

## Chapter



## Community Setting and History

*The Copperton Township is in a good position to have control over its future. Neighborhoods have developed in an attractive and orderly fashion. The community's population is projected to increase along with opportunities for residential growth. Following the development guidelines and planning objectives will provide the ability to maintain and improve the positive qualities and achieve the community vision.*

### In This Chapter

#### Social and Economic Conditions

#### Area History

Copperton is an unincorporated township located in the southwestern part of the county near the mouth of Bingham Canyon. The Kennecott Copper Mine, one of the largest open pit mines in the world, is located in Bingham Canyon, which is partially within the township boundaries. The planning area boundary is defined on the north at 7000 South, on the east at 7800 West following the irregular boundaries of West Jordan City and South Jordan City, and the south at 11800 South. The western boundary runs along the crest of the Oquirrh Mountain, which delineate the Salt Lake and Tooele county boundary. Virtually all of the Township's foothill and mountainous areas are privately owned, with Kennecott Utah Copper Corporation being the largest single owner. Kennecott, which was founded in 1903, has contributed much to the historical significance of the Copperton area.

### **Social And Economic Conditions**

The population of Copperton has fluctuated over the years, showing consistent growth from 1930 to about 1960 and then stabilization and declining from 1960 to 1990. In the 1990s, the population increased about 15 percent to 726 residents. The figure below shows the historic trends and population projections for the Copperton Township and also Salt Lake County.

Copperton's median age is 32 years, and the age structure is changing. As younger families have moved to Copperton in the last ten years, the percentage of senior citizens has decreased and the average household size has increased. This trend is expected to continue.

Copperton's median income over the last ten years has increased from \$19,135 in 1990 to \$44,722 in 2000 due to the influx of younger workers and the decrease in the number of retirees. This increase in median income was greater than the State or Salt Lake County changes during the same period.

The 2000 Census estimates the median home value in Copperton at \$115,000, as compared to \$144,000 statewide and \$151,000 in Salt Lake County. The 2000 Census information reports 46 percent or 315 of Copperton’s residents were in the labor force, as compared to 73 percent in the State and County. This reflects the relatively high percentage of senior citizens and retirees in Copperton. Copperton’s unemployment was 2.1 percent, as compared to about 3.5 percent in the County and State.

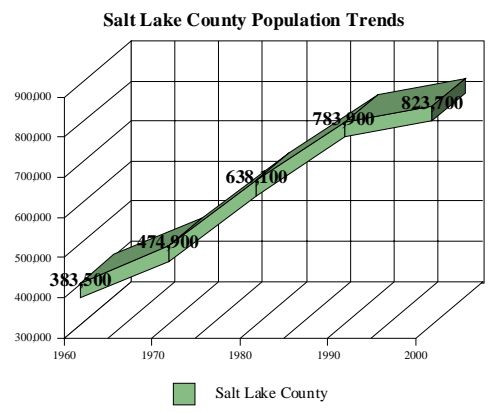
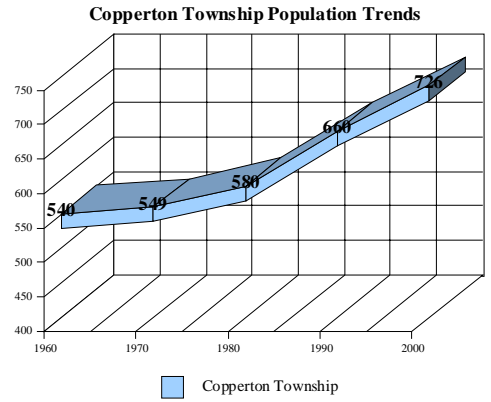
There are about 15 businesses currently operating in Copperton, including the headquarters of Kennecott Utah Copper Corporation, the U.S. Post office branch, an automotive service station, wholesale plant nursery, a small grocery store, a credit union, four commercial establishments, and various home businesses mainly catering to beauty and health care. Of the businesses surveyed by students from the University of Utah Urban Planning Department, most had been in business more than 20 years. Several of these businesses have adjoining retail space, which could be utilized for future expansion and redevelopment opportunities.

Copperton has less residential turnover than either the State or County. In 2000, 69 percent of Copperton residents had lived in the town longer than five years, as compared to about 50 percent in the State and County.

The combination of Copperton’s rural nature, availability of affordable housing and close proximity to major employment and retail centers makes it a valued and convenient place to live. The quaint 1920s style bungalows, front porches, small lots, quiet streets, mature trees and large neighborhood park all come together to create a desirable place to live and encourages community unity and pride.

**Area History**

The earliest historical records involving the Copperton Community area date back to 1847 when Orson Pratt entered the area on an expedition to survey land west of the Mormon Pioneer camp. Thomas and Sanford Bingham first settled the area and used the land for herding horses, cattle and sheep and prospected for valuable minerals. However, mining was discouraged by Mormon leader Brigham Young because it would attract non-Mormons. He believed all labors were needed to produce the necessities of life and to establish Salt Lake City. Ore deposits were forgotten after 1850 when the Bingham families left to settle in Weber County. The area remained unsettled for the next 15 years, although periodic use of the area for grazing and timber cutting from Bingham Canyon occurred. While the logging continued, the



*Kennecott’s Utah Copper’s corporate headquarters is located at the entry to the Historic Town Center.*

large ore deposits in the Oquirrh were rediscovered, and claims were staked. On September 17, 1863, the West Mountain Mining District was organized, which included Copperton. Placer mining was established as a cost effective method for extracting ore, which further supported the already-occurring lode mining. Gold was the primary mineral mined until about 1880, at which time lead and silver became the primary minerals.



