

July 23, 1996

Memories of Sylvanus (Vean) S. Collett

by his daughter Edna Collett Raines

The memories that I have of my father, Sylvanus (Vean) (S.) Collett.

He was born December 15, 1866, in Smithfield, Cache, Utah, one hour and a half behind his twin brother, Sylvester Daniel.

He was married to Sarah Elizabeth Simkins, June 2, 1886 by T. E. Jones in Arizona. They received their endowments in the Logan Temple on October 1, 1889. They had five children: Wiley Sylvanus, Annie Elthurah (who died in infancy), Orin, Alice and Byron Sylvester. Sarah (Sadie) died February 27, 1902 in Naples, Utah.

Then he married my mother, Ethelwynne Stringham (Winnie). They had five children: Claude (died in infancy), Howard, Edna, Edith and Carl.

Howard Samuel, Edna and Edith were born on the Moore place, up on the corner, across from the Ackhurst house, on the lane (3000 W. 1500 N.). I remember that there we got our water from a well. I can remember how excited I was in 1919 - when we moved to the William Vernon house about ¼ of a mile east. This was to be the home that we would all grow up in. All, but Byron (of the first marriage), was married. The rest had moved away at this time.

In 1919 and 1920 we were all so ill from the flu and father gave us blessings that we would become well (during World War I).

Papa was what we called him. Papa and others built a front porch on the house, a lean-to kitchen and a back porch. On the back porch, we would do the washings and separate the cream from the milk.

Papa had a little over 40 acres of land, with most of it planted in grain and alfalfa.

His working clothes were blue bib overalls and shirt.

When it was haying season, there were several hired men to help put the hay and grain up. The two I remember most were Jim Fisher and Jack Bascom.

The hay was first mowed, then the workers had to go and put it into piles. When it was dry enough, it was loaded onto hay wagons and hauled to where the hay stacks were made. With a hay horse to pull up the Jackson Fork full of hay to the stack from the wagon. You would ride the hay horse forward - then when the hay fork was tripped - you had the hay horse back up for another fork full. (I rode the horse many times and also tromped the hay on the hay wagons as they were being loaded.)

Papa and a Mr. Gardner dug the trench from the Maeser Water system in the middle of the road to the house and we had our faucet of cold water in the house. The hot water being heated on the stove and in the reservoir of the stove.

Often after haying, they would drive the wagons down to the canal and let the wagon wheels soak over night, so that the wheels would swell and the tires stay on the wheels.

The women would cook a hearty meal because the men had to work so hard and it was hot.

For about a half hour after the meal - the men would lie down on the grass or on the floor in the house. Then up to work again.

The hay was very dry and lots of dust would go up in the air to cause asthma injury to the lungs.

In the fall was the time for the Threshers to pull in - then the air was again filled with dust as the wheat and other grains were thrashed.

That was the life of Papa during the summer months.

In the winter it was cold. Cold enough for us to walk over the fences on the hardened snow to school.

Papa built an ice house and filled it with saw dust. Then in the cold of winter, he and other men, with their team and wagons, rode down to Jensen, Utah and cut blocks of ice off the Green River. Then they hauled them back to put in the saw dust in the ice house. Later they would cut 3 feet blocks off Calder's Pond and had enough ice to last them through the winter to put in their ice boxes to keep the food from spoiling.

On the 4th of July, we would dig and dig in the saw dust to find the last pieces of ice so that we could make and freeze homemade ice cream.

The ice house was also used to hang up our meat during the winter months.

Papa had about 12 head of cows to milk and we would separate the cream from the milk. We would sell the cream to Calder's Creamery and got small checks from them twice a month.

When Papa became ill during the winter, Howard and I would milk the cows.

Papa would help the old local Veterinarian, George Wilson, when he needed help in treating the large animals. George was very deaf, so everyone would have to shout to him.

Papa had a Black Smith Shop, where he fitted shoes for his horses, etc. I often went down and turned the billows to make the fire blaze or run the sharpening wheel to sharpen his tools.

