

A SKETCH OF MY FATHER'S FAMILY

by Ross McGee

[Note: The transcript was a poor quality photocopy. There can easily be errors in reading the document.]

Father: Solon H. McGee, born Nov. 25, 1853, Loweryville, Tenn.
Mother: Emily L. Robinson, born Aug. 14, 1854, Columbus, Miss.
Married May 4, 1876, in Noble, Ozark County, Missouri.

From here we will skip over to the early 90's where you will find our father and mother in Adair, Indian Territory, with the following sons and daughter:

Ulysses Smith:	born April 7, 1877,	Noble,	Ozark County,	Missouri.
Elwood D. ¹ :	born Oct. 1, 1878,	“	“	“
Wm. Henry:	born July 8, 1880	“	“	“
Ross Solon:	born Sept. 24, 1882	“	“	“
James Grover:	born March 31, 1885	“	“	“
Joseph Carr:	born March 18, 1888	“	“	“
Sally Margaret	born May 5, 1890	“	“	“
Calm: ²	born July, 1892	at Adair.	Died January, 1893	

While in, or near, Adair, we had rented a farm and had raised corn and wheat and a few hogs and the like. I say we. Some of our boys were pretty young at the time. But after all, there isn't one of us lads can remember when we were too young to help with the work that had to be done on the farm and around the house. With six rough and rowdy³ boys there was plenty to do. And we had a most wonderful and patient mother to guide us in our work and in our lives.

At this time and especially in this part of the territory, school conditions were very poor. It was about four miles to the nearest school. Ulysses, Elwood and Henry put in about one term at that school. The rest of us missed that term, because it was too far to walk. So that was part of our lives in the wild and woolly Indian Territory.

It was a common thing for us to hear of the small towns such as Adair and others around the country having their banks robbed by the outlaws, the Dalton Brothers and others. They had a regular run in that

¹ Elwood *DeWitt*

² Cam or Campbell – seems to be a typographical error

³ Original document's spelling: roudy

part of the territory. The notorious Dalton boys were stamped on everyone's mind for a long time. They held up trains and banks as a hobby. I will have more to say about that later. The reason I mention some of these things is to give the reader an idea of some of the experiences we had in our growing up.

Our father and the older boys wanted to get some land of our own, so in the early Spring of 1893, I think March or April, we moved about 30 miles east, near Vinita, Indian Territory⁴, and located on 160 acres of new land under the Cherokee rights. At that time very sparingly settled, the nearest town of any size was Vinita, which was 18 miles away. Our post office, 3 miles, Ruby, Indian Territory. Our neighbors were scattered and far between. Our nearest neighbors lived about three-fourths of a mile away. A Mr. Webb and family. So our environment was mostly around home and the home was in the making. At times it wasn't so easy sledding.

The house put up, the fencing of 160 acres and fixing for spring plowing and planting our crops. All in a pioneer way. The older boys did most of the work with the sod plow, and old "Tobe and Mal", (a mule team). We had a few other small horses, but old "Tobe and Mal" were the old stand-by.

With warm spring weather coming and the blooming of beautiful wild flowers that were plentiful in that wide open prairie country, it made things look very pleasant.

With all the work and chores there were to do, we, as boys, had plenty of time for fun and play. By this time we had pretty well surveyed all the country around about. We picked out the best "Swimming holes", as we would call them, for part of our summer's recreation. Ice skating in the wintertime, etc. And as time went on, some of the boys rated pretty good in swimming and springboard diving. I mean as we became older.

Now back to some more work. With a pretty good crop of corn, it had to be shucked and put in the crib which we had built during the summer. We raised sweet potatoes, pumpkins, and all kinds of melons, vegetables and so on. With the fall work done, including the cutting of the wild grass for hay, and with the corn put away, and a few pigs fattening for our meat, we were all ready for a hard, cold winter. We also raised sorghum cane and made molasses, as this insured us pretty well for food for our stock and something in the way of food for ourselves.

Now there were other things to do, such as our winter fuel. We had learned how to find coal, by the formation of the rocks on the creek banks, where we would dig down from 4 to 6 feet and find coal with a depth of 12 to 14 inches. As time went on and we became older, some of the boys got pretty good at digging coal. When we would sell it we would get \$1.00 per tone on the ground. So you, the reader, can imagine how much money we would make. But what we did get, we got the hard way.

So time marches on. And the school season is coming. The school term at that time was about 3 months: November, December, and January. The amount of cash the teacher would get depended on the number of students. One dollar per month per student. There were 4 of us to go that winter. We walked the 3 miles to Ruby.

⁴ Later this became the state of Oklahoma

The winters were pretty cold and stormy. Quite a lot of snow, sleet, and wind. We would only have about three months of real cold weather. Spring would come quite early. Wild flowers would bloom out in March. So we rocked along through the seasons.

We became acquainted with all the kids in the country for miles around.

Two of our best sports were hunting and fishing. We just about kept ourselves in meat with prairie chickens, ducks, and geese. Ducks and geese would flock in there by the thousands in the fall and winter, as it was a good feeding place and the ponds of water were there for them to get to at night. We would build a blind on the shore. The chickens had a gathering place on dry ground. The game was plentiful and there was no country law against hunting. We never tried to get more than we could use. We would get them on the fly, too, and some of the boys got pretty good at that. So time marches on and where it stops nobody knows.

We had an increase in the family on December 23, 1894. A sister, Luella,⁵ was born, making two sisters along with six brothers. That winter there were five of us going to school under the same set-up as mentioned before. At the same time, we were putting in plenty of time ice skating. We could know along at a pretty good speed, cut figure 8's, going at a high speed we would jump 16 feet, and some of the boys got pretty good at that, too. As time went on, wrestling was quite a sport in that day. Some rules were, "catch as catch can" and then take the results. Some of the boys got pretty good at that, too.

Then again connected with what work we would have to do, baseball was the big thing. Even though we had to go miles, we would be there. And as time went on, some of the boys got good at that, too. We always gave Ulysses the credit for being the best ball player in our bunch. We had all the home games from checkers to horse-shoe pitching and croquet. We played all these games when we weren't going any place else.

As a rule, we had a rough element to grow up in. There was everything from bootlegger to outlaws. They were ranging all through this part of the country.

It was the summer of 1895. I remember we, with Tobe and Mal (the mules), and the sod plow, turned over about three acres of ground that had grass just about a foot high. We planted this in watermelon and musk melon. The way we did it was to take an ax and chop a hole in the sod (that could be one hundred yards long without a break in it) and drop the seeds in and step on them. That Fall the melons were so thick on the ground you could hardly get through the patch. I remember one afternoon when all of us boys were at home and a bunch of fine looking young men rode up to us on fine looking horses and saddles. They said, "Boys, how's the watermelons?" We said, "We have a few out there in the patch." "What would be the chance to get a few to eat?" asked one of them. And we said, "Goo!" So they tied up their horses and went out to the melon patch. Of course, we boys sized them up one side and down the other. We had been used to having all kinds of people stop because we were on an open road, but we hadn't seen many that looked just like those fellows did. They had such fine hats and boots and spurs and were very well dressed. We thought it looked very different for boys to be dressed so nice when they were just out riding around. We loaded them up with watermelons. They

⁵ Louella is the correct spelling.

were nice to talk to and look at. They asked us what they owed us, but of course we said nothing. They gave a dime or so and went on.

