



THE UTES

ANNOTATED TIMELINE OF UTE HISTORY

Ute lifeways changed so significantly with the introduction of the horse that it is a natural starting point to tell this chapter of Ute history.

1630–1640 UTES EXPERIENCE FIRST CONTACT WITH THE SPANISH (INTRODUCTION OF THE HORSE)

When Christopher Columbus arrived in the Caribbean Sea in 1492, he opened the floodgates for the European invasion of the Americas, and with European expansion came new animals, goods, and diseases. The Spanish who settled and explored the American Southwest brought their horses with them, and this new animal dramatically transformed the Utes' economy, culture, and political structures. The Utes gained horses through trade, and adopting the horse for transportation meant that they could travel over greater distances and gain access to more resources. The Spanish moved further into Ute territory as they searched for gold and people to convert to Catholicism.

1829 OLD SPANISH TRAIL OPENS

The Old Spanish Trail connected Santa Fe, New Mexico, to Los Angeles, California. The travelers using the trail brought new trade goods to the Utes, but the increasing numbers of non-Indian people traveling through the Ute homeland also led to change. One important impact of the Old Spanish Trail was that it escalated the Indian slave trade in the Great Basin. The Utes were sometimes victims of the slave trade, but they also raided neighboring tribes and traded with Mexican slavers.

1833 U.S. MILITARY ESTABLISHES FORT KIT CARSON

Kit Carson established a winter fort near the Ute village at White Rocks.

1630

1776 ESCALANTE'S EXPEDITION TRAVELS THROUGH THE UTAH BASIN

Franciscan friars Dominguez and Escalante entered Ute territory while exploring a northern route from Santa Fe, New Mexico, to Monterey, California. Though communication was difficult, they relied on Ute guides for part of their journey. They turned back before reaching Monterey, but the records of their journey introduced the world to the Ute people.

1825 ASHLEY EXPLORES THE UTAH BASIN

William H. Ashley sent a crew of mountain men into Ute territory in search of beavers for the fur trade. In 1825 he came to Ute territory himself to bring supplies and plan a rendezvous. Ashley explored much of what would become Utah and continued to send mountain men through Ute territory and to sponsor rendezvous in the area. The fur trade would bring many more Europeans into the formerly isolated lands held by the Ute people.

1831 ANTOINETTE ROBIDOUX OPENS A TRADING POST IN THE UTAH BASIN

By setting up a trading post in the northern end of the Uinta Basin, Robidoux drew more Europeans into Ute lands. The trading post also had a reputation for encouraging bad behavior amongst the non-Indian people who frequented it. The fort brought increased access to guns and alcohol, and some Indian women and children were captured into prostitution and slavery. When Robidoux left town in 1844, the Utes burned his trading post to the ground, possibly in retaliation for his attempts to cheat the Indians and the harm that his post had done.

1833



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1847 MEMBERS OF THE LDS CHURCH BEGIN TO SETTLE ON UTE LANDS

The presence of permanent settlers displaced important Ute campsites, disrupted hunting trails, drove out wild game, and put serious stress on the resources of the Ute homeland. This competition over resources and threat to their livelihoods led some Utes to raid settlers' livestock, and eventually armed conflicts broke out between the two groups.

1849 MOACHE UTES NEGOTIATE A TREATY WITH THE U.S.

This treaty was negotiated between leaders of the Moache band and Indian agent Calhoun but written to apply to all Ute people. Under this treaty the Moache agreed (for all Utes, without the authority to do so) to live under the jurisdiction of the government, return any captives, abide by trade laws, and keep the peace.

1861 PRESIDENT LINCOLN CREATES UINTA RESERVATION

LDS leader Brigham Young sent a survey party to the Uintah Basin in 1860 to see if the area could be settled. The party concluded that the lands were "entirely unsuitable for farming purposes, . . . one vast contiguity of waste, and measurably valueless. . . ." Being of no use to the Mormons, Young recommended that the area be turned into an Indian reservation (confining the Utes to a reservation would free up more Indian land for Mormon settlement). By executive order, President Lincoln established the Uinta Valley Reservation in 1861.

1865 (JUNE 6) UTES AND BRIGHAM YOUNG SIGN TREATY AT SPANISH FORK RESERVATION

Although many Utes spoke out against the agreement, at the advice of Brigham Young, Ute leaders signed this treaty, giving up Ute lands in central Utah in exchange for an annual annuity. Congress did not ratify this treaty, so the Utes never received payment. Nonetheless, most were removed to the Uintah Valley Reservation.