Carl Stringham Collett was born, June 10, 1922 in the Vernon house. I always felt bad that they had us go down to Aunt May's while he was being born, because I had wanted to be up there on our lawn and catch the baby as he came down, and take him into Mother. Papa only stayed four days after Carl's birth, then went back to the Oil Shale on Hill Creek.

We all seemed to have the same place to sit around the table. I sat next to my father. Before we ate, we moved back our chairs, knelt down on the floor and had a family prayer, including a blessing on the food.

It seemed as if we had lots of hot biscuits and rolls. I only liked the crust, so I would dig the centers out and give them to Papa. One day he said to me, "I wonder, if it would be all right with you, if I had a complete biscuit instead of just the centers." To this day, even at the Golden Age Center, I will take the center out of a biscuit and put it in my milk carton. Shame Edna!

Papa loved a spoonful or two of sugar in his bread and milk at supper time. When he ate candy, he would buy a sack and eat it all. Then not eat any candy for months.

I had long hair, big heavy braids, until I was 12 years old. One summer afternoon, Edith and I began to beg mother to cut our hair.

Finally she said, "Go and ask your father". He was out cultivating the corn. I remember going out and following him up and down the rows, not daring to ask him.

Finally I did and he said, "Okay, if you want to be sorry." I ran back to mother and she cut it off. When I looked in the mirror, I could have cried, because I looked so ugly!

When I learned to read, I would get a story and ask Papa to read to me. He read so slowly, that I would look over his shoulder and read ahead of him. Sometimes he would get so disgusted with me.

He never really liked to write very much because he said that he didn't learn how. The reason papa did not like to write was because he was left handed. When he began school - no one could write left handed - so he had to write right handed.

I am adroit dexterous myself. I have more power in my left hand than in my right. I always have to look down at my rings to know which is my right hand.

I can remember two trips that he took us on. Around the twenty-fourth of July we went by horse and wagon to the Dry Fork Twins. As we went along the road, we picked up Rowena and Ethyl Stringham and Mark looked so forlorn that they told him to get in. He spent about a week, with no change of clothes. When we got back from our trip, Glen Calder had been born. Can't remember too much about the trip, but we had a good time.

Later we went over the mountain (Taylor Mountain) to go and see Wiley and family over in Burnt Fork, Wyoming. There was our family and Mrs. Alice Billings, Erma's mother. We were two or three days by wagon and time going over. We stopped one night at old Pat Carroll's mill and playing in the saw dust. Mother lost her gold wedding ring, which made her feel very bad.

The next day, we hit rain early in the afternoon, so we stopped a little early. We went down to a little stream fishing, giving Carl a willow with cord string and a bent pin on it. Papa caught a little fish. So as Carl was fishing, that fish got on his line. An old Indian and his squaw had met us and were traveling along with us. How that old buck laughed as Carl caught the fish.

Mrs. Billings and mother wanted to find out the Indian's name, so he told them he would tell them in the morning. So at noon the next day, they asked him his name and he told them, "He had lost it on the way". By night fall they were gone so we never saw them again.

We had a good visit with Wiley and family. Left Mrs. Billings there and returned home by wagon. I can still hear the grinding of brakes as we went down the switch backs and resting of horses as we returned.

Papa never liked to have his picture taken, so any family pictures we had taken were with mother.

One day, I had my little box camera and coaxed him to let me take his picture. "Well hurry up!" I did.

We raised a big garden up in the corner of my field where I live. That year we had a lot of cantaloupes, so just before frost, we came up with wheel barrows and gathered the melons and put them in the granary in the oats, where they slowly ripened and we had melons for quite a while that winter.

One day Papa was cutting hay, when Uncle Phil Stringham came along and wanted him to go with him up on the mountain to his sheep. Mother was a little upset. In later life, I found out that the reason Papa was willing to go was because Uncle Phil was an alcoholic. If Papa went with him, he didn't drink. He did this several times.

When Papa was Bishop, he would go to the home of the sick or if there was a death. He would sit up all night, then come home and do a day's work, which was hard on his health.

Things are not in order. So I ramble on.

One day, we were going to town in early spring after a good rain. We were in a wagon pulled by a good team of horses. We got down by Freestones (which is just below Searle Gas Company on the Maeser highway) and got stuck. The harder the horses tried to pull, the farther the wheels mired down.