We found out the next day that it was the Dalton boys. Our neighbor, Pat Coins' boys, told us. We and the coin boys ran around together and they told us later that the Dalton boys stayed at their hosue that night and that their place was a hideout for them but nobody knew it. But boy will tell sometimes.

To make a long story short, I will say that the Dalton boys were killed just after robbing the bank in Coffeerville, Kansas, in 1896, just 35 miles from where we lived. That is, all of them except Emmett, the youngest. He was eighteen years of age. He slid off his horse, got away, and was never caught.

On April 22, 1897, another girl was born in our family and her name was Mary Etta. That brought it up to three sisters and six brothers. We were always very proud of our sisters, and I have mentioned the names of each one of them in this story. I may help someone in the long distance future to keep track. For one of these boys might become your dad and great and great, great and so on. Or one of these girls might become your mother or great, and so on.

At this point I think I should say something about the spiritual side of our life. Our father and mother were of a religious nature, especially mother. She believed in God, that He heard and answered prayers; and she wanted to believe in a God that had body, parts and passion. As far back as I can remember, she taught us these principles as near as she understood them. There were several different denominations in and around the country. Namely, Methodist, Baptist, Campelities, Presbyterian, and Seventh-Day Adventist.

We went to a lot of meetings. As the different preachers came along, some would put on big revivals, shout, and carry on. I think we boys went more for the fun of it than anything else. The doctrine they put out didn't satisfy mother. She was wanting the Church of Jesus Christ. Believing they couldn't all be right, she told us that she had prayed to her Father in Heaven to show her which one was right. We had a neighbor family by the name of Homer and they belonged to the Reorganized Church (We called them Josephites), a branch of the Mormon Church. Our folks had heard about what was called the Brighamites, but know nothing of either one's teachings. This neighbor, Mr. Homer, said his church was the true churc of Jesus Christ and he would have two of the Elders come to see us. It wasn't very long until two elderly men came to our place and they were made welcome and they gave us their message of the gospel. But after all was said and done, there was still something lacking – The Authority. Dad and Mother were both well read in the bible, so they thought they knew the way it should be. Mother seemed to like some parts of this church; but, as I say, it didn't seem quite right. So she prayed if this church wasn't right that someone with the true church would be sent to her.

I am thinking at this point, knowing the father that Mother had, that she had without any doubt read these words in the Bible: "Knock and it shall be opened. Ask and it shall be give." And in James, Chapter 1, Verse 5, it said⁶, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not. And it sahl be given you." Mother, I am sure, believed this was for her.

⁶ Spelling in original document: *sayd*

Soon after, in the early part of September, 18898, Mother and Dad had planned a trip to Ozark County, Missouri, to visit with Mother's people. We had been away a long time. It didn't take us long to get everything ready. With a team and spring wagon, we started on what we thought at that time was a long trip – 250 mi. All of us went except the three older boys, Ulys, Elwood, and Henry. They had to stay and take care of things at home.

After we started out this day, it began to rain, and as we got up the country further, it rained more and more. Finally we came to the river known as Big Cabin. It was really big and overflowing. This was close to the town of Vinita, Indian Territory. And there were no indications of the river going down, anyway not very soon. So we sent back home.

We arrived home just after dark. When we drove up to the big gate, the boys heard us coming and Henry came out to meet us. He said, "We have two Mormon Elders from Utah staying with us tonight." Dad said that was all right. So we went in and met the Mormon Elders. The two young men were William R. Palmer from Cedar City, Utah, and Albert Kirby of Hyde Park, Utah. They were both about 21 years of age. We explained why we were back so soon. Dad said to the Elders, "Boys, after we have our supper I want to ask you some questions." Elder Palmer said afterwards that he knew what the questions were going to be, and that was about Brigham Young and polygamy. They sat up to a late hour that night, and by then we had almost learned to like them. The next morning being Sunday, Elder Palmer came into the kitchen and told Mother not to fix breakfast for them as it was the first Sunday of the month and they would fast. And he explained their belief as to that.

I might explain here that before the Elders came to our place, they had walked a long way that day and Elder Palmer had a very lame foot. The last place before coming to our place, they had asked to stay, was our neighbor, Mr. Webb. He told them that he couldn't keep them, but he told them his neighbors, McGee's, sometimes took in travelers. You can imagine how thankful they were when they arrived at our place and found the boys were frying sweet potatoes for their supper and that they were made welcome and asked to partake of the good supper of sweet potatoes and bread and milk.

So, this Sunday morning Elder Palmer said to Dad, "My foot is sore. What would be the chance to stayover for a day?" Dad told him it would be fine and that we wanted them to stay. I think the day was pretty well spent in asking and getting answers to questions on the principles they taught. And they explained to us about their mission and how they worked. They told us how many Elders there were in that mission and that it was the Southwestern States Mission, with Independence, Missouri, as headquarters.

So early Monday morning they left with a friendly goodbye and we invited them to come again. We told them to tell the other Elders that they would be welcome when they were passing this way. They walked away feeling happy with their stay at the McGee's for those two nights and one day.

This same Monday we again started on our trip to Missouri. At this point I will again go back in this story and say a little about old Tobe and Mal, our faithful mules, and one or two other things that happened.

I think it was the Spring of 1897, when we went out to round up our horses, but Tobe and Mal, the mules were not among them. We hunted the country over in every direction. There was plenty of grass

everywhere and we let our stock run out in the open country. We would never go out but what we would hear of some lead when inquiring for a brown and sorrel mule. I remember one day Elwood and I had ridden many miles. We stopped at a negro's place and asked about the mules. "You, suh, I done seed them very mules day befo yestidy pass right heah on this very road goin' that way." So we would hunt that down; and it went on the way for a long time.

In our way of figuring now, we spent enough time in hunting those mules to have bought a herd. We didn't figure in dollars and cents in those days. It was the mules we wanted, but we gave up. We found out afterwards the mules were stolen and friven into Western Kansas that very night that they were found missing. We needed another team, so Dad bought another span of mules and we named them Zike and Ben. It was these mules that took us back to Missouri. They could go just as many miles in a day as we would want to ride. I remember the time Ulys and I were going down to Ruby with Ben, Zike and wagon. We left the wagon, and riding the mules back home with the harnesses on, Ulys was on Zike and me on Ben. I guess I did something that Ben didn't like, for he started to buck and he threw me off. As I fell my foot caught in the side strap with a half hitch around my ankle. You can draw a picture of that scene with old Ben going at high speed and me hitting the ground every ten feet. With the quick action of Ulys and his mule, they outran old Ben and grabbed him by the bridal bit and jerked him down. As luck was with us, I managed to get my foot out, and I wasn't skinned up very bad, either. As I have said before, we had been taught in time of need to pray to God, our Father in Heaven, and that we would be blessed. I am sure I did that at this time.

Another scene I will mention was at a place called Homers Lake. All of us boys were having a good time swimming and diving off the spring board. We were teaching our little brother, Carr, how to swim. We missed Grover. We knew he was there not long ago. It was a big pond and about eight feet deep where we had seen him last. While getting our bearing and in our excitement, we saw him pop up (maybe for the last time) in the deepest place close by. Quick work by Ulys and Elwood had him out on the bank. We weren't scouts trained in that sort of work, but with the knowledge we did have and with a lot of time and work, he came through okay. And again we were blessed through our faith. Time goes on with other experiences.

