



(*Grafton in Spring*, oil painting by Kate Starling 2018)

This is an interesting question that perhaps may never be answered with certainty. Ron Morris wrote an article on the subject. Here are some excerpts.

Most early references indicate Grafton was named after a town in Massachusetts. In the book *“Origins of Utah Place Names,”* published in 1940, it reads: *“GRAFTON, Washington County: (Alt, 3,660; Pop. 20; Settled 1859.) from a town in Massachusetts.”*

Franklin Wheeler Young, the nephew of Brigham Young, was one of the first settlers to begin developing this new location into a town - Grafton. Franklin Wheeler Young had received his mission call on 18 Oct 1861 to settle in Southern Utah along with his brother John Young.

There were at least 15 other places in America named Grafton when Grafton, Utah, was organized in 1859. This resulted in the mail many times being sent to the wrong place. Because of this, the post office at Grafton was given the name Wheeler, Utah by the federal government. But the town continued to be called Grafton. As the Postmaster of Grafton, Franklin Wheeler Young may have used his middle name “Wheeler” as the name of the Post Office in Grafton. Ron writes about how Joe Hills Johnson may have named Grafton. The story begins.

In September 1858, Nephi Johnson, with the help of a Paiute guide named Nauguts, was able to explore the area above Toquerville. By December 1858, Nephi Johnson, his brother Seth Johnson, Darius Shurtz, and his brother Carl Shurtz, Anthony J. Stratton, James Bey, Andrew J. Workman, William Haslam, and Samuel Bradshaw began building a road from Toquerville up over of the Hurricane Fault. When completed, the road became known as Johnson’s Twist or Nephi’s Twist and was, for many years it was the main route east of Washington.

Among those who moved to Virgin City before 1862 were the three Johnson brothers, Nephi, Seth, and Sixtus, and their father **Joel Hills Johnson**. In December 1859, some of the new settlers in Pocketville (Virgin City) decided to move upstream to a new location. This group was led by Nathan Tenney, who was one of the original Indian Missionaries of 1854. This new settlement they called Grafton.

Of all the settlers, **Joel Hills Johnson** is the only person that Ron could find who was born in Grafton, Massachusetts. It therefore, seems likely that he or his sons were influential in naming the new settlement Grafton. Interestingly, a Johnson family is helping us take care of Grafton's property today.

Another story about who named Grafton is found in the Rockville Cemetery. There is a tombstone prominently placed at the entrance of the cemetery. It reads Charles Merriweather Slaughter 1819-1883, Lewis & Merriweather Expedition, Settled & Named Grafton 1861.

However, it appears that there is no historical evidence that supports the claim that Charles named Grafton. Charles arrived in Grafton in 1861 but, Grafton was named in 1859. There is no record of a Lewis & Merriweather Expedition, and it could be confused with the Lewis & Clark Expedition. It began April 1805, 14 years before Charles was born.

It seems that Grafton, Utah was named after Grafton, Massachusetts by the Joel Hills Johnson family. Grafton, Massachusetts was named in honor of Charles FitzRoy, Duke of Grafton (1682-1690), a grandson of Charles II King of England (1630-1685).



Dukedom of Grafton



According to Wikipedia in the British peerage, a royal duke is a member of the British Royal Family, entitled to the titular dignity of prince and the style of His Royal Highness, who holds a dukedom. Dukedoms are the highest titles in the British roll of the peerage, and the holders of these particular dukedoms are Princes of the Blood Royal.

The Dukedom of Grafton was created in 1675 by Charles II King of England. Henry FitzRoy was the 1st Duke of Grafton (1663-1690) and Charles FitzRoy, was the 2nd Duke of Grafton (1683-1757), the only son of 1st Duke.

The Queen of England creates peerages. For example, on his wedding day, Prince William was given a dukedom by the Queen and became the Duke of Cambridge. A few rock stars have been knighted by the Queen, including, Sir Paul McCartney, Sir Elton John, and Sir Mick Jagger. A Grafton Facebook page has been set up. You can upload photos, stories and histories at: <https://www.facebook.com/graftonutah>.



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