We sat in the wagon while Papa went on to town and got another team of horses, so with the four horses pulling we finally got out.

I can think of the long wagon ride it was to go out into Davis Ward and go along the mountains, cross the creek and to visit Newell and Alice in Jensen. It was a long days ride.

Papa told of a legal paper that N. J. Meagher had said that he signed at his Bank (The Bank of Vernal) Papa declared that it was not his signature and that it was forged. He couldn't prove anything, so he had to pay the note, but he said that he would never bank at that bank and he didn't.

Papa had bought second hand cars. One old Buick from Mr. Rudge seemed to be the last one. Mother wanted to take her children to Salt Lake City for the 24th of July Parade. She was looking for a used car. Then her father and brothers went in with the money she got from the Buick and bought them a brand new 1929 Chevrolet. So Papa stayed home and Junius Hacking drove us out. The break in speed limit was 25 miles an hour. So we went and had a good hot time in the city.

Papa did not like to drive cars. I learned to drive when I was about 12 years old. Often I drove him places. He could drive, but he didn't like to. In about 1931, he and I drove over the mountain. Wiley's house had burned down at Burnt Fork, WY and he was living in Lyman, Wyoming. We visited with them several days.

On the way back, we were driving from Manila up the switch backs of sheep creek dugway. I was driving. I looked down to shift and ran into the bank and flattened the front fender. I thought surely that Papa would drive, but he just pulled out the fender away from the wheel and I drove the rest of the way home.

Papa was an old country dentist, in that he had some forceps to pull teeth. All the neighbors would bring their children up to get their teeth pulled out. I would climb a tree and stop up my ears, so that I would not hear them scream, while he pulled their teeth.

He told the story of a man who met him in this buggy and asked him to pull his tooth. He said, "I'll scream and yell, but don't quit pulling until it is out." So Papa straddled him and pulled. Yes the man screamed and yelled, but finally the tooth came out. Then the man quit yelling and said, "You darn fool, you pulled out the wrong one!" So he had to pull the right aching one.

Yes, I had him try to pull some of my molars, but my teeth were soft on top but hard to pull, after he felt like he broke my jaw and broke my tooth off. I still had to go to another dentist to have my roots dug out.

I must have taken after him a little bit, because I was known as the dentist of Maeser School. I pulled teeth from first grade to eighth grade students. Anyone could have

pulled them, because I just used my fingers. I still pull Stephanie's (Galloway) teeth, but my grandchildren will not come near me.

Papa was not one to socialize. He would go with mother once in awhile under protest. I don't know whether he ever danced or not.

Papa was put in as Bishop of Maeser Ward in July 1922. Carl was blessed that day and Papa put in as Bishop. Mother herself did not know he was going to be made Bishop, until they read his name.

Junius Hacking got me in the Kindergarten room and began to tease me as the "Bishop's daughter". I began to cry. Yes, I was a cry baby.

Mother did most of the disciplining. I don't remember my father ever hitting me. But when he spoke at times, I knew he had the authority, so we would obey. He was a very shy, kind man.

Asthma has to do with the lungs. It wasn't long after he was Bishop, his health began to fail. Because the Bishop has so much responsibility, taking care of the sick, sitting up all night with people who were dying and settling differences of couples of his Ward. I remember one woman saying, "We have been married 25 years and I have never had a new coat." Not that they couldn't afford it.

He married people in our home. One time, I sat on the sewing machine treadle while a couple was being married. He married one couple at her parent's home and the minute the "I do's" were said, the groom crawled out the window.

We owned 25 acres up at the Pearce place. It was on the creek. We took our cows in the mornings and got them at night to milk at home. We also took our sheep up there at times.

The road was deep sand. The place also had an orchard on it, so we would go up there in the wagon and pick apples and plums.

Papa was released as Bishop of Maeser Ward in 1927. He worked on the building committee for a new church house. The people on the South (Angel Street) wanted it over there. The people on the North wanted it over where an old school house had been.

Uncle Philip Stringham bought the old Riddle place in the middle of the ward and donated the property for the new chapel. Which was completed in 1929. That chapel has also been torn down.