Now back to our trip to Missouri. We arrived back at the place of our birth, Noble, Ozark county, Missouri; back to see Grandma, uncles, and aunts. They were all glad to see us. We had so many good things to eat and had good times with out cousins and kin. We had written the boys at home of our safe arrival. In the first letter we received from the, they told us two more Mormon Elders had been there. Father and Mother had told the folks about the Mormons and Dad took the Book of Mormon and a few other little books back there with him. But all they would say was, "Beware of wolves dressed in sheep's clothing." Finally our visit was over and our journey back home was a good success. We were gone four weeks.

We were glad to get back home. We had all our corn to gather in before school stared. This being about the first of October, school would start in November. We had two thousand bushels of corn to get in along with other things, and that was a lot of work. The Mormon Elders came and went regularly and we enjoyed them very much, for most of them were young fellows and full of fun. But that was only part of it. There were very sincere in their work. And we felt like we really knew they were servants of God. I think that Mother knew right from the start that they were messengers of Jesus Christ, representing the true church, as it had been restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith in the latter days.

In November, 1898, in the little creek close by, Father and Mother were baptized and confirmed members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I think it was Elder Linton of Nephi, Utah and Elder Hoops of Arizona that officiated in the ordinances.

After this was done, the next day or so the Elders went on their way as time went by other Elders came. I think by the time winter and early spring were over and past, we had met and kept every Elder in that Mission. I shall name them one by one:

Elder Wm. R Palmer	Cedar City, Utah
Elder Albert Kirby	Hyde Park, Utah
Elder Heber H. Harrison	Pinto, Washington Co., Utah
Elder Arthur V. Lee	Penaca, Nevada
Elder Shade Boyce	Manassa, Colorado
Elder James H. Anderson	Mt. Pleasant, Utah
Elder Hoops	Arizona
Elder Samuel Linton	Nephi, Utah

And by this time they had explained the Gospel in its fullness. We were going along with our work in about the same way, but the course of our lives was being changed. We would go and hear them preach when they held meetings. We would take them with us when we went wild berry hunting and on swimming trips, although the Elders weren't supposed to get in very deep.

We had a very good crop coming along. It was on July 5, when Ulys and Elwood were baptized. The rest of us were baptized on July 21, 1899. From the information that we had of the West and of the Mormon people, we were making plans and we weren't very long in making up our minds as to what they would do.

The Elders thought it was the thing to do, too. They would sing many of their hymns. Elder Palmer would sing this one, especially to Dad. "Think not when you gather to Zion, that nothing but comfort and cheer is waiting for you," and so on.

But we decided to go West and establish ourselves with the Mormon people. Inasmuch as all of us, from the oldest to the youngest, were of one mind as to that, we weren't long in winding up our affairs. We sold our cows, hogs, and a few other things. We traded our drops off in the field. The land and our rights to it had not been explained in this story, so I will pass that by. We had the right to dispose of the improvements such as building, etc. Dad thought it best to leave the whole thin, thinking maybe sometime in the future there might be an adjustment made. With everythin taken care of end saying our good byes to the Elders as they came along, we were ready to go.

On September 18, we loaded our belongings in what consisted of two wagons and a buggy, or a light spring wagon. We had two saddle horses which make eight altogether. So on we went.

The second day out, we were driving through Coffeerville, Kansas, when two of the Elders saw us and waved us down. It was Shade Boyce and Albert Kirby. They got into the buggy with Dad and Mother and stayed with us until we camped and then stayed overnight with us. Elder Boyce had told us many times before that if we were to go anywhere near Manassa, Colorado, his home, to be sure and stop and see his family. At this time he made Dad promise that he would.

Dad and Mother and the three girls, Sally, Louella, and Etta, occupied the team and buggy. Ulys was the driver of one team and I was the driver of Ben and Zike, which was the feed wagon. Elwood and Henry, I think, were riding the saddle ponies most of the time. Elwood was keeping the mileage as we were marching along. Of course, Grover and Carr, (Tacky as Dad would call Carr) had their places, too. They were either up by the side of Ulys or on the seat with me. So that is the way we rocked along in Kansas.

Then we went through part of Oklahoma, then back into Kansas again. That was a long stretch. Through Western Kansas there was no end of space. For miles and miles and sometimes days, we would see nothing but cattle and windmills. The wells along the way were so deep we boys would throw a rock down and then wait for the sound to come back and it would be a long time.

When we started on this trip, we pledged ourselves that we wouldn't travel on Sunday. We kept that promise. An up to this time we had enjoyed our trip very much. The weather had been good. Our teams were in the best of conditions and we weren't too heavily loaded. So we really moved along at a pretty good speed. We wouldn't drive very late at night, especially when we would find a good camping place. Our motto was "start early and camp early. Feed good and eat good." Hay and grain were cheap. Corn was about 25¢ per bushel; hay was about 20¢ or 25¢ per hundred.

One afternoon, I think it was in Western Kansas or the Eastern part of Colorado, we were passing a big ranch house that set back off the road quite a ways. We saw a lot of beef hanging in a big tree in front of the house. We were a little hungry for beef, so we stopped. Dad and we boys walked over to the house and asked if we could buy some of the beef. There was an extra big hindquarter hanging off to one side. The man said if we would take the whole quarter as it hung, we could have it for 5¢ per pound. We took it, and it was the best meat we had ever eaten. We could cut steak off of that as big as your hat.

At this point, we could begin to see the mountains, as I remember it. The first big mountain that came into view was a welcome sight. We thought we could make it to there by camping time, but we were two or three days getting there. We found out that it took experience to measure distance from a flat country to the mountains.

I believe it was on a Saturday and we were on a road going due West when we learned that the road to the right would take us to Manassa, Colorado. That was Elder Boyce's hometown and it was 20 miles. We took that road. We made it there in good time and made our camp in the outskirts of town. We camped by a farm house which belonged to a Chandler family. They had a bunch of boys, five or six of them, about our own ages. It wasn't long before all of them came out to talk to us, and their father, also. They soon learned we were converts to the Mormon church.

We found out where Elder Boyce's family lived. It was no surprise to them, as Elder Boyce had written them that we would be there. He had that much faith in the promise Dad had made to him, that if we went anywhere near his hometown we would go and see his folks. So Dad, Mother and the girls put up with the Boyce family and we boys stayed with camp. Chandlers had us turn our horses into their fields and said we could leave them there as long as we wanted to.

The father of the boys had told Dad and Mother that the next day, Sunday, was conference and that Apostle Heber J. Grant was there. Brother Chandler, the Boyce's Dad and Mother, and the girls went

to conference. We boys figured we weren't fixed up good enough for such an occasion. Dad and Mother had plenty to tell us about it when they came home. They had met Apostle Grant and liked him very much, and they liked everyone else they met.

Manassa was a small town and we had gotten acquainted with quite a few people. By Monday morning they were making plans for us to stay there. They said we could get a farm and they would help us get work. They said we could do all right there, and so on. But we didn't like it very good. Their crops were mostly hay, grain, and potatoes. An it was too cold there in the winter. (This was in the latter part of October.) Soon we got our outfits together and again we headed for the West. I don't think we know exactly where we were going. It was either Thatcher, Arizona or Fruitland, New Mexico. So on we went.

