

BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM CROOKSTON

By Emma C. Dunn

William Crookston, better known as Bill, was the second son of Robert and Ann Welch Crookston. He was born Oct. 18, 1849 at Savannah, Missouri. When he was about two years old the family moved to Jackson Point, Holt Co. Missouri, where his brother John was born June 1, 1851. In the spring of 1852 they started to cross the plains with all their possessions in a covered wagon, except the two milch cows which could be considered the most prized assets because of the contribution they made to the food supply on the long journey and a longer period of hard times at the journey's end. The family arrived in Salt Lake City in September 1852.

The father worked in the Temple Rock quarries at Red Butte Canyon and in the lime-stone quarry. He helped quarry and load the corner stone for the Salt Lake Temple and was present when the stone was laid, April 6, 1853. The parents had three more boys born while living in Salt Lake City:

James, born April 27, 1853, died Sept. 15, 1854
Robert, born March 6, 1855, died June 2, 1928
Nicholas born Oct. 22, 1857, died June 7, 1892.

In the spring of 1858 the family moved to Payson where Robert Crookston was called to rock up wells. That was the time of the Move South when Johnston's army came to Utah. Grandfather built a home in Payson in the neighborhood of Heskiah Thatcher and William B. Preston. In 1859 Grandfather moved again; this time the destination was Moroni, Sanpete Co. where he spent the next few years working at his trade of stone mason. Two more sons were born in this settlement:

Benjamin Franklin, born Oct. 22, 1860, died Oct. 15, 1927
David, born Oct. 24, 1862, died March 6, 1948.

The eldest brother, George, died while the family was living in Moroni, March 6, 1862.

Grandmother always said that her sons all had different dispositions: Uncle Bill was the "dare-devil" of the family, never afraid of anything. Uncle Nick tells in his history the event he recalls most clearly was that in Moroni the people were very poor and did not have the necessities of life. Uncle Nick also recalls one occasion in which Bill was the hero. The choir was giving a program with dancing and a supper after the entertainment. Grandmother had baked a large chicken pie; the children watched and smelled it in the making; the smell was immense. About ten o'clock Bill and some friends returned home with that chicken pie. He had crawled through the meeting house window and had handed the pie out to waiting hands. It did not take long for the pie to disappear.

The Indians were bad and caused a great deal of trouble for the white settlers. Grandmother was a good nurse and took care of the women in confinement and of the sick in general.

Biography of William Creekston (continued)

In 1864 the family moved to Logan, Cache Valley, Grandfather bought a lot where Sears store now stands. Uncle Bill worked for John Thatcher, as the Thatchers had persuaded Grandfather to come to Logan, promising him employment as a stone mason. He laid the stone for Thatcher's Mill and the building now called the Relic Hall, although it was the stable originally that housed the Thatcher horses. Many rock houses stand today as monuments to the fine workmanship of Grandfather Robert Crookston. The first winter was very cold; the snow lay on the ground for five months.

Uncle Bill and his brothers Jehn drove teams to Idaho and Montana for Thomas E. Ricks who was shipping produce to the mines in these states. When Bill was about 18 he was called by Brigham Young to drive a four mule-team back over the Plains to help the companies of immigrants. In my father's history he tells that one of his earliest memories was going up to the Tithing Office Yard to watch the immigrants come in when the family were expecting Uncle Bill back from his journey. There were apartments on the east side of the Tithing Office where the church let the newcomers stay until they could find better homes of their own. Before the railroads came in 1869, Uncle Bill made several more trips for the church which furnished the outfit and helped the poor to come to Zion.

Grandmother had three more children after moving to Logan:

Daniel, born Oct. 16, 1864, died April 22, 1924

Mary Ann, born April 7, 1870, died Oct. 5, 1941

Ezra, born May 18, 1873, died June 24, 1954.

When Uncle Bill was about 21 years old he went away to work in the mines; he spent some time in Eureka, Mercur and Steckton. While in the latter place he met a nice young lady by the name of Agnes McKeller. She was born and reared in Tooele, Utah and came of Scotch parents. They were married in 1873 and came to Logan. At first they lived in two rooms of the old Crookston home, where two children were born to them: William, born August 30, 1874

Margaret Ann, born Oct. 6, 1875.

They built a two-room house on First East between 2nd and 3rd South where Addie was born Oct. 13, 1878. Later his brothers, Nick, Bob, David and Dan all lived in that neighborhood. It was called The Island. While living in Logan Bill worked hauling rock for the Logan Temple and tabernacle and in the canyon getting our logs for the lumber mills.

Uncle Bill was called in 1879 by the church to go help colonize Arizona. He sold all his possessions and left in April of 1879. They travelled in a wagon and his brother Frank, 18 years of age, went with them riding a horse the entire distance. Grandmother was very superstitious and I have heard her tell many times how the morning they left a mourning dove sat on the roof of the house and sang his mournful song and she knew one of them would never come back.

Biography of William Crookston (continued)

They settled in a place called Pima, not much of a place to this day. Their ~~men~~ will remembered the hardships the people had there. The Indians were very bad and the pioneers had built a stockade to which the women and children would run when the Indians were seen. The men tried to defend themselves but were always out-numbered. He told how one year the man had planted lots of corn so they would have enough feed for their animals as well as for themselves. When the corn was ripe the Indians came and picked the crop and helped themselves to everything else they wanted. Uncle Bill was the only man who dared to grab a horse and go for help.

The trip down had been too hard for his wife, Agnes, as she had heart trouble and was sick all the time. They became discouraged and after six years they returned to Utah. They stopped in Tooele to visit her people and she became worse and died there Dec. 28, 1885 and was buried. Uncle Nick and David, my father, went down for the funeral and brought back the three children. Grandmother cared for them with the help of Aunt Alice and uncle Nick, and as soon as they were old enough they got work and were independent. Uncle Bill went away to Montana to work in the mines at Butte.

I remember him well coming to the old home when I was a child. He was a ~~big~~ good-looking man about five feet ten inches tall. Well built, weighing about 180 pounds; ~~dark hair and dark blue eyes.~~ Having lived in a mining camp I knew a miner's life is not a healthy one, breathing the mineral dust and bad air, none of them can stand it for long. About 1897 his health ~~was~~ ~~back~~, he spent the winter of 1898 with his son Will and Please Farmer who were living in Star Valley on the church farm taking care of the church cattle. He hoped to get his health back. Later he went to Mercur where his daughter Addie Bracken lived. She did not know him he had changed so much, but she recognized his voice. They got a doctor and were very good to him. Addie had two small children and was expecting another. The son Will came and took him to Salt Lake and put him the General Hospital where he died Dec. 18, 1904. His funeral was held in Logan at Lindquist Mortuary. His old friends furnished the program and the quartette that Uncle Ezra belonged to furnished the music. The members of the group were Helmer Pedersen, John Petersen, Willard Skanohy and Ezra Crookston. William Crookston was buried in the Logan cemetery.