*Residential streets are laid out in a grid pattern with the Copperton Community Park at the center.*

This continued until 1896, when Colonel Enos A. Wall purchased a number of old claims. Colonel Wall saw the potential of low-grade copper deposits, and due to copper's lack of popularity as a useful mineral easily acquired 19 claims covering 200 acres. Together with Daniel Jackling, a financial partner, Wall had the area surveyed by mining engineers. They determined that the low-grade copper ore could pay if it were mined in large quantities using the open-pit mining process. This ore would then be hauled by standard-gauge railroad to a concentrating plant near the Great Salt Lake, which was the nearest source of adequate water. Wall needed \$500,000 in financial backing to begin the 300 tons-per-day mining operations. In May of 1903 Wall took four potential investors on a wagon tour of the Bingham copper deposits. At the end

of the all-day tour, the men agreed to back Wall's idea and the Utah Copper Company (UCC) was founded, being officially organized on June 4, 1903. Mining continued at the mill located in an area known today as Old Copperton. The mine was moved to its present location around 1910, when mining had reached 1,000 tons of ore per day. The present day site of Old Copperton is located near the mouth of Bingham Canyon, at Dry Fork.

In 1910, Joseph Pratt, a rancher, moved his home from Bingham, and built a two-story frame home in the area that is now Copperton. This was the first home in the present-day Copperton boundaries. It stood until 1930, after which it was torn down to make room for the new Bingham High School. The area surrounding the Pratt home came to be known as "Rattlesnake Flats," because of its flat terrain and the barren landscape inhabited by, among other things, rattlesnakes.

Between the years 1925 and 1926, officials of Utah Copper Company discussed the prospect of building a new town. Up until this time, residents of the area, mostly mining employees and their families, lived in the crowded town of Bingham to the west of Copperton in Bingham Canyon. The demand for housing was great, and housing that was being provided was proving inadequate for the need. The Utah Copper Company (UCC) was eager to fill the need, because it meant that workers could live closer to the mine, and there would be less travel time and tardiness. The search for the best new town location led to Rattlesnake Flats. This site was ideal because the flat terrain was easy to build on, and the company already owned the land. It was decided early on that the name of this new town would be Copperton. This was a company town in every sense of the

phrase. The UCC maintained the housing units with regular cleaning, painting and repairs.

In July of 1926 construction began on 18 homes, as well as a 10-acre community park. As the homes and the community park were completed, the ballpark, which had been previously constructed, was improved. UCC hired the Salt Lake architecture firm of Scott & Welch to design the homes, which were built using quality design and construction. The main product of the company, copper, was used in the plumbing, wiring, rain gutters, sheet metal work and all roofs of the homes. Scott & Welch also designed the Bingham High School, which was built in 1931.



*A majority of homes in the Copperton Historic Center still display the unique designs and quality construction.*

The new homes were in great demand and the number of requests to receive homes was enormous. A policy was developed that gave first choice of homes to UCC officials, and then homes were given to company employees on the basis of seniority, department, application date and how well the applicant cared for previous company housing. It was also said that chances of getting a home were greatly increased if you were friends with the mine superintendent. For the most part, residents of Copperton were employed by or related to an employee of UCC. If one's job was lost, or if they were widows of UCC employees, they were forced to make other living arrangements.

By 1930, Copperton had grown to a total of 131 houses and a population of 525. This number did not increase for the next seven years as the Great Depression brought UCC's building project to a halt. Construction in Copperton resumed in 1937 and continued until the United States became involved in World War II. By this time Copperton had grown to a population of 860.

In January of 1947, the UCC gave way to the mounting pressure from the larger Kennecott Copper Corporation (KCC). This company, which was based in Colorado, had greater resources that enabled them to take over the smaller, less versatile UCC. Residents of Copperton were concerned about the takeover because they were satisfied with the treatment received from UCC. Their fears subsided when they found out that KCC planned no major changes.



*The Bingham Canyon mine measures 2.5 miles across at the rim, and is one-half mile deep.*

In 1955, Kennecott Copper Corporation announced its plans to get out of the housing business in Copperton. An independent company acquired the property rights and under the direction of KCC made provisions for residents (or any party if residents were not interested) to purchase the homes they were renting from the company. This presented a unique opportunity for residents of Copperton, for the homes were mostly sold at prices below the cost of construction. As the homes were being sold, changes to the town of Copperton were

becoming evident. No longer were residents required to maintain their properties, and unkept yards became a more common sight. Residents could also make any structural or decorative change they desired, which began to change the face of a well kept, uniform community.

In 1975, a new Bingham High School was built in South Jordan. The old Bingham High School became a junior high/middle school until 1996 when its use as a school was discontinued. Unfortunately, the school was demolished by Kennecott in early 2002.



*Historic Bingham High School was built in 1930. Unfortunately, the school was demolished in early 2002.*

In 1980, Copperton had more or less grown to its present-day size, although nine new homes have been built along the south side of 5<sup>th</sup> East Street. A new subdivision with eighteen lots has also been developed north of Main Street on Solstice View Drive and Equinox Circle. As of February 2003, fifteen of these lots have homes built on them.

Sources:

Scott C. Crump, Copperton, Publishers Press, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1978.

Celebrate Historic Copperton, Utah Heritage Foundation, 1996.