Our next town was Antoneta⁷. This was a pretty good sized town. We loaded up the mule wagon with feed and food. I think from here the road took us Southwest. We finally came to a Mexican or Spanish town. This was the first time we had ever seen so many Spanish people in one big body.

In going out of town we got on the wrong road. We were part way up the mountain side when we saw about three wagons coming down loaded with wood. We pulled off to one side of the road. The Mexicans showed us that we were on the wrong road, so we took our teams off and turned the wagons around by hand, because that was the safest way. We could do almost anything when we had to. By the time we got back to town, it was about camping time (that is to camp early). The Spanish people wanted us to stop and we did. One family said they had plenty of room and that Mother, Dad, and the girls could stay with them. But, of course, we told them we all had a place to sleep and we were used to it. They wouldn't take no for an answer. They insisted that Mother, Dad, and the girls stay in the house. They even made them eat supper and breakfast with them. So again we boys had the camp to ourselves – six of us.

The next morning while we were getting ready to go on our way, the Mexicans came out with half of a big deer, as hunting season was on. That is where we learned to like the Spanish people. Their houses were white-washed inside and everything was so clean and nice.

Once again we started on our way. Everyone was feeling gay and happy. As I remember it, we were still going Southwest with the mountains to the North and West of us. Within the course of time we came to a little place called Goodhope. Here we stopped and inquired. We found out that there were two roads. One that I would call North, going over the mountains, which would take us to the San Juan River in New Mexico, and the other to Arizona. Here we all went into a council, as we had done many thies. We decided we would go over the mountains. We had been told that the road had not been used very much and at times it would look like a sheep trail. But we thought we were used to such toads. There wern't any highways anywhere that we had been in those days. We had come across a good part of Kansas on roads that hadn't been traveled on for weeks or months. So we were willing to tackle anything.

I don't quite remember just how long it took us getting to what we thought was the top of the mountain. This night we pulled off the trail about 100 yards in a nice clump of pine trees to camp. It

⁷ Probably Antonito according to a handwritten side note

was getting quite cloudy, and I think Dad began to think and realize the predicament that we might be in. About 2 o'clock in the morning it looked very much like snow. We had heard and read stories about getting snowed-in in the mountains. Dad wanted all of us to get up and hitch up our horses to the wagon and get over and down the mountain. The older boys and I think the younger ones, too, said, "We can't do that." They said, "The road will be dim and bad and if it does snow, we would lose the trail." So we didn't move that night. But we started out early about sun-up, if there had been a sun. It was till looking pretty stormy, but we found out pretty soon it was hard enough to travel in the daytime. We were three or four days getting over and through and down that mountain. It did snow and it was the first we had had. We went down hillsides that were so steep and sliding that we would put ropes on the wagons and four or five of us would hold the guy ropes to keep the wagon from turning over. This was really our first experience in such rugged mountain country. But we were going down and that was worth quite a bit.

This night where we camped there was quite a lot of snow. We spotted a big pine tree about 100 ft. long and three ft. thick laying in the snow. We drove our wagons right along side of it so everyone could step out onto the log. We made a big fire close by. We were right at home in a little while, with everyone well and feeling fine. The next morning we were on our way again.

During the day we came to another town, the first one since we left Goodhope. This was a Mexican town, also. Termirea⁸ was its name. We loaded up with feed and food, which we thought would be enough to see us through, as it was 100 or more miles to the San Juan River from this town. There were two roads. One was much nearer and we thought we could make it through. So we got along down this trail about 30 miles and camped for the night. It had already begun to look bad. There had been no travel over this road for a long time. The next morning we started out again. All at once like a thunder cloud from a clear sky, we saw a bunch of Apache Indians (there was about 20) bounding over the hill to our left. They were on their ponies and all painted up with feathers on their heads. Boy, we had never seen a group of Indians like that, but we had read about them. I don't know what the rest of the boys thought, but I would guess they were like me, a little bit scared.

Dad was behind with his outfit and I think we figured this was a job for him to handle. He drove up and quietly walked around to where we were and without any indication of fear. All who ever knew Dad knew him as a fine man. He could make friends with any race or kind of people. And right here and now he started to talk and make signs as to where we were going and where we were from. The leader of the band got down off his pony and started making signs on the ground. Dad did the same thing. The Indian's markings told him, "This is the Largo Canyon and it is something like 100 miles to the San Juan River. The road no good. You can't make it. Heap rain all washed out. Sand washed heap deep. Nobody travel for a long time." Well, we felt like we were up a stump. They said we could go back to the town of Termirea, which was 30 miles back. We well remembered that piece of road or trail and we didn't like the idea of going over it again. Then the Indians told us we could go across the country to the East and get onto that other road; that is would also get us to the San Juan River but much higher up.

We decided to cut across. We traveled until a little late in the afternoon and it was pretty rough going, so we stopped and began to size things up. We had no road. We could see the roughs ahead and as the

⁸A handwritten side note identified it as Tierra Amarilla

hills closed in, we knew we could not get through. We turned around and went back and camped at the same place we had stayed the night before. It was right here that we decided to go down the Largo Canyon, even if we had to cut our way through.

Up to now we had enjoyed our trip very much; not many hardships as traveling goes. Our health had been good and we boys would often sing the songs of Zion, such as "O Ye Mountains High" and "Do What Is Right." Here's one that would ring out through the night around the campfire. "Come, come ye Saints, no toil not labor fear, but with joy, wend your way." And if you should die before your journey's through, all is well, all is well." (How the frogs and hoot owls must have enjoyed it.) So with this in mind and the faith we had, we could easily get through this undertaking.

On we went, cutting our way across the sandwashes, man of them eight ft. deep and straight up and down. We ran out of everything to eat and food for the horses. But we always believed that where there was a will, there was a way. I well remember one evening just about dark, when we saw a light up on the side of the mountain to the southwest of our camp. We were right down to the bottom of everything in the way of food. And, by the way, we boys were very hungry. We had been rationing ourselves on food for sometime so that Mother and the girls could have something to eat if it came to the showdown.

Now, back to that light. Henry and I made a run for it. We took with us an empty flour sack. By the time we reached it, it was good and dark. There three Mexican shepherders were getting their supper. We quickly made friends with them and told them the fix we were in and we wanted to buy some flour from them. They gave us a dishpan full of it and, of course, that made us very happy. They had a plate of flapjacks or pancakes a foot high sitting right by us. Boy, did they look good! I guess those Mexicans didn't realize how hungry we were, but we were thankful to get the flour. So back to our camp we went, wending our way through the brush.

Now, this is just part of our experiences going down Largo Canyon to the San Juan River. It took us two weeks to go less than 100 miles. I'll never forget our first view of it. It was early in the morning about 10 o'clock. It was a big river and full of mushy ice. It was getting quite cold, as it was along in November.

Oh, by the way, I am just a little ahead of my story. Just before we camped the night before, we met a man on a horse and he had a pack horse loaded down for some shepherders. He told us it was six miles to the river and there was a store on the other side. So Ulys and Elwood took the mules and buggy and hit out for that store. They got back about 10 o'clock and by the time we got through cooking and eating, we didn't feel much like sleeping. We were really full.

Now, back to the river. We crossed over and stopped at the store and got a few more supplies. From here it was 40 miles down the river to Farmington, New Mexico. I think it was the next day, late in the afternoon, when we arrived in Farmington. We stopped at the first store on the north side of the street. It was an old fashioned store with a board platform in front about four feet up from the ground and with board steps going up into the store. About the first thing we saw in the window was a big picture with about 50 kids on it and with these words written under it: "Utah's best crop."

