



Jordan McAllister

Two uplifted layers of limestone create the 40-foot-tall, 600-foot-long natural chute called Devil's Slide along Interstate 84 in Weber Canyon.

Diabolical playground equipment sprouts from Weber Canyon

by MATT MASICH

Geologists might call the twin slabs of rock jutting from the south face of Weber Canyon a textbook example of differential erosion. Everyone else calls it Devil's Slide.

Found just west of the Croydon exit on Interstate 84, Devil's Slide bears an uncanny resemblance to an oversized piece of playground equipment. Two parallel limestone formations form the 40-foot-tall walls of a natural chute that runs 600 feet up the mountainside. An 1846 map lists the area as "Gutter Defile," but by the 1870s, the feature was widely known as Devil's Slide.

Though the slide's rocky walls stand nearly straight up today, they originally lay flat when they formed as part of a seabed 170 to 180 million years ago, when this part of Utah lay at the bottom of a shallow sea that stretched from Arizona to Montana.

A layer of shale formed between two

layers of limestone. When the Wasatch Range uplifted 75 million years ago, the newborn mountain punched through the layers, tilting them almost 90 degrees. Over vast stretches of time, the softer shale layer eroded away, while the harder limestone layers remained intact. The Holcim Devil's Slide Cement Plant, located just across Weber Canyon from the slide, uses that same limestone layer to make cement.

Anyone hoping to actually slide down Devil's Slide is out of luck, as the location is behind a fence on private property. However, pull-offs on either side of I-84, just west of Exit 111, give motorists in Weber Canyon ample opportunity to take a good, long look. Those hoping to bag another bit of fiendish topography can take the nearby freeway exit and head less than a half-mile down State Route 158. At a pull-off beside the cement plant, they can look south to find a small arch known as the Devil's Looking Glass at the top of the ridge.

Homegrown novelty company makes SLC the rubber chicken capital of the world

by LEAH M. CHARNEY

Is it fair to describe Loftus International as the world's premier manufacturer of rubber chickens? After all, the Salt Lake City company was one of the first to mass produce the item, and demand was often so high it could hardly keep them in stock. Loftus spent years perfecting its famous flexible fowl – not too floppy, definitely not rigid, good coloring, comfortable to hold. That dedication earned both the city and Loftus a reputation.

"When the BBC came to town years back, they interviewed the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and us," said Jim Rose, Loftus' past owner and current president. "That's pretty good company."

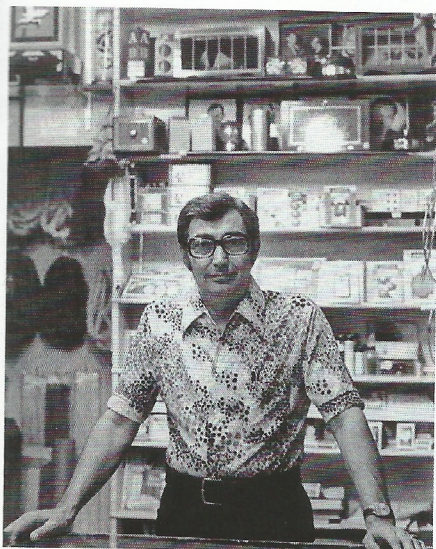
Loftus started as a brick-and-mortar store on Main Street in 1939. Rose's dad, Gene, grew the business into a thriving purveyor of magic tricks and novelties before shifting to a wholesale-only model in the 1960s.

The company now also distributes balloons, costumes, party goods and even confetti cannons with biodegradable filling. These goods are carried by mom-and-pop shops, party purveyors, online stores, grocers and florists all over the world.

Though Loftus' catalog has grown to include hundreds of novelties, the rubber chicken has remained its flagship product. The item's enduring popularity baffles many, including its creators.

"To be honest, I don't know what people do with





Loftus International (both)

Gene Rose minds the counter at Loftus' bygone Salt Lake City magic and novelty shop.

them," Rose said.

When asked to explain what, exactly, is so funny about a rubber chicken, he is just as stumped as everyone else.

"I wish I knew the answer to that," Rose said. "Its first appearance was in vaudeville, so maybe it's associated with comedians. They're 'weird funny.'"

Other products have received the rubber chicken treatment over the years. The hand buzzer is a simple joke trick, yet Loftus invested countless hours into its engineering. And the company's disappearing ink formula is a perfected house recipe. This attention to detail furthers the company's reputation for integrity, according to Casey Fitts, CEO of Loftus International, and its new owner as of 2018.

After three generations, when it came time for Rose to retire, selling to Fitts and his two brothers was a no-brainer: The Fittses were longtime customers, then logistics partners, and, eventually, chosen family. Rose continues to consult as needed. The company may be in new hands, but Loftus has no plans to retire from the rubber chicken industry, especially given the product's continued staying power.

So, how many rubber chickens does Loftus produce each year? Fitts won't squawk. "That's an industry secret," he said. 🐔

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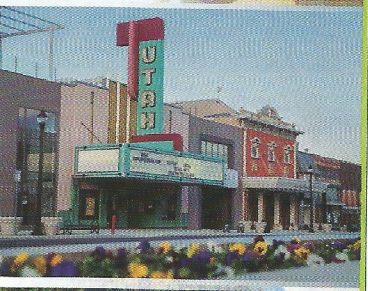
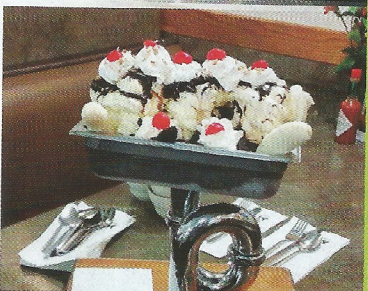
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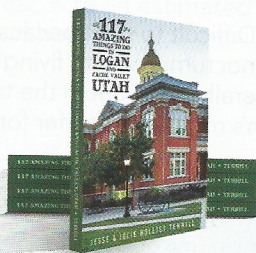
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