

**For Immediate Release (June 23, 2014)**

**Beehive Archive**

Welcome to the Beehive Archive—your weekly bite-sized look at some of the most pivotal—and peculiar—events in Utah history. With all of the history and none of the dust, the Beehive Archive is a fun way to catch up on Utah’s past. Beehive Archive is a production of the Utah Humanities Council, provided to local papers as a weekly feature article focusing on Utah history topics drawn from our award-winning radio series, which can be heard each week on [KCPW](#) and [Utah Public Radio](#).

**The Gypsies are Coming!**

**Traveling gypsies brought excitement to small towns all over Utah in the early 1900s.**

To most residents of rural Utah in the early 1900s, summertime meant hauling hay, digging ditches, irrigating crops, and tending livestock. Other than the usual town parties, there was little diversion from the monotony of farm labor. That is, not until traveling groups of gypsies showed up – and stirred up excitement – in small communities all over Utah.

From Garland to Kanab, and towns in between, news of these exotic visitors spread quickly. Most gypsies were of Balkan, and Eastern or Central European descent, and had come to the United States at the turn of the century. Their traveling lifestyle took them from town to town, leading caravans of wagons, horses, dogs, and children. They generally traveled in groups of five to ten families, camped on the outskirts of town, and stayed a few weeks before moving on.

Utah residents who remember gypsies coming to their communities reported the experience with great fondness, if not some stereotyping. Gypsy men apparently wore large hats and spangled vests, while women wore full skirts and bright scarves. Gypsies earned a living by horse trading or telling fortunes, and sometimes by begging or stealing. But most stories focus on gypsies entertaining townspeople. In Manti, for example, one resident remembered a group of gypsies that owned a dancing black bear and a monkey that sat atop an organ grinder catching nickels. In Oak City, a singer entertained residents for hours at the city hall with his extensive repertoire. In Elsinore, another man performed rope tricks in an hour-long demonstration that was a highlight of the town's Fourth of July celebration.

By the 1930s, a combination of industrialization, the automobile, and the Great Depression forced many gypsies into sedentary urban settings, which brought an end to their intensely mobile way of life.

*Beehive Archive is a production of the Utah Humanities Council. Sources consulted in the creation of the Beehive Archive and past episodes may be found at [www.utahhumanities.org/BeehiveArchive.htm](http://www.utahhumanities.org/BeehiveArchive.htm). Utah Division of State History © 2014.*

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