From there, we headed for Olio and Fruitland. We got out west of Farmington and camped for the night. I think it was the Laplata River or wash. So from there we had a mess to cross before entering

the valley for which we were headed. We had a long dugway to climb for the first thing in the morning. From the top it was about three for four miles across to where we would go down. At the top of this dugway we had a good view of part of the valley. The first big farm, 160 acres, stood out above everything else. I will have more to say about that later.

We got down the dugway okay and went on down past this farm, then down through Olio, now Kirtland, and to Fruitland, the end of the trail. This was about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, November 18, 1899. Elwood's records showed we had traveled a little over one thousand miles. We had been on the road sixty-one days, as I remember.

As I say, we had at last land in Fruitland, the place we had been striving to get to for a long time. And in no way were we disappointed. We first stopped in front of a little store owned by John R. Young. The first man we met was a man by the name of Polk Pipkin and his father. Both were very old men, I thought. Polk was 53 years old and his father was 75 years old. They were converts to the church⁹ from Arkansas. John R. Young was a very fine man and so was all of his family. He had a bunch of boys, I think. Several people came along to talk to us. Near as I can remember, there were William Black, he was the 1st counselor to the bishop, and Dan Black, and Thomas Stolworthy¹⁰, and a few others. We found them to be very helpful. Everyone helped us in every way they could. Bishop Ashcroft was away at the time. He was over to Gallup with a load of apples.

We went down by the river side and camped by Luther G. Burnham's farm. He was a patriarch. He had whiskers down nearly to his waist and he was quite old, but he was a fine looking man. He put me in mind of the old prophets that we used to see on the cards we would get when we went to Sunday School back in the Indian Territory.¹¹ Henry and I got the job of shucking corn at his place. It wasn't long until Bishop Ashcroft got back home, and he and others came right down to see about getting us located. We got a little place to move into for the rest of the winter. Well, so much for that.

I remember the first Sunday School I went to in Fruitland. Thomas Stolworthy was the Superintendent of the Sunday School. Henry and I went this Sunday. He said, "Now boys, we want you to come all the time, and we won't ask you to do a thing that you can't do." He was a very fine man and later we learned that he had a wonderful family.

Time passed on and Spring came. It is now the year 1900. We had bought that farm at the head of the valley, the first one we had seen from the top of the dugway. It was the first of March when we moved in. It was a beautiful farm to us. There were fruit trees of all kinds, and it wasn't long until we had plenty. We had a wonderful crop, fruit and most everything we needed, and it seemed as though all nature smiled down upon us.

⁹ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints aka the "Mormons"

¹⁰ This Thomas Stolworthy would have probably been either the uncle or grandfather of Ulysses McGee's future wife, Matilda Palmer.

¹¹ Later to become the state of Oklahoma.

That Fall, I, with Dad, drove a four horse team with a load of apples to Gallup, New Mexico to sell. Bishop Ashcroft and a man by the name of Hicks went with us. It took us about ten days to make the trip, which was about 100 miles each way. Well, this about takes care of our story up to the year 1900.

From here on each one may write his or her own story.

This is told in my own way from a memory of 50 and 52 years ago. To whom it may concern and for the benefit of those who may come later.

With best wishes,

Ross S. McGee

This story was completed February 18, 1952.

By Louella McGee Norman

My father, Solon Huff McGee, was born on November 26, 1853, in Loweryville, Tennessee, to James Giles McGee and Sally Davis McGee. My mother, Emily Lucretia Robinson McGee, was born on August 14, 1855, in Columbus, Mississippi, to James Harvey and Margaret Fergah Femster Robinson. My father and mother were married on May 4, 1876. My mother died May 4, 1919 in Springdale, Utah, and was buried there. My father died February 3, 1934, in Draper, Utah, and was buried there.

My mother's people were Scotch. My father's people on the McGee side were Scotch -Irish. He used to tell us that three McGee brothers came to this country from Ireland and that his great-grandmother was the daughter of a Cherokee Indian Chief. He also told us that his great-grandmother on his mother's side was a sister of United States President James Madison.¹²

I can remember my dad telling me about this as a youngster and again about a year and a half before he died. He came down from Draper with Herb to spend the weekend. That is when he told me about it again. He said this information had been handed down through the years by family records and word-of-mouth. My father was always so proud of his Indian heritage, and he had many of the Indian characteristics.

My Grandfather McGee had Negro slaves, but I don't remember how many. My dad used to tell us as youngsters about his life during the Civil War and slavery days. Three slaves I do remember him speaking of so often were two women who did the cooking and housework and a Negro man they called Friday. He, as I remember, was a sort of a handyman. He did the yard work and sort of looked after the young children of the family. Many are the stories my father, or "papa" as we used to call him, used to tell us of Friday and his wild yarns of slavery days. The people on the plantation next to my grandfather's owned Friday's wife and children. My father was about ten or eleven years of age at the time of the Civil War. He would tell us about standing as lookout or guard in a "thicket," as he called it, or a large patch of willows bordering the road leading to my grandfather's farm, watching for guerilla bands engaged in harassing the enemy in small bands (petty warfare). They roamed the country pilfering, looting, and forcing the younger boys who were not quite old enough to join the regular army to join up with them. My father's brother who was about sixteen years of age was running to hide in a corncrib, as they called it, when he was shot and killed by the band. They would just ride in and help themselves to anything they wanted. I recall my dad saying they would take supplies of all kinds. They would go into the Smokehouse, where my grandfather cured and smoked meat, hams, and bacon, and take all they wanted. They would then go to the stables (barns) and take the best horses and leave the poor, tired horses behind. They would go into the kitchen and order the two Negro cooks (at gunpoint) to fix whatever kind of food they wanted. I recall my dad telling us and laughing as he told it, about the two Negro cooks planning how they were going to be so dirty about their cooking if ever the gang came by again and ordered them to cook a meal for them. But the very next morning the gang came by real early, before the cooks got things lined up. Two of the men went into the kitchen and ordered the cooks to fix their breakfast and told them that they wanted a good, clean meal and to wash their hands real clean -- they were very particular about their food. They stood with guns on them to make sure that everything was cooked and served just right (it seemed as though they suspected something).

¹² Mollie Madison born about 1760. However, it has not been established that she is truly a sister to President Madison.

After the war was over and the negro slaves were freed, there was nobody to pick cotton. Much of the plantation was ruined, and then came the Carpetbaggers, as they were called, who also took everything they wanted. My grandfather and ~. family decided to move to Missouri. In the meantime, my grandfather had given the negro they called Friday a piece of land and built him a small house so that he could have his family with him. But Friday had become so attached to my grandfather's family and felt so helpless without them (he had never been on his own before) that he was determined to go to Missouri with them. But, of course, they couldn't take him. When they left, my father said they could hear him for a mile or more screaming and yelling just like he had lost everything in the world. He could not read or write, so they never heard from him again. However, a boy from Tennessee who went to Wasatch Academy with Rowland said that on their farm there was a grave with a headstone, which was very old, which bore the name "Friday."

