



# COTTONWOOD HEIGHTS

## WALKING TOURS

### Route 3: Big Cottonwood Canyon Creek Trail

Distance: 2 miles

Online Map: [cottonwood-heights-walking-tours-chcity.hub.arcgis.com](http://cottonwood-heights-walking-tours-chcity.hub.arcgis.com)



This route travels between the Old Mill Office Park and the Big Cottonwood Canyon Park and Ride. Much of the route is along a paved walking path through what was previously known as Old Mill Valley. In 1848 the area's first road was built on the north side of Big Cottonwood Creek to haul logs from Big Cottonwood Canyon to Salt Lake City and later to transport granite from the canyon for construction of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' Salt Lake Temple. Along the route are multiple markers chronicling the history of pioneers in Cottonwood Heights.

#### 1. Woods Homestead

The Old Mill bike path has an entry between the Old Mill Village Shopping Center and Big Cottonwood Creek. The land was originally part of Edwin (Edward) Woods' homestead. Woods was an African American who came to Utah with his wife and five children from Missouri. He applied for and was granted a 160 acre homestead for which he received a patent in 1880. Woods' property was considered a choice piece of land because the creek ran through the middle. Due to financial difficulties, the Woods homestead was eventually sold for \$14.05 in back taxes and developed by others.

#### 2. Old Mill Park

Old Mill Park has a retention pond known for bird watching in the spring when the pond is full. William and Janette Ritter arrived in Utah in July of 1847 with a group known as the "Mississippi Saints." The couple lived on the land for several years before applying for a homestead grant in 1875. Shortly thereafter William was killed in a snow slide in Big Cottonwood Canyon. Janette obtained the patent in 1880, making her one of only five women to receive a federal land grant patent within the boundaries of what is now Cottonwood Heights.

#### 3. Covered Bridge and Pond

Take a brief detour across the park's covered bridge crossing Big Cottonwood Creek to explore the loop around the retention pond. It was constructed by Cottonwood Heights in 2011. On April 20, 2015, Boy Scout Troop 1571 placed the flag and plaque to honor those from Cottonwood Heights who have served their country.

#### 4. Majestic Elms

The huge trees next to the historical marker titled Cedar Tree are elms. Known for their majestic shade canopy, an elm can live for 400 years.

#### 5. Deseret News Paper Mill

Construction of the Deseret News Paper Mill began in 1880 and it opened for business in 1884. The Old Mill, as it is now known, was built here to access the clean water provided by Big Cottonwood Creek, essential for producing the white paper on which the local newspaper the Deseret News was printed. The Deseret News Company operated the mill until 1890. It then leased the operations to Granite Paper Mill which purchased the building in 1892. On April 1, 1893, a fire started. Hearing the alarm, many thought it was an April Fool's prank. The building was destroyed except for the stone skeleton. It was partially rebuilt in 1927 and used as an open air dance hall until the 1940s. Rock bands played here in the 1960s and the building was used

as a haunted house in the 1970s and '80s. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971.

#### 6. Butler Brewery and Hotel

In 1872, Leander Butler received a patent for 160 acres of land stretching from here to the south and west and onto what was known as the Butler Bench. Leander deeded eight acres to his brother Philander who built a brewery and hotel. As part of the brewery operation, a large pond was created on the shores of the Big Cottonwood Creek. After Philander Butler sold his property to the Deseret News Company for construction of the mill in 1881, residents of the area used the pond to harvest ice and store it for use in the summer.

There are cottonwood, maple and box elder trees. The deep roots of the cottonwood trees can tap into groundwater, which allow them to live in the bottomlands of semi-arid regions. These trees help to absorb floodwaters, prevent soil erosion, filter runoff to maintain water quality, modulate urban air temperatures and provide wildlife habitat. Myrtle spurge is an abundant ground cover on the west side of the path. It is a succulent plant that is thick and able to retain water in dry climates. It has a showy bloom in spring, but is considered a noxious weed. This plant spreads quickly, outgrows native species and can cause rashes and irritations when handled.

#### 7. McGhie Jr. Homestead

In 1867, William McGhie Jr. along with his wife and family settled on land near the mouth of Big Cottonwood Canyon. In 1872, he received a patent for 160 acres through the State Agriculture College Grant. McGhie was designated postmaster for Butler in 1892 and operated the post office out of his home.

A small door is located in the hillside to the east. This is the area where McGhie Springs, a cluster of several crystal clear springs, once flowed from the hillside. During the 1930s, Murray City bored four tunnels into the hillside in an attempt to find the source of the springs and increase the water flow. The door you see is one of the tunnels where the water was piped out and delivered to a reservoir at about 1400 East and Fort Union Boulevard. The water was so clean it required no purification.

The fenced-in property is still owned by Murray City, Utah. This was part of the McGhie homestead. The springs and the property were sold to Murray City by Hyrum Covert, a son-in-law of McGhie's who purchased the property from his mother-in-law.

#### 8. Water Outlet

On the east side of Big Cottonwood Creek, close to the high watermark, look for the water outlet discharging to the creek. The modification of the springs, as well as the ponds and paper mill diversion, are examples of how people have engineered the water resources of the area.

#### 9. Big Cottonwood Park and Ride

With public restrooms and free parking, Big Cottonwood Park & Ride Lot is the access point for outdoor activities in the canyon, including Brighton and Solitude ski resorts.

# #3 Big Cottonwood Creek Trail

- 1 Woods Homestead
- 2 Old Mill Park
- 3 Covered Bridge and Pond
- 4 Majestic Elms
- 5 Deseret News Paper Mill
- 6 Butler Brewery and Hotel
- 7 McGhie Property and Spring
- 8 Water Outlet
- 9 Big Cottonwood Park and Ride

