

Editor's Corner: Logan has interesting link to Apple computer history

news.hjnews.com (http://news.hjnews.com/opinion/editor-s-corner-logan-has-interesting-link-to-apple-computer/article_b71cddba-f7a0-11e0-8054-001cc4c002e0.html) · by Charles McCollum Herald Journal managing editor

Pieces of the not-too-distant Cache Valley past are always surfacing at The Herald Journal — events that made big splashes when they happened but have mostly faded from memory.

I was surprised to learn recently, for instance, that Cache Valley played a curious role in the history of Apple computers. If you do a Google search for “Apple” and “Logan,” you’ll find dozens of references to it, including one on Wikipedia.

An old Herald Journal photograph related to the valley’s Apple connection is even floating around in cyberspace. The photo shows a front-end loader barreling through a mound

Successfully posted to Evernote

of computers at the Logan landfill. How those computers got there was the subject of a front-page story in The Herald Journal more than two decades ago.

Story continues below video

I'd never heard about this piece of Logan's past, nor had anyone else currently working in the Herald Journal newsroom, until Apple co-founder Steve Jobs died recently. A few days after his death, someone showed our city editor, Emilie Wheeler, an article in Businessweek magazine recounting the history of Apple and noting that the company had dumped 2,700 of its early "Lisa" computers in Logan in 1989 "in order to write off unsold inventory."

"Why Logan, of all places?" we wondered. The Businessweek article didn't say.

Searching the Internet, we found several more mentions of the event, but no details. After some pretty fancy Internet sleuthing, Emilie was able to pin down the exact date of the computer disposal then find The Herald Journal's story on microfilm.

Successfully posted to Evernote

It was written by former HJ reporter RaeAnne Thayne, who still lives in Cache Valley and makes her living as a novelist. I phoned RaeAnne. She had only vague memories the article but seemed to recall it all came to the newspaper's attention by way of an anonymous tip from somebody working at the landfill; otherwise the paper might never have gotten the story. She also recalled that nobody seemed too anxious to talk about it.

Her article explained that the Lisa computer — an unusual-looking device by today's design standards — had been rendered virtually obsolete in the late '80s because the latest software was incompatible with it. Sun Remarketing, a local computer dealer, had developed a workaround and still had Lisas in stock, including some 2,700 of them on consignment from Apple. But at a price of around \$4,000, they weren't exactly flying off the shelves. The expense of servicing the computers was another concern, so Apple decided it would be more advantageous to dump them all and write off the loss on its taxes.

The Herald Journal article reported that Logan “rented” landfill space to Apple for the scrapping operation, charging \$1.95 per cubic yard for the 22 truck loads that measured

Successfully posted to Evernote

out at 800 yards. Security guards hired by Apple were reportedly standing by to make sure all the computers were destroyed.

The news story apparently started rumors that led some locals to think they could go out to the landfill and find free computers. At least that's how one longtime resident I spoke to last week remembers it. Of course, if any people did venture out there, they would have been disappointed to find only crushed and scattered parts.

Logan Environmental Director Issa Hamoud said his department has no record of the computer disposal. This was before the landfill kept records and before he came on as head of the environmental department. It was also before regulations were adopted on the disposal of computers, which contain a variety of toxic materials. Today, Logan city asks that people bring computers to a separate drop-off point at the landfill. The city then pays another entity to pick them up and dispose of them.

The Lisa was an interesting chapter in the annals of the personal computer. Rolled out in the early 1980s at the same time as the Apple Macintosh, it was intended primarily for business use, and, interestingly, it was considered more advanced than the Macintosh in a number of ways. The

Successfully posted to Evernote

company said the name was an acronym for “Local Integrated Software Architecture,” but many observers believe it was actually named after Steve Jobs’ first daughter, Lisa, who was born in 1978. Ironically, according to several sources, Jobs himself was forced out of the Lisa development project, then went to work on the Macintosh, the Lisa’s ultimate conqueror.

If you followed any of the biographical accounts of Jobs’ life this month, you know he had a complex personal and professional history. It’s kind of eerie to think a chunk of that history now lies in a computer graveyard right here in Cache Valley.

[news.hjnews.com \(http://news.hjnews.com/opinion/editor-s-corner-logan-has-interesting-link-to-apple-computer/article_b71cddba-f7a0-11e0-8054-001cc4c002e0.html\)](http://news.hjnews.com/opinion/editor-s-corner-logan-has-interesting-link-to-apple-computer/article_b71cddba-f7a0-11e0-8054-001cc4c002e0.html) · by Charles McCollum Herald Journal managing editor