1847

1848 U.S. AND MEXICO SIGN THE TREATY OF GUADALUPE-HIDALGO

The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo ended the U.S.-Mexican War. In the agreement, the United States took California and the nearby territory. Without the consent of the Ute people, their land was divided into territories of the United States, and the federal government began to establish local agencies in the territory to "civilize" the Indians.

1853-1854 WALKER WAR

In the summer of 1853 a Ute was killed by a settler, and anger at this action led Wakara to conduct raids on Mormon settlements. Peace was arranged in under a year.

1864 (MAY 5) CONGRESS RATIFIES LINCOLN'S ORDER AND ENACTS STATUTE 64, SETTING APART LAND FOR PERMANENT SETTLEMENT BY INDIANS

Though the Uinta Reservation had been created by executive order and ratified by Congress, the Ute people were not all moving peacefully to their new government-appointed home. Mormon settlers became frustrated that the Utes were not abandoning their traditional territory to resettle on the reservation. This led to conflicts.

1864 MORMONS ASK FOR UTES TO BE REMOVED TO SANPETE AND THE UINTA VALLEY

As whites began to occupy the Uintah Basin and game became increasingly scarce, the Utes found themselves struggling for survival. After his people suffered a smallpox epidemic and famine in the winter of 1864-65, Black Hawk was named a war chief. He and the surviving Utes of the Manti area decide to attack the settlers, whom they believe brought the smallpox epidemic that decimated their numbers.

1865



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1865–1872 BLACK HAWK WAR

Ute leader Black Hawk intensified raiding of nearby Mormon settlements, seizing livestock and supplies. Mormon requests for federal aid were initially refused, and fighting frequently broke out between the settlers and the Utes and their Paiute and Navajo allies.

1868 OURAY SIGNS “KIT CARSON” TREATY

This treaty promised seven bands of Utes 1,500,000 acres of land in Colorado for their “absolute and undisturbed use and occupation.” The new reservation was headquartered at the White River Agency. In spite of the treaty’s promise of permanency, the Brunot Agreement of 1874 took this land away.

1868 WHITEROCKS AGENCY ESTABLISHED ON THE UINTA RESERVATION

The Uinta Reservation is one part of the modern Uintah-Ouray Reservation that the Northern Utes of Utah now own. The nearby Uncompahgre (later renamed Ouray) Reservation was established in 1882 for the Uncompahgre Utes. The reservations were consolidated in 1886, and the headquarters was moved to Fort Duchesne in 1912.

1880 TREATY SIGNED AND RATIFIED FORCING REMOVAL OF UTES FROM COLORADO

After the Meeker incident, anti-Ute sentiment was strong in Colorado. The Uncompahgre Utes had not taken part in the fighting, and Ouray attempted to reestablish peace with the federal government so that his people could remain in Colorado. His efforts failed, and U.S. troops forcibly removed the Uncompahgre Utes to Utah in 1881.

1865

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1869 TABBY-TO-KWANAH LEADS HIS PEOPLE TO THE UINTA RESERVATION, ONLY TO LEAD THEM FROM IT THREE YEARS LATER

Following a trusted leader, hoping for peace, and having been promised payment for the land they were leaving, many Utes (primarily of the Uintah and White River bands) went peacefully to the Uintah Reservation from their homes in eastern Utah.

1878–1879 UTES AT WHITE RIVER AGENCY IN COLORADO HAVE PROBLEMS WITH INDIAN AGENT NATHAN MEEKER

Although he had little prior experience or contact with Native Americans, Nathan Meeker was appointed Indian agent at White River. He saw the Utes as savages and wanted to “civilize” them by creating a farm on the reservation, and he infuriated the Utes by telling them that they would have to become farmers or lose their land. With no understanding of horses’ importance to Ute culture, he banned horse-racing and converted the best pastures to farmland. He even suggested killing some of the Utes’ horses and plowed up part of a horse-racing track to send a message. The Utes were infuriated, and Meeker, fearing for his safety, sent for federal troops to protect him. In 1879, troops from Fort Steele, Wyoming, came to the reservation and did battle with Indians assembled at reservation border. While some Utes held off the troops, others attacked the agency, killing Meeker. After the incident, the White River Utes were removed to Utah.

1880