Our property was mortgaged to the Land Bank of Berkeley, California so we were deeply in debt most of the time.

My father was a prospector, or he had a brother who was always finding new places to mine. So he spent a lot of time away from home, proving up mine claims in oil shale in the Hill Creek area. He and his nephew, Sterling did the proving up and his brother R. S. was reaping what benefits they could get from it.

I don't remember him ever saying "I love you"; but we knew that he was proud of us.

Mother was the feisty one, always saying what she thought. Quiet Papa just sat and listened.

In about 1929, he had gone up to visit his sister Princetta. He really liked his niece, Mildred Bills, so when he went to Salt Lake City to visit, he brought back Mildred a stuffed animal and was so proud of it!

Mother really climbed his frame, saying "you brought something for your niece, but nothing for you own children."

The next time he went, he brought us all a gift. Mine was a small table cloth which I had to embroidery in cross stitch. I don't remember what the others got.

I was always climbing trees. This day I had climbed up real high. Mother was calling me to get down to do dishes. I said, "I can't get down".

My father came out and said, "If you don't come down now, I will come up and spank you with this stick." I climbed down!

It was April 29, 1932. I got off our High School bus, thundering in the house and probably shouting, "What did we get in the mail?"

Mother met me at the door and said, 'Sh! Sh! Your father is very ill. The Doctor came up and gave him a hypo (hypodermic). So that it will kill the pain and he is asleep!"

It was still cold enough that we had a fire in the stove. So it was decided that Howard and I would sit up and keep the fire going and mother would go in the bedroom and sleep until mid-night. About 11:15 p.m. she awakened and came out. She walked over to Papa and said, "He just passed away!"

Everyone of the relative were so shocked, because Papa had seemed to be better the past week.

I know I went down the road to Aunt May's and Uncle Mark's and pounded on the door crying, "Papa is dead, Papa is dead!"

I remember Feron Hacking, Uncle Mark and others who came. They got a board and laid Papa on it. Wrapped his body in white sheets and put ice around it. Then some one sits by the body to change the ice so that the body does not go dark.

People of the Ward would come to view the body - which was in our front bedroom - but I never wanted to look at him lying dead. I wanted to remember him alive.

A friend, Pauline fisher Walker added this:
She said the morning after papa died. Her mother was outdoors looking up toward our place. She saw a white sheet hanging in the tree. She said, "Something has happened up at the Colletts. I must go up and find out what it is."

Not having a telephone - - we often signaled each family with a flag. White = "Sorrow" Red = "No, we can't come up" Green = "Yes, we can do it."

His funeral was set for May 1, 1932. All his brothers and sisters came except Aunt Princetta and Uncle Charles. They said it was one of the largest funerals ever because they opened the doors to the cultural hall and they even sat on the stage. He was well loved and respected.

They thought Carl, who was almost ten, was too young to go to the funeral, so he stayed up to Aunt Ella's.

The day of the funeral, all of his brothers and sisters had arrived. For the first time, I began to realize that my father was really gone and I began to cry and cry. "Why?" because "what would we do at Christ^{mas} time without papa?" Grace Postma and Aunt Julia comforted me.

Leo Smith built his casket.

Mrs. Swain drove the hearse.

He was laid to rest at the Vernal Cemetery next to his first wife, Sarah.

Howard graduated that night from Uintah High School.

After that, time was spent settling up all our debts. Cows were sold, sheep sold and 26 acres of our land and also the Pearce place.

We were a struggling family, but better off for it.

Our Pioneers - "Sylvanus Collett" From Vernal Express

Sylvanus Collett, the son of Reuben and Elthurah Merrill Collett, was born in Smithfield, Utah, December 15, 1866. He spent his early life in northern Utah. His father, who built 25 homes, was called to help settle communities in Utah and Arizona. In this latter place, Sylvanus married Sarah E. Simpkins, June 2, 1886. To this union were born five children. In 1887 the family moved to Ashley Valley and settled first in Maeser but later lived in Naples. He held many responsible ecclesiastical positions.

