

# Why Not Hooper?

by Debra G. Hunsaker

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People are often familiar with Hooper for its famous Tomato Days celebration over Labor Day weekend, the age-old question whether its name is pronounced "Whooper" or "Huper," and the fact that a President of the United States once visited this small farming community. He what? That's right. President Ronald Reagan came to Hooper on September 10, 1982 for a good old-fashioned picnic with the Utah Republican Party, bringing with him an army of Secret Service agents, law enforcement, media representatives from across the country and approximately 25,000 spectators. When asked by media, and even local townspeople why the President was coming to Hooper – of all places – one local leader exclaimed, "Why NOT Hooper?"

Residents of Hooper have always been proud of their close-knit community and pioneer heritage. Although the area was first known as "Muskrat Springs," Captain William H. Hooper built an adobe house there in 1854, known as the Hooper Herd House, to shelter his herdsman as they drove cattle. In 1863 the first permanent resident, James Hale, arrived to settle the area and by 1868 several other families had arrived and the town was surveyed and laid out in blocks. The new settlement was named in honor of Captain William H. Hooper, then a Utah congressman and successful businessman. By 1880, the population of Hooper had grown to approximately 800 people. The area would later boast enough dairies and farm goods to support a cheese factory, three canning plants, the Hooper Sugar Factory, and a steam grist mill.

Although the factories are now long since gone, farming still remains the predominant industry. Despite its long heritage, Hooper didn't officially become a city until November 30, 2000. Before that, the small community was considered a township under Weber County. But as other cities kept trying to incorporate Hooper, it was decided that residents should vote whether or not to take the step to become their own city. While the vote narrowly went through, the official city of Hooper is actually just the Weber County portion of the community. A city can legally exist only in one county, and since Hooper encompassed parts of both Weber and Davis County, citizens in the Davis County portion chose to remain unincorporated. When Hooper City was officially incorporated in late 2000, there were 4,081 residents and 1,000 homes. Since then, approximately 140 more homes have been added.

Managing growth will be the biggest challenge Hooper faces this decade. "Proposed growth is a challenge. We have close to 800 homes sites that could be built on in the next four to five years, and limited resources and staff for all that growth," explains Mayor Glenn Barrow, who was just sworn in to office this past January. While 500 home building lots are currently approved, another 300-400 will probably get approved in the next six months. "As Davis County fills up, people are spilling in to Weber County, and Hooper is closest," says Mayor Barrow. "We already have a lot of commuters to Salt Lake." Hooper is bordered on its east side by the cities of Clinton, Roy, and West Haven and its boundaries run west all the way to the Great Salt Lake. Fremont Island in the Great Salt Lake is also officially part of Hooper City, but is privately owned.

Old timers "are not happy about the growth," stated Judy Murray, long time resident and city administrative assistant. "The city's been trying to slow it down but you can't tell people they can't sell their land. The people who came to settle Hooper, their families are still here. While we have young families, we still have a lot of older farmer families." Murray explained that many people move to Hooper because "everybody's really friendly out here, there's still a

small-town feel, and the (building) lots are just bigger."

If the current Legacy Highway proposal is approved, then built, the new highway would come along 5100 West and run 1½ miles through Hooper on the east. The highway would mean much easier access for commuters traveling to Salt Lake and other area communities. "It's a fear we have if the Legacy project is approved," admits Mayor Barrow. "It will be a lot easier for people to live here and catch the highway to get to work." The proposed highway might also attract more commercial development to the city. "We have no plan under way yet for commercial development, but if the right commercial development presented itself, we would give it consideration."

Hooper currently has limited resources and staff to handle all the proposed growth. City leaders have also pledged not to collect property taxes. "We don't have the commercial and manufacturing zones, so we're limited in our dollars. The first thing we have to do is take care of the basic needs of our community, while avoiding debt and taxes," explains Mayor Barrow. The city, as of January, has its first two full-time employees, a part-time building inspector, and contracts out for a treasurer, city engineer, and other positions. Before that, everybody — mayor, council members, planning commissioner, etc — worked for free until January 2004 so that money could be saved to construct a city building. The new Hooper City Hall, located on the edge of the Hooper City Park, was dedicated in late 2003. City meetings were previously held in homes, the local elementary school, and later in rented offices.

Another area of concern for some residents is the lack of a sewer system. "People want it and we're currently doing a sewer feasibility study," said Murray. Right now, only septic tanks are available and homes must sit on at least a half-acre to be approved for one. As new subdivisions with smaller lots than a half-acre have been approved, some sewer lines will have to be brought in at some point.

It is clear that managing growth, providing necessary infrastructure and preserving the city's open areas will continue to be a challenge for this relatively new city. But as the new city seal attests, Hooper is dedicated to "Preserving Our Past, Protecting Our Present, and Preparing Our Future."

And for those who still aren't sure how to pronounce the city's name, one old-time resident had a sure-fire way to remember. "It's pronounced "hooker" - but with a P."