

History of the Heber Valley: Home of Soldier Hollow

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When planners for the 2002 Olympic Winter Games and the Paralympic Winter Games looked for a good location for biathlon, cross country and the nordic combined ski events they found that the Heber Valley was at the right elevation and had the appropriate mix of flat and hilly areas for these events. They named the spot after the soldiers who passed through on their way to Salt Lake City in the mid 1800's.

The Heber Valley has an interesting history. Early Native Americans lived and hunted there. Hunting also brought white Americans. Fur trappers, led by Etienne Provost, visited the area in 1824. The Provo River, running south through the valley, is named after that explorer.

Settlers knew of the beautiful valley but could not travel there without a road through either Parley's or Provo Canyons. Provo residents were nervous because Johnston's Army had settled at Camp Floyd near Utah Lake. They asked Brigham Young to build a road through Provo Canyon which would allow them an escape from the army if necessary. The Utah War delayed construction, but finally, in 1859 a road linked Provo and the Heber Valley. This opened the area up to families, and the little communities of Heber City and Midway were settled. As more white men moved into the land, the Indians became angry and raided the communities. Brigham Young, the territorial governor, encouraged the settlers to built forts for protection. Two settlements along Snake Creek agreed to build a fort halfway or "midway" between the communities and the

name stayed with the area. The first settlers of Heber City were English converts to the Mormon Church. They had been taught by Heber C. Kimball and honored him by naming the valley and the first settlement, Heber.

Agriculture has always been important to the residents of Heber Valley. When the Rio Grande Western railway track was completed in 1899, the city became a shipping center for agricultural products. Today, the "Heber Creeper" follows the old track line and will bring guests to the events at Soldier Hollow during the Games. Changes will continue to come to the Heber Valley as the economy shifts towards tourism and as the world discovers Midway and Heber City.

SOLDIER HOLLOW VENUE

Soldier Hollow is the largest venue with over 23 kilometers of trail and an Olympic size shooting range. The area, previously used for cattle grazing, has now been planted with native trees and wetland species. Soldier Hollow will host the biathlon, cross-country skiing and nordic combined skiing during the Olympic Winter Games and will host the cross-country and biathlon events during the Paralympic Winter Games.

WESTERN EXPERIENCE AT SOLDIER HOLLOW

When people visit Soldier Hollow during the Games, there will be a lot to see and do. Not only will visitors be able to watch Olympic Winter Games and Paralympic Winter Games events, but they may also participate in a unique "Western Experience." Going through the venue gates will be a walk through time. Volunteers, dressed as pioneers, will be stationed at log cabins and covered wagons ready to share experiences with visitors. Animals seen on the range will be grazing nearby. Several trapper families will simulate wilderness living in tepees and canvas tents, where they will demonstrate beading, curing hides, and other trades necessary to life in the wild. The "Western Experience" will be a wonderful view into Utah's past.