He was the first president of the Maeser M.I.A., counselor to Bishop Shaffer of the Naples Ward, counselor to Thomas Bingham in Maeser Sunday School, high counselor in Uintah Stake. July 2, 1922, he was chosen bishop of Maeser Ward by George Albert Smith. During the last few years he has devoted himself to service among the afflicted and needy until his friends have become very numerous.

Most of his life has been spent in the farming and livestock business. However, in 1903 he acted as forest ranger on the Ashley forest. In 1905 he was called to act as supervisor of the Dixie National Forest, with headquarters in St. George. There he made many friends. In 1907, he returned to Uintah county where he acted as state road supervisor in the construction of the present highway to Roosevelt, also the road from Vernal to Jensen. *Ward Dugway.*

Obituary in the Vernal Express. "Pioneer Bishop of Maeser Succumbs Following Cold and Attack of Asthma"

Bishop Collett Succumbs Friday after useful career.

Entire Valley Honor Splendid Life of former bishop and organizer at Impressive services held in Maeser chapel Monday afternoon.

Maeser, (Special) - The whole community was surprised to hear of the death of Bishop Sylvanus Collett at 11 a.m. Friday. For several years he had been afflicted with asthma, but had felt better lately than for some time. Having been exposed to a severe wind storm recently, he took a severe cold which resulted in his death.

The commodious chapel would not hold the huge crowds of admiring and sympathetic friends who assembled on Monday, to pay respect to him and it was necessary to open the folding doors of the amusement hall to accommodate them.

The services, held at 1 o'clock p.m., were under the direction of Bishop Lester Bingham. A chorus from the Maeser choir, directed by Warren S. Jones, and assisted by Mrs. Thomas E. Caldwell, as accompanist, and other singers from Vernal, feelingly rendered, "Providence Is Over All." The opening prayer was offered by President Ernest Eaton of the High Priests Quorum, to which Mr. Collett belonged. Mrs. May Jorgenson and Mrs. May Calder rendered the duet, "Hope on Dear Heart."

Thomas Bingham, who served as first counselor to Bishop Collett, was the first speaker. He told of his loyal devotion to duties as the ward and his ability to unite its

members. As an illustration of his interest in folks, Edgar A. Guest's poem, "People Liked Him" was read. Albert G. Goodrich was the second speaker. He referred to the high esteem in which the deceased was held in Naples where he had lived many years.

Charles H. Colton, supervisor of priesthood activities in Maeser ward, related incidents in proof of how true religion was exemplified in the life of Bishop Collett by his unselfish service to his family and people in need everywhere. Mrs. Lucile Calder sang touchingly, "There is No Night."

R. S. Collett of Salt Lake was the concluding speaker. With great difficulty he bore witness of the kindly disposition and loving nature of his brother. He referred to his splendid wives and honorable family which he had raised. The speaker gave eloquent utterance to the reward of a well spent life. The chorus sang, "When the Mists Have Cleared Away." The benediction was pronounced by President Hugh W. Colton.

A large number of High Priest with bowed heads in columns on either side of the entrance walk, in token of their high esteem of the departed. Three sons, Wiley, Orin and Byron and three brothers, Adelbert, Clarence and George, acted as pall bearers. The floral tributes in the form of wreathes and house plants were profuse. A large cortege followed the remains to the Vernal cemetery where the grave was dedicated by Phil Stringham, Sr.

Mr. Collett is survived by his wife and the following children: Wiley S. Collett of Lyman, Wyoming; Orin and Byron of Vernal; Mrs. Alice Snow of Jensen; Howard S., Edna, Edith and Carl, who are still at home with their mother. The following brothers and sisters are still living, all of whom, except Charles were present at the funeral, R. S. and A. T. Collett of Salt Lake; Charles of Bennington, Idaho; Mrs. Julia Postma of Smithfield; Mrs. Princetta Bills of Meeker; Clarence of Murray; George Collett of Salt Lake and Mrs. Roseltha Neilson of Sandy.

Mr. Collett's first wife having died several years previously, he was married to Miss Ethelwynne Stringham. September 27, 1904. From this very happy union two boys, Howard and Carl, and two girls, Edna and Edith, survive and live with their mother. Mrs. Collett is a very useful member of the Maeser ward and has with her family, numerous friends who mourn her untimely loss.

