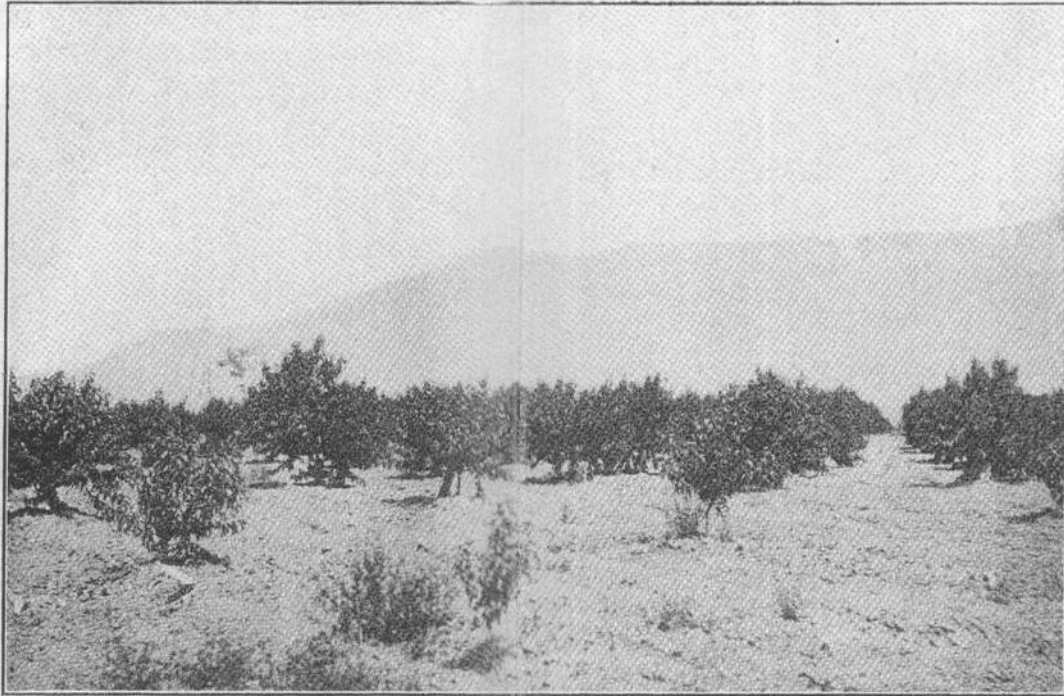
A sheep herd in Park Valley, ca. 1911 (Photo used by permission, Utah State Historical Society, all rights reserved.)

Figure 3



Sectional Map of Park Valley, Utah.
This map was distributed in a Pacific Land and Water Company pamphlet in 1911 showing the sections they offered for sale in Park Valley. (Photo used by permission, Utah State Historical Society, all rights reserved.)

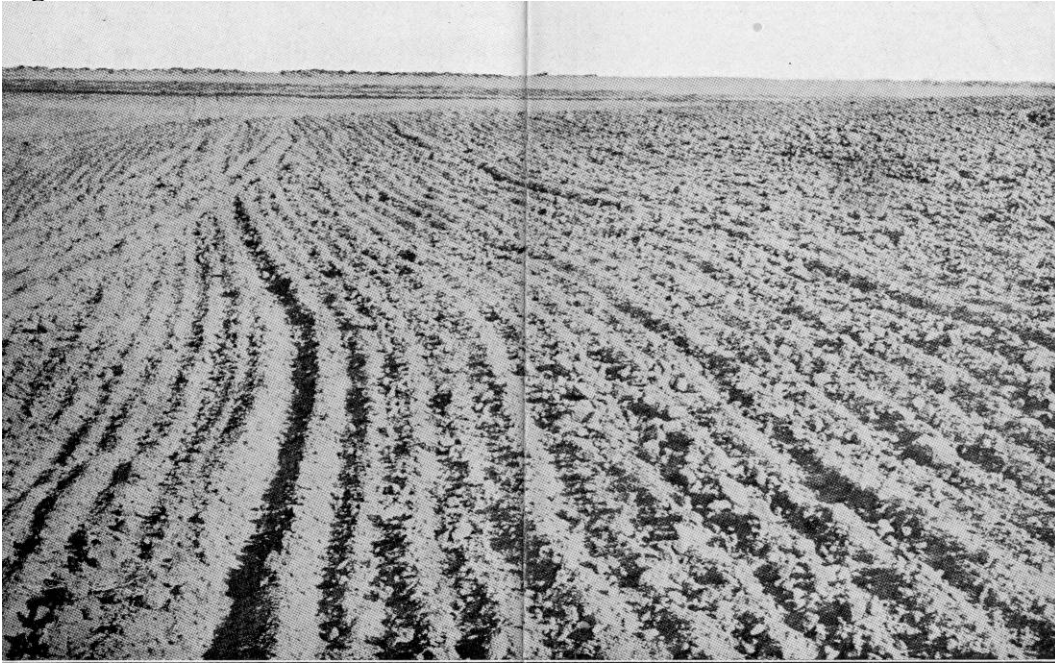
Figure 4



Two-Year-Old Peach Orchard Grown Without Irrigation in Box Elder County—Cultivation vs. Irrigation

The Pacific Land and Water Company claimed this “two-year old peach orchard” was grown without irrigation, ca. 1911. (Photo used by permission, Utah State Historical Society, all rights reserved.)

Figure 5



Land cleared and plowed for dry-farming in Park Valley, ca. 1911 (Photo used by permission, Utah State Historical Society, all rights reserved.)