At about the same time my grandfather McGee moved to Missouri, my grandfather and his family left Mississippi and went to the same part of Missouri. Later on, my father and mother met and were later married. My grandfather McGee owned a large flour mill, and my dad worked with him.. Henry, my brother, told me that when he went back through that part of the country a few years ago, the flour mill was still standing as was the big, two-story house where my grandparents lived years ago. He took a picture of it and was going to let me take it and make a copy, but it got mixed up with a lot of pictures he was showing me and at the time I had to leave, I didn't get it. Henry said my dad and mother lived up the lane, and at that time it seemed such a long way; but he said in looking back at it now, it was only about three or four blocks. My six brothers and sister Sally were born in Missouri. When my dad and mother and my father's people moved to the Indian Territory later becoming the state of Oklahoma where they homesteaded land, my brother Camm, just older than me, was born there and died when he was seven or eight months old.

I was born In Ruby Indian Territory, Oklahoma, just after midnight December 28, 1894. I can remember but very little of my life in the Indian Territory Oklahoma, as I was around four and a half years of age when we left there. But I can recall a few things such as the black funnel-shaped clouds--cyclones or tornados as they are called now. I also remember the cyclone cellar where we went for protection when they thought there was a possibility of a cyclone striking our place. I can also remember one time we went to the town of Veneta, I think. On the way home (we were in a one-horse buggy), we could see a storm coming up, and we hurried so fast trying to get home before it struck. I don't really remember this, but I have been told about it. In fact, Ross mentioned it just a short time ago when we stopped by to see him. When I was just a little tot, I was taking a nap on a folded quilt on the kitchen floor when a sudden storm came up. All the family ran for the cyclone cellar. After they had all gotten in, they heard a loud clash of thunder and they happened to notice that they had left me behind. My brother Ross said he ran back into the house to get me and found that I was safe- -but he found that the lightning had struck and gone down the kitchen wall and splintered the floor right under me. It hadn't harmed me at all.

I have been told about several Mormon Elders (missionaries) laboring in the area where we lived and that they stayed with my folks and eventually converted them to the LDS Church. One of the missionaries, by the name of Palmer, lived in Cedar City, Utah, and had contacted my father through the years. lie came up to Draper and talked at my father's funeral, lie told of the bitterness against the LDS missionaries In the Indian Territory at that time and that my father, a tall man, over six feet, acted as a bodyguard when they held cottage meetings.

The land that my father homesteaded was Indian land, and even though my people had Indian blood, the Government reclaimed it. I just don't know the details, but soon after they joined the Church they decided to move someplace where there were Mormons.

I remember hearing my parents speak of three Mormon missionaries from Utah -- Elder Palmer from Cedar City, Elder Kirby from Hyde Park, up by Logan, and Elder J. W. Anderson of Mt. Pleasant or Spring City. They also spoke of Elder Boyce of Manassa, Colorado. At the time of the death of Mrs. Emily Peterson, Miriam's mother, Miriam's sister Helen Kirby of Hyde Park stayed with us for two nights. In talking about me being born in Oklahoma she told me that her father-in-law served a mission there in his younger life at the time it was Indian Territory. My folks had told me that Elder Kirby had something wrong with one arm, so I asked her about it and she said, "Yes, he had a bad arm." So we decided he was one of the elders that converted my parents to the LDS Church. He had been dead for several years.

I'll get back to the time my folks left the Indian Territory. My grandparents, the McGee's, had died, and my Uncle Josiah -- or "Uncle Doc" as we called him, as he was a medical doctor -- had also died. He had had three wives at different times. They had died, but I recall my dad telling me that his third wife gave birth to a baby. It died, and the following week she died, and the next week he died. My father's younger brother, Uncle Jess, and his family and his only sister, Nancy Ward (I don't remember her husband's first name), and their family remained in Oklahoma. My father's older brother, Uncle Bill, and his wife, Aunt Lou, and his children by his first wife who had died (Walter and wife and children, Tom and Dora and family, and two single children- -Billy and Sally, or Sarah as she was called, [Billy was a lawyer] along with the Hulderbrand family, parents of Dora) all left together. But when my folks went by way of Manassa, Colorado, to see the family of Elder Boyce, they became separated and didn't get together again. Uncle Bill and all their family went to Aztec, New Mexico. None of them had joined the Church, and as far as I know never did. My family went to Fruitland, New Mexico, about twenty-five miles south of Aztec. We bought a 160-acre ranch on the San Juan river, about six or seven miles up the river towards Farmington. But we still had to go to Church in Fruitland. Now they have the church and school in Kirtland up on the Mesa, but there was a little adobe schoolhouse with just one big room. This was just a short distance from where we came down from the mesa to the ranches along the river. I think it was about three miles from our ranch. There was just one teacher, always a man, for the group. They didn't have grades; we were segregated according to how well we could read and do arithmetic.

I'll explain now how I got the name of Louella. My mother had a close friend by the name of Ella, so they put the "Lou" from Uncle Bill's wife with the "Ella" from mother's friend.

When I started to school at about seven years of age, it seemed like an awful long way to walk, but we had plenty of company along most of the way. Our ranch was the next to the last. There was the Ben Black family- -he was a polygamist with three wives, two with school age children. The Haddens and the Pipkins also had school age children. The Stolworthy and Palmer families lived just under the hill leading to Kirtland. One thing I especially remember was this one man teacher, I think he was the teacher when I started to school. We as youngsters thought he was really mean, but in looking back I guess some of the older boys were really hard to

manage. I recall when they would get to acting up he would send them out to a large willow patch close by for a willow stick, he would tell them the size to get. They always brought it back, knowing if they didn't he would get it himself. He would always give them a good lashing. We younger children were too frightened to get very mean.

We only went to school during the late fall and winter months because the older boys had to work on the ranches as much as possible. They always had a teacher come in from some other place. We would take our time going home from school, playing along the way until we left the last farm next to ours. Then we would run the rest of the way home, knowing a good hot meal would be waiting for us. My mother cooked a big dinner at noon for my dad and the older boys. She always made sure there would be plenty for us younger kids.

The only thing that bothered us was the fact that about three times a week a middle-aged man in a one-horse buggy, a man with red hair and a short beard and mustache, would come back from Farmington, where he went regularly to pick up his mail and groceries. He never looked one way or the other -- just straight ahead. He never talked to anyone or bothered us in any way, but we as kids were just scared to death of him -- probably because there were lots of rumors about him, where he came from and why he was there. He lived in a little one-room red brick house just on top of the sand bill above the Stolworthy farm (he was a polygamist too). But when I grew older and read the book, "Riders of the Purple Sage," I just wondered if he was someone trying to get information about polygamy. I do recall that when we saw that buggy coming in the distance, we ran for the high sagebrush along the road.

At that time, we had to go to Fruitland to church, and in those days the women all wore long dresses, some with trains on the back. Sometimes they would pin them up on the side, but I recall one time we went to conference (we went early and stayed all day, having dinner with some friends), as I was going back to the church, the lady was carrying her baby and asked me if I would hold up the back of her dress so that it wouldn't drag in the dirt. So I went along in back of her and held that dress up in the back. I'll never forget how silly I felt, but after she gave us our dinner I didn't dare refuse.

We did have Primary in the little schoolhouse, so we didn't have to go to Fruitland. The boys let us ride the two riding horses. Sally would take Etta and ride the one horse, and I would ride the other.

