



*Dan Schweitzer*

Recently we visited 9-Mile Canyon in Utah – a place famous for ancient rock art.

Surprisingly, the canyon is, occasionally, wide enough and lush enough for a cattle ranch.

One farm house, long abandoned, stands out: Solid exterior walls of rough-cut, limestone bricks. Arched, cedar window frames, weathered, but still smooth and tight. Sagging roof boards studded with uniform rows of nails – the wooden shingles having escaped after decades of summer suns and winter snows. Thick, crumbling, interior plaster speckled with the light slipping in between roof boards. Four gnarled cottonwoods shading the backyard.

It was once a very fine home.

This place needs a story. I'll give it one.

*A century ago, up the canyon, a barn-raising party drew distant neighbors for a week of hard work, and a barn dance.*

*He: A stranger, having just bought several acres down valley. Rumor had it that he once rode with Butch Cassidy. Others thought that he came from east coast money. No one really knew, but he was*

*friendly, and a hard worker. He was welcome.*

*She: Her parents brought her along from Price, a distance of some thirty miles on rough, dirt roads. But, the new barn was her uncle's, so the journey was a pleasure. She too was a pleasure, especially her smile.*

*At week's end, when the first squares formed, he was quick to line up as her corner (being a bit too bashful for a direct approach). Soon thereafter, came a fateful call, Flutter Wheel, and she took him home.*

*He asked her to marry, and promised her the best house in Carbon county. She was thinking that a canvas tent would be just fine.*

*Being a hard worker, with a good eye, his ranch did well. He kept his promises. They were quite happy.*

*So how did the house come to be abandoned for so long?*

*Well, except for that first barn dance, there just wasn't enough square dancing in 9-Mile Canyon.*

