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Brighton's Camp

The "first family" of Big Cottonwood was the William and Catherine Brighton family, who emigrated from Scotland. In 1870 they homesteaded 80 acres near Silver Lake. The next year, 1871, brought the mining boom and created a bustling corridor of traffic between Park City and Alta.

Catherine was a good cook and began to serve hearty meals to the travelers. Lunch at the Brighton's included freshly churned butter, hot biscuits, mutton and beef from canyon herds, and fresh trout from the lake. William bought Catherine a white boat to help her catch the fish. According to a granddaughter, Catherine would land the fish with her apron.

In 1874 William built a small hotel; two stories with 7 bedrooms, dining room, and a lean-to kitchen. The walls were covered with white muslin and the beds were clean and warm, though guests were advised to bring flannel pajamas, even in July.

The hotel lot was fenced to keep out the cows. Soon it became known as Brighton's Camp, and eventually just Brighton. It was a wildly popular summer getaway, with "dancing in the hotel dining room to the music of a fiddle and accordion." The room rate was \$2 per day. From Salt Lake City the trip took 7 hours; the trip back took 5 hours.

One of the guests named Lake Catherine after Mrs. Brighton. In 1893 the Brightons built a three-story 50-room hotel. Both Brightons died shortly after its completion. Their legacy, however, lives on in this favorite mountain retreat.



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