My father, as I recall, had a large herd of Texas long-horn cattle, which grazed on the rolling hills just above our ranch. Each spring my dad and the boys would brand all the newborn calves and dehorn part of them before turning them loose on the range. Etta and I would sit on the corral fence and watch from a distance. We thought that was great fun. In the fall, they would bring part of them in to fatten for the market. They had to either take them to Durango or Denver, Colorado.

Much of the ranch was planted in alfalfa hay. They had a big derrick, and two loaders each brought in a big load of hay at one time. They also raised grain and corn and had a large orchard with all kinds of fruit. They took the apples to Durango, Colorado. At that time, that was as far as the railroad went. They also raised Sorghum cane and made molasses. My dad had lots of hives of bees. I remember as he worked with the bees he would get stung once in a while, but it didn't seem to hurt him at all. Sometimes they would start to swarm and wouldn't settle down in a hive that he had ready, so we would get out with tin pans or anything that would make a noise, and what a racket we would make until the bees would settle down in clusters on a limb of a tree (if they

didn't go into the hive). If they clustered on a limb of a tree, he would cut the limb off and lay it by the opening into the hive.

Christmas was about the only time we had store candy, as we called it. I would always save part of it for my birthday, which was on the 28th of December. But otherwise we had all the honey and molasses candy we wanted. We raised lots of watermelons and cantalopes. We would just go out and pick them whenever we wanted them.

We hardly ever had snow, but it would get might cold sometimes in the winter. I'll never forget those cold north winds we had to walk through to school, but sometimes we would catch a ride on a coal wagon as they came from Farmington. Most of the people those days were farmers, and they hauled their coal in the wintertime from the coal mines at Fruitland.

Our ranch bordered the San Juan river, so the folks built an ice house, filled it with sawdust, and always put in ice during the coldest part of the winter. That was where we kept our milk and butter. We made ice cream a lot, as long as the ice lasted. As I said before, our farm bordered the San Juan river, which separated the farms from the Indian reservation.

When we first settled there, I was so frightened of the Indians. They would often, when the river was low in the summertime, wade across the river and come up through the fields. In the Indian Territory, the Indians were civilized, and I had never seen an Indian wearing a blanket and dressed as they were. I recall that I would dream about them and wake up screaming at night.

I can remember being baptized in the San Juan river down by a big flour mill in Fruitland. I was eight years old in December, but had to wait until summertime so that the water would be warm.

I recall that my dad was one of the first people to get a surrey with the fringe on top, and were we proud going to church with our Sunday-best clothes. The folks had two of the prettiest horses that were just used for the surrey. They were sort of a speckled gray.

I well remember the first automobile I ever saw. Somebody had called on the telephone from Farmington saying an automobile was coming down through the country and should be by our place in a short time. So Grover and Carr climbed the tallest cottonwood tree in the yard in order to get the first view of it coming down the dugway. It didn't stop, but we all watched it go by. What a thrill it was to see that horseless carriage.

It seemed as I grew up everybody had a job to do. Sally, my older sister, helped my mother with the housework and cooking. Etta and I just did little odd jobs, but had plenty of time for play. We didn't have well water. It was strange that we didn't get typhoid fever, but we didn't. We had some big wooden barrels which were kept up by the driveway into our place and just across the road from a large canal, which was usually muddy. So Etta and I had to carry water from this

canal in buckets and fill the barrels so that the water could settle for drinking, cooking, and washday. The folks dug a deep well and struck water, but it wasn't fit to drink, so they just covered it with boards and left it that way. I recall we had a couple of ducks for pets, and one morning we couldn't find the one anyplace. We looked everyplace, and as a last resort we looked down the well. It was swimming

around in the water. A board had gotten pushed over a bit, and the duck had fallen through. But the boys tied a long rope onto a bucket and scooped it up.

We had a small flock of turkeys. I believe we had around fifty or more, and they just ran loose over the 160-acre ranch. My sister Etta and I as kids had to follow them around in the spring and try to find where they made their nests. Inevitably, about an hour before dinner or lunchtime, those turkeys would take off far parts unknown. We would have to follow in the background after grabbing a sandwich or something to piece on. Turkeys, when they run wild, try to hide their nests. They can be walking around eating and all of the sudden they will crouch down close to the ground and slip off into the bushes or anyplace they might have their nests. So we would have to watch them real closely, and when we found their nests we would put a long stick in the ground with a white cloth on the end of it and thereafter keep a close watch on the nest so that we would know when they started to set on the eggs. When the eggs hatched, we would take the little turkeys with the mother hen up to the barnyard until they were big enough to be safe on the range.

Sometimes when we were following the turkeys around, we would see a snake, sometimes a rattlesnake, but mostly blow snakes, which are not poisonous. We would throw rocks or hit them on the head with a big stick until they were dead. Then we would hang them on a fence. There was a superstition that it would rain if we did that. There was but very little rain in New Mexico, so we took advantage of every snake-hanging we could. Later on in the day when the turkeys started to go back to the barnyard, and as our work was done for the day (as far as the turkeys were concerned), we always beat the turkeys home. By that time we were good and hungry for a good, hot meal.

Etta and I used to like to play jokes on the boys while they were eating their meals. We knew they all would try and get to the telephone first if it rang. As I grew up, the kids always had to wait until the grownups were through eating. Then we could eat. So several times (until we were caught), we would take the alarm clock and crouch down by the open window. The telephone was just inside the open window, an old style one that we had to crank. I recall that our ring was one long and two shorts, so when the boys were about half through eating, we would ring our number, and the boys would all try and get to the telephone first -- hoping it was a girlfriend..

I believe it was about two years before we left New Mexico that early one morning Willard Stolworthy came by our house on a horse and yelled there wouldn't be any school for a while because the schoolhouse had blown down. I'll never forget how excited we were. We thought it was great to not have to go to school, but it was only a short time until a room was arranged for in the home of a Mexican family. It had a dirt floor, I think. It must have been clay because it was almost as hard as concrete. We went to school there for the rest of the winter and the next. They still hadn't built a new schoolhouse when we left there, and I understand that they later built it at Kirtland.

In the meantime, Henry had gone on his mission. He labored in Illinois and Indiana. I was around 10 years of age when he left for his mission. About once a year my mother and a younger kid would go up to Aztec to visit my dad's brother and family, and Uncle Bill and Aunt Lou would do the same. I recall we went up to Aztec the summer before we left New Mexico. It was my mother's birthday while we were there, and we had quite a celebration.

It was in July, I believe of 1906, that my dad sold the ranch, and a few days later had a big auction sale. They sold everything, even to the last dish. Our clothing and bedding were the only things that weren't

sold. In a few days Jim Washburn took us to the train. I believe it took two days, as we stayed overnight with some friends by the name of Tanner. My brother Elwood's two girls, Stella and Ruth, later married their two boys.

The train was a narrow gage, and the first train I had ever seen. We went on to Grand Junction, Colorado, where we had to wait a few hours for the train that was to take us to LaGrande, Oregon. Ross and his wife, Irene, had gone there in the spring. While waiting for our train -- it was early in the evening -- the Salvation Army group paraded around the depot playing their instruments and singing. That was another thing that we had never seen before, and I was really fascinated by it all. Ross had rented a house for us until the folks could find a home to buy. We three girls picked fruit during the rest of the summer.

We found school quite different than we had been used to. Etta and I were the only ones that went to school in LaGrande. Jim Washburn came out in the fall and lived at our place. He wasn't going to let Sally get away from him.