Poem used at Funeral - "People Like Him" by Edgar A. Guest

People liked him, not because
He was rich or known to fame,
He had never won applause
As a star in any game.
His was not a brilliant style.
His was not a forceful way,
But he had a gentile smile
And a kindly word to say.

Never arrogant or proud,
On he went with manner mild;
Never quarrelsome or loud,
Just as simple as a child;

Honest, patient, brave and true;
 thus he lived from day to day,
Doing what he found to do
 In a cheerful sort of way.

Wasn't one to boast of gold
 Or belittle it with sneers,
Didn't change from hot to cold,
 Kept his friend throughout his years,
 Anytime or any place,
There was always something sweet
 And refreshing in his face.

Sort of man you'd like to be;
 Balanced well and truly square;
Patient in adversity,
 Generous - when his skies were fair.
Never lied to friend or foe.
 Never rash in word or deed.
Quick to come and slow to go
 In a neighbor's time of need.

Never rose to wealth or fame,
 Simply lived, and simply died,
But the passing of his name
 Left a sorrow, far and wide.
Not for glory he'd attained,
 Nor for what he had of self,
Were the friends that he gained,
 But for what he was himself.

I asked my brother, Howard "What he remembered about his Father?" Howard was very ill in the hospital and he answered me, "He was a very good man, a good man!" Howard died July 27, 1996 in Vernal, Utah.

From Mother's (Ethylwynne S. Collett) record book.
Sylvanus Collett.
Born at: Smithfield, Cache Co., Utah, December 15, 1866.
Blessed by: His Grandfather, Daniel Collett.
Baptized by: A. P. Scrow, August 4, 1875.
Confirmed by: Thomas Heaps, August 4, 1875.
Ordained High Priest: by Anthon W. Ivans, August 22, 1908.
Married to: Ethelwynne Stringham, January 20, 1904.

Married by: John R. Winder in the Salt Lake Temple, January 20, 1904, Salt Lake City, Utah.

Endowed at Logan Temple, October 1, 1889.

Patriarchal blessing by: Jeremiah Hatch, June 26, 1892.

Vocation: Farmer, Road builder and Forest Ranger.

Height: 6 feet Weight: 180 pounds Chest: 40

Color of eyes: Brown Color of Hair: Dark Brown

General condition of health: good

Especially interested in: Farming

Died of: Asthma at Maeser, Uintah County, Utah, April 29, 1932

Buried in Vernal Cemetery, May 2, 1932.

Comments in her record book:

In his boyhood days, always an obedient son, kind and good.

Attended the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple in 1893.

President of Young Men's M.I.A. in Maeser when it was first organized, about 1881.

Was first assistant Superintendent in Naples Ward Sunday School for a good many years.

Bishops Second Counselor of Naples Ward, always willing to perform his work.

First assistant Superintendent in Maeser Ward Sunday School and Teacher in same Ward. August 23, 1908.

Taught Teachers, Deacons and Priests. Also a teacher in Sunday School.

Chosen as High Counselor, May 7, 1916 - a faithful worker.

Chosen as Bishop of Maeser Ward, July 2, 1922. Bishop for five years.

Did Temple Work for the dead in St. George Temple, 1906.

Sept. 15, 1996

(Today, I stopped by to visit Genieva Warby Perry and this is the story she told me about my Father: She is 91 years old.

She said that she + her future husband, Evan Perry, decided to get married on Christmas Eve. 1925. They asked his Bishop in Glines Ward to marry them, but he said that he was too ill to do so.

Genieva said, "I'll bet my Bishop in Mac Ward will marry us." So they sent three young men to our home to ask Bishop Collett to marry them.

(These three young men were met at the door by my mother, when they stated the meaning of this late visit, mother answered, "my husband has been so busy today, he was so tired that he has gone to bed!"

Papa hearing the voices, asked what they wanted? He invited the three young men into his bedroom - after hearing their story - he answered. "If you will go out of the bedroom while I dress - if you will take me over to the Perry home in Glines ward, and bring me back home, I will marry them."

(He married them and was brought back home in an old righty car. Dec. 24, 1925