

## **William Christopher's Mission and Marriage to Nellie Miner**

(As remembered by his oldest daughter, Ora Maren Christensen Sharp. Also included, as noted, are excerpts from history written by Leona Christensen McGee.)

In the spring of 1897, papa William (age 22) was called to fill a mission to the Southern States. He asked to wait until the crops were harvested in the fall. On December 4, 1897 he was ordained an Elder by Peter Rasmussen and soon after left for his mission. On the way to Salt Lake City, he stopped in Fairview and visited with his sisters, Gurena Brady and Mary Brady. He was very grateful for the financial help they were able to give him. As it is the special duty of a Seventy to preach the gospel, Semore B. Young of the Presiding Quorum, ordained papa to the office of a Seventy on the 15th of December 1897. On this same day, he received his endowments in the Salt Lake Temple. He left immediately to labor in the Southern States. Papa tells of some of his experiences on his 27 month mission:

“Somore B. Young set me apart for my mission. I was promised I should go in peace and no arms or flesh would harm me. Even though the mobs were after us many times, I was never harmed. Thomas Halls and I were sent to Louisiana and landed the day before Christmas with \$.07 in our pockets. The elders who were to meet us did not show up. We sat there until eleven o'clock. We went to the post office...there was not mail. There was a pair of shoes for an elder that had been there three weeks. We talked to a man on the street that said two elders had been killed. We were very downcast. Three miles down the tracks, we held prayer. We were directed over the hill to a man who had kept the elders. When he saw us coming he called, “Praise the Lord.” We met Elder Joseph P. Sharp. By the end of the week, the elders had received their mail and came in search of us. Held conference and traveled without purse or script. Elder Charles E. Jones was my next companion. Baptized the James B. Case family. I have later contacted them in Salt Lake City. I was released on March 8, 1900.”

[Church News article “Faith to Persevere” by Michael Ann McKinlay reported on Men & Women Lecture on Faith by Heather Seferovich on Nov 14th 201? : Throughout the late 19th century (1875-1898), missionaries serving in the South encountered every imaginable situation in their travels...Brigham Young organized the mission in 1875...Some of those missionaries became church leaders such as Karl G. Maeser, John Morgan, LeGrand Richards, B. H. Roberts and George Albert Smith...Elders had to adjust to the climate (hot, hot, hot), diet and customs...they walked up to 20 miles a day, without purse or script (depending on God's mercy and the generosity of the people)...These circumstances produced powerful faith in the missionaries...their faith overcame their fears....19th century missionary life was physically, emotionally and spiritually taxing...Their examples of hard work, diligence, duty, courage, faith and perseverance are inspiring.]

By this time papa was nearly 25 years old. High time he was finding a wife and settling down. He dated Dixie Faucett, a very fine hometown girl. She liked him too, but her mother had died [when she was fourteen] leaving her father with a family of 5 children to take care of. Dixie was a very unselfish person and knew well where her first responsibility lay--thus turning down papa's proposal of marriage to keep a home for her father and brothers and sisters. When Nellie Minerva Miner, lively daughter of Alma Linsey Miner and Caroline Neilson, came from

Fairview to visit her Uncle Pete and Anthon Nielson, it was a lucky day for William. Their first date was attending a dance with another couple in Manassa, a nearby town. Their courtship ripened into love and they were married December 11, 1901 in the Manti Temple. When they got back to Sanford, papa and mama Nellie set up housekeeping in a little adobe house just east of Grandma Maren's. Papa always told me how much joy and happiness I brought into their humble home when I was born 9 January 1903 (married William Giles Sharp). Alta Enola was born 21 September 1904, but only lived a short time. This was a sad day for the parents. However, Velma came to fill the void 24 October 1905 (married Frank Poulson). Nellie Dee was born 6 November 1907 (married Orin W. Reed). William Ferrel was born 25 November 1909 (married Ora Taylor. Reo M. was born 16 November 1911 (married Elnora Palmer, later Kenna Peterson). Papa worked his farmland, but it didn't produce enough to meet the case needs of his family. So in off-seasons he sought jobs elsewhere to get the necessary money. Sometimes he was obliged to go farther away from home for employment. He worked on ditch and highway construction jobs for about 10 years.

These times without papa were so difficult for mother Nellie. There were the outside chores to see about. The garden to get going so it would produce vegetables for the family's use. Then she had to care for the needs of her five small children. I was only 10. With all this she had to do, she was trying to get through a difficult pregnancy and keep her 7th child. However, she was suffering with albumen in her kidneys [toxemia]. I remember what ghostly yellow color she was. She was so terribly sick and it was difficult to get to a doctor, having to go 7 miles with a horse and buggy alone. Dear Grandma Maren did what she could with home remedies, but to no avail. On 27 June 1913, at the age of 33, our dear, beloved Mother Nellie died, [as well as the unborn child...leaving 5 small children from 10 yrs to under 2 yrs old] Oh, what a sad, sad time in papa's life. His grief was almost more than he could endure. If he could only have stayed home to care for her and the children during her illness, perhaps she would have lived. But he must go back to his work if he was to meet his financial expenses. Mother Nellie's' sisters in Utah offered to take the younger children, and Grandma Maren's home and assistance was always available to us, but he didn't want his family separated. He hired reliable girls to help out in the home, so we got along somehow. [Leona: Sylvia Hostetter and Hazel Neilson also helped with the work and the children.]