It was a short time before Christmas that we moved into the home that my dad had just bought. It was a bungalow-type frame home, painted yellow. It had three bedrooms, a living room, dining room, and kitchen. We had a pump on the back porch over a well, so we had water handy, which was really wonderful to us. The house was almost new and was on an acre of land. We had a big new barn with board walks leading to everything. LaGrande was noted for its big sawmills, so all the sidewalks in town were made of wood. A big sugar factory was only a couple of blocks from our home, and my dad worked there. Grover worked at one of the sawmills. Henry came home from his mission in the late winter, and he also went to work at the sugar factory. We had to walk several blocks to church, or at least we had to go through town.

I will never forget when the Church President Joseph F. Smith visited at conference a short time after we moved to LaGrande. The people stood in line just outside the chapel to shake hands with him as he came out. I think that was just as thrilling to me as if I had touched Christ Himself. I won't forget his long white beard.

In the spring, after school was out, my dad and mother, Grover, Etta, and I moved out on the farm for the summer. In the meantime, my dad had planted a large garden at our home in town, which he had to go in and water each week. Sally stayed in town and kept the house up and cooked meals for Henry, Carr, and Jim Washburn.

It was in October that Henry and LaRetta Wilson and Sally and Jim went to Salt Lake City and were married in the LDS Temple. Shortly after, Carr went back to New Mexico. He was engaged to Pearl Stolworthy. In the spring, they were also married in the Salt Lake Temple and came on to LaGrande. I recall that my dad had to send notarized papers giving his consent to the marriage. I also recall the first time I ever saw a circus, "Ringling Brothers." To me it was one of the most wonderful experiences I had ever had.

It was later that fall that Elwood and family Ulys and family, and Jim and Sally and Ross and Irene moved to Nampa, Idaho. They bought a big machine to clear sagebrush off the land, but I don't recall how all this came about. I do recall that my dad, Grover, and Henry stayed on in LaGrande and worked

in the sugar factory that winter and early spring. Then we also sold out and went to Nampa, as did Carr and Pearl. It seemed where one went, they all went.

My dad and Grover leased a farm. It had a new white house on it with a windmill that pumped the water for culinary purposes. I remember we had a riding pony, and that summer I rode around to the farmhouses and sold subscriptions for a magazine. I received a nice set of dishes for my work, which I gave to my mother. Otherwise, I didn't do much of anything except help my mother with her housework. It was far from town to go to church, the people that lived on a farm next to us had two girls around the same age as Etta and myself, and we occasionally spent the night with each other.

We moved into the town that fall and went to school. My dad and Grover worked in the sugar factory, and two young fellows that worked with Grover roomed and boarded with my folks. Two Mormon missionaries stayed with us at times. One of the Elders was a fellow by the name of Gifford from Springdale, Utah, and I recall hearing him talk of the beautiful climate down there and of all the things they could raise down there as they could in the South where my father was raised as a youngster. I believe this influenced my dad in moving there later. In the meantime, Henry and LaRetta had moved to Burley, Idaho.

It was during that winter that my dad, Grover, and Elwood decided to move to Oakley, Idaho (about twenty miles from Burley), and go into the picture show business. (When we left LaGrande, Oregon, my dad had rented a car on the railroad and brought everything with us.) Again, they had a big auction out at Elwood's place and sold everything.

We moved to Oakley, where we bought a lot and built a showhouse and called it the "Empire." Up until then, there had never been a picture show in the town, as it was just a small Mormon town without electric lights. So my folks operated the picture machines some other way (I have forgotten just how). Elwood operated the picture machines, I sold tickets, and Grover took tickets. He and my dad managed it. My dad rented a house to live in. It had at one time been a small hospital just a block from the church. We didn't have shows on Sunday at that time, and of course we always went to church. We also had Mutual on Sunday nights at that time.

It was in the spring after going to Oakley that I graduated from the eighth grade. I recall that the following winter the folks started to let me go to dances; that is, if I had a date, which I did most of the time. My dates would call for me at the show after I finished selling tickets. The dance hall was close by. I really enjoyed selling tickets.

It was during that winter that Jim and Sally came from Nampa to visit with us for a while before going back to New Mexico to live. Their little girl, Neta -- I think she was close to two years old -- took ill suddenly one night and died. This was a real tragedy for us. They buried her in Oakley, and in a short time left for New Mexico. I was still going to school that winter.

It was in the late summer of that year my brother Grover (he was about eleven years older than me but was still single) went to Richfield to investigate starting up a business there. They had one picture show there, but he thought it could support another one. So they sold out in Oakley. In the meantime, Ulys and his family and Carr and Pearl and baby had moved back to New Mexico to live.

We moved to Richfield in the fall of 1912. My dad rented a building, remodeled it, and it was a real nice place. My brother Elwood operated the picture machines, Grover took tickets and managed the business along with my dad, and I sold tickets. They also bought a player piano.

I went to school that year and also sold tickets at the show house. I surely enjoyed selling tickets. There was never a dull moment. I hardly ever had to walk home alone. It was only three blocks, but it seemed there was always some fellow waiting to walk me home. It was really hard for me, going to school and selling tickets every night except Sunday (we didn't have shows on Sunday night). We always went to Mutual on Sunday nights, and it seemed that was the night the boys and girls got together and went to one of the girl's homes for a party of some kind. Sometimes we would play cards, and when my brother Elwood heard about it he almost raised the roof. Until this day I have never played cards since. I recall that my folks would never have a card in the house (they had been brought up that way).

I went to school the second winter until Christmas. Then my mother's health got so bad that I quit school. She wasn't able to do the housework. I had been doing the washing for a long while on Saturdays -- and did it the hard way on a scrubbing board. I would always go to the dances on Saturday night. My dates would always call for me at the show house.

It was on January 2, 1914, I was in the ticket booth as usual when a young man up the window and bought a ticket. I wasn't rushed at the moment, so he stopped and talked for a minute. I had no idea who he was, and he didn't interest me in the least. Later that evening I closed the ticket booth and stepped out into the lobby and told my brother Grover who took tickets that he could check me out. To my surprise, there stood the fellow who had bought a ticket and stopped to talk earlier in the evening. My brother Grover introduced him to me as Herb Norman. We talked for a while, and he told me he had just recently come to Richfield and was a clerk at the Denver and Rio Grand depot. He asked me if he could walk me home. That was the beginning of our romance. I sort of got to liking him, and the more I saw of him the more I liked him. But to make him sort of jealous, I had put a picture in my locket of the guy that I was supposed to be engaged to and wasn't -- a fellow by the name of Philo Farnsworth.¹³ I had met him in Idaho, and he would come to Richfield to see me occasionally. He wrote to me all the time. But anyway, Philo came down on a surprise visit and took me out for a buggy ride. Before he left, he looked into my locket. He just smiled but said nothing. But when he got home, he wrote me and said that when he looked into my locket I had made him the happiest guy in the world. He said that he had stopped in the barbershop that day and was told that I had found someone else -- the guy down at the depot.

It wasn't long after that when Herb and I became engaged to get married in the fall. In the meantime, Grover and Herb had become good friends, so Grover asked him why didn't he come and room with him, since he spent most of his time at our place anyway. And that's the way it was. He walked me home every night until after Grover and Martina were married the latter part of July. Then Herb moved back to his old boarding house at the Ogden's.

¹³ Is the the same Phil Farnsworth that invented television???