

# Moving West

We know that people have used this area for hundreds of years. In this small area, we can see older, subtle evidence in the petroglyphs carved on a large boulder, and the more obvious log cabin, root cellar, and corral. All of these people had their reasons for coming here.

In the late 1800s, John Wesley Wolfe came west because of health problems related to a Civil War injury. He left his wife and three of his children in Etna, Ohio. His oldest son, Fred, came with him as he looked for a place to settle.

Wolfe raised cattle here, eventually grazing more than a thousand head on the plentiful grass of the time. Although the sandy soil was poor, water was the key to successful living. The alkaline water of Salt Wash supplied Wolfe's cattle and a garden; a freshwater spring nearby provided drinking water for people.

# Living in the Desert

The first cabin that John and Fred built was not elaborate, but provided basic shelter from spring winds, summer heat, fall rains,

This easy 0.25 mile (0.4 km) trail offers a glimpse into the past through the lives of American Indians and European-American settlers. You can play an important role in preserving this irreplaceable historic site. The ravages of nature are nothing compared to the effects of thousands of visitors.

## Please:

- DO NOT enter or climb on historic structures (buildings or fences).
- DO NOT touch petroglyphs or pictographs; oils from your hands can damage fragile rock surfaces.
- DO stay on trails to help prevent damage to delicate plants and soils.

and winter cold. A dam on the wash helped capture water for root vegetables, pumpkins, and melons raised in their garden. The dam washed out regularly and no sign of it remains today. They ordered staple groceries from the Sears, Roebuck and Co. catalog about once every three months and picked them up at the Thompson Springs railroad station, which was a full day's wagon trip away.



In 1906 Wolfe's daughter, Flora, and her husband, Ed Stanley, along with their two children, Esther and Ferol, came from Ohio to live with him. Initially disappointed in the "ranch," Flora convinced her father to build a new cabin with a wooden floor. They used horses to drag the logs from near the Colorado River and the boards for the floor came from Thompson Springs.

The root cellar was a vital part of life at the ranch. Underground storage provided a cool place to store canned goods and staples. In the winter it protected edibles from freezing temperatures. Jerked (dried) meat and corned beef were kept here after butchering in the fall. Root vegetables from the garden provided meals throughout the winter. Each year, Wolfe stashed a melon for a Christmas treat.

Flora spent two lonely years at the ranch. Wolfe tried to make her more comfortable in what must have seemed a desolate place. Because Flora disliked eating on tin plates, Wolfe ordered a one-hundred-piece set of blue china dishes from Sears. The children found the butter



plates useful for mud pie parties! Wolfe also surprised his daughter by ordering a camera and developing kit from Sears. Flora took this photograph of Delicate Arch, one of the earliest taken of the often-photographed arch.

In 1908 Flora and Ed moved to Moab so the children could attend school. John and Fred Wolfe remained on the ranch for two more years before joining them in Moab. John Wolfe and the Stanleys left Moab in 1910 and eventually moved back to Ohio where Wolfe died in 1913 at the age of eighty-four.

# American Indians

Walk across the bridge over Salt Wash and take the trail to your left. There you will see a small panel of petroglyphs on the rock face.

Indians from the Ute and/or Paiute cultures never inhabited this area on a year-round



basis, though for centuries they roamed Salt Valley searching for wild game such as bighorn sheep and plants that were either edible, medicinal, or could be used to make dye. Perhaps on food-gathering trips they discovered the abundant supply of chert, which they used to make tools. Utes camped nearby during Wolfe's stay here and traded handmade blankets for garden produce and meat. The petroglyphs you see chipped into the sandstone are the most conspicuous evidence of American Indian life in the area. The figures on horseback show us that this rock art was created after the mid 1600s when the native people in this area acquired horses.

**Please do not touch the rock art. All archeological resources are protected by federal law and are irreplaceable. Leave them unharmed for future visitors to enjoy.**

## After the Wolfes

Wolfe sold his ranch to Tommy Larson in 1910. In 1914 J. Marvin Turnbow, the first custodian of what was then Arches National Monument, bought the ranch. Turnbow and son are pictured at the cabin on this brochure's front panel. The Turnbows used the cabin intermittently during grazing or round-up times. Turnbow sold the ranch to Emmett Elizondo in 1947, who subsequently sold the property to the government to be included in the monument. Arches was designated a national park in 1971.



In 1975, the Wolfe Ranch Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The nomination reads: "Historically, the activities of man on the Colorado Plateau have been a function of his ability to exploit and control its meager water resources. Wolfe's ranching operation on Salt Wash is an excellent example of early subsistence farming and grazing in a marginal environment."

It was indeed a marginal environment, and years of cattle and sheep grazing have had a significant impact on the natural vegetation of the region. No grazing has occurred for more than two decades, but native grasses are still sparse and in some localized areas have disappeared completely. Today, we may admire the perseverance and determination of early ranchers, but we also realize that the impacts of their actions went far beyond their brief stay. It will be years—if ever—before the ranch and surrounding area look like they did when American Indians or John Wesley Wolfe first saw it.

**Help us take care of this place by staying on the trails. Please do not disturb historical or archeological sites.**



**National Park Service**  
U.S. Department of the Interior

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# Wolfe Ranch

TRAIL GUIDE



0.25 mile (0.4km)  
National Historic District  
**ARCHES NATIONAL PARK**