

## Uranium Mining in Emery County

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Castle Dale, Utah

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I started getting interested in Uranium from working with my father, Ernest Hunter. They called him "Doc". We lived in Ferron at the time.

There was a lot of claim staking in the county, but not much mining. The Atomic Mining Comm. was offering a \$10,000 bonus for shipment of so many tons of ore. They probably shipped it to Blanding. That is where the Uranium Mill was at that time. This was during the Atomic Bomb era. This was at the Morrison Formation. I think it belonged to Foster Nelson and I believe they were the ones who got the \$10,000 bonus.

At that time, that was a lot of money. Many of the mines at that time were not actually in Emery County, but close to the border. The big money mine was the "Snow Mine" south and west Green River. Don Snow and the Sr. Clifford Snow along with others, owned that mine. It actually produced ore up until some time in the 70's . Ray Wareham was involved in that mine. Also Atlas Minerals from Moab actually took it over. They were the last producers of that property.

Two or three years ago when Uranium was high, we looked into reclaiming our mine. We had claims east of Ferron at the Head of Sinbad. We never shipped any ore, but we were adjacent to Vitro Marathon and they drilled a lot of holes. They sold out to an outfit from Canada and they actually shipped some ore out of there.

The bigger mines, the "Pick Mine" and the "Lucky Strike Mine" were two that shipped a lot of ore. A man by the name of "Bill Hannert" took it over and shipped a lot of ore out of there. Also, the "Vernon Pick Mine" down on the Dirty Devil was actually mined out and the structures abandoned.

The biggest money making mine in Emery County was the "Snow Mine". I am not sure about the "Pick Mine"...it might have been outside of Emery County. The "Lucky Strike Mine" did ship out a lot of ore. But the one that was in operation for many years was the "Snow Mine" that was just South of Green River.

The ones below Castle Dale were in the "Morrison Formation" which is a lot different from the "Chinle Formation".

We made contracts with Westinghouse and they drilled many holes out east of Ferron along our property. We had about 10,000 acres of claims east of Ferron.

Back then, up until about 1990, you could just go out and stake a claim, but you had to do \$100.00 worth of work on each claim. The only cost was the filing fee on each claim with the County Recorder.

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The Federal Government got involved and they passed rules that you had to file claims also with the BLM at the state office. Sometime in the late 1990's they changed it so that the ones that were doing the most to keep track of where the claims were and making them pay the filing fee was the Government. Then they changed it over to rather than a \$100.00 assessment they changed it to \$165.00 per claim per year in lieu of assessment work. A small buyer can still, if he has 10 claims or less, can do a small ladder exemption, so he can still do the assessment on the claims.

Back in the early years, there was a lot of out-crop and you couldn't follow the channel without drilling. You had to stake a lot of claims in order to justify a drilling program to try to find the ore. Now days if you staked 100 claims that would be about \$16,500 a year just to hang on to the thing. That is a lot of money! It takes time to put a drilling program together and now you don't have rights to drill like you used to have. Now you have to file with the Government, and they have to make sure it meets the environmental standards. They send out the troops to check everything out and that takes a lot of time. Now days for an operator to be able to afford it financially...it might take 7 or 8 years of processing and making application to drill before you can do it and then you are not assured of anything. They might approve a part of it and not the rest, and the part they don't approve might be the best part. So it was very difficult if you're a small operator. Of course if your Exxon or Mobil, you might be able to do that. However, most of the Uranium Boom in 1950 and 1970's when I was involved (1970) it was mostly the independents that did all of the work. The major chunk came in after you had staked the claims and dropped the preliminary down to show that there was a possibility of something there. Then you could talk to the larger corporations and they would come in and do the drilling. A small operator couldn't do that. So, it was a sort of uranium pick-up.

Australia decided that they weren't going to have uranium mines anymore. So for awhile, the price of Uranium went way down.

There was a lot of interest and activity started up again. But the price of uranium dropped down again. So it doesn't mean that it might not happen again.

I was in uranium during the 70's and early into the 80's, probably from 1965 to 70 something. We never had a mine, we were trying to get things to the point where we could entice larger companies to come in. We had Conoco come in down in Sinbad and they took over and did a lot of the drilling there. Westinghouse also came in and we made deals with them.

I feel it was well worth the investment we made. However, it is a big gamble. But we loved doing it. I think I actually had a love of mining in my blood from my father. He was an early coal miner. He mined hard rock mineral in Nevada and Utah. The stuff just gets in your blood. But, as I said, it is a big gamble. What you try to do ...we knew we did not have the where-with-all to take it all the way, so our program was to hunt and prospect and get it to the point where we could sell it to a major company and let them come in and do the big job. They would pay us something up front and give us a royalty check if the mine paid off. It was exciting and a lot of

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people in the early 50's were very excited about finding uranium. But, by 1970's it was also exciting because it died away and then came back again at this time. It seems to follow a cycle, being high and then it falls off. It's just like gold... it gets to about \$1,000 an ounce and then everybody is out there looking for gold and then it falls off, and something else gets hot. The big banks buy and sell gold high, but it really has more to do with monetary value.

People would buy Silver to hedge against inflation. It actually has more value because it has so many more uses.

Since Uranium played such an important role in Emery County, I feel that it will do it again. There is a proposal to build a uranium plant in Green River at this time, but it takes so long to get the process approved. Companies won't spend the money unless the Government will guarantee them, that if they go through the process, that they can accomplish it. The whole complaint is that we don't have a place to dispose of the waste, or they might have an accident, etc.

China has all nuclear, most foreign countries do, all but us. So what difference does it make. I like to think that I am an environmentalist, but when you get so far out, crying that we need to use wind, etc, soon they will be saying that the wind mill are killing all the birds, it is a crazy problem. Maybe someday someone will get some sense.

I feel sure that Uranium will come back, however, it might take another decade. We probably won't be here to see the day it comes back.