

DUP AF Book 1 page 34

Biographical Sketch

of

William Thomas Brown

Pioneer Year \_\_\_\_

by George F. Shelley

Born at Stratford on Avon, Warwickshire, England, on 1 May 1843

Married 1869 to Docia Preston in the old Endowment house in Salt

Lake City, Utah

Died date \_\_\_\_ place \_\_\_\_

Buried date \_\_\_\_ place \_\_\_\_

William Thomas Brown, the subject of our sketch, was born at Stratford on Avon, Warwickshire, England, on the first day of May, 1843. His parents were Henry Brown and Catherine Maria Wright. His father was by trade a brick layer, and having accepted the Mormon Faith and the church being in need of builders in its new location in the Rocky Mountains, the family was encouraged to go to Utah to assist in building up Zion. Accordingly, taking advantage of the Church Perpetual Emigration Fund, Henry Brown together with his wife and six children: five boys and one girl, sailed from Liverpool in the sailing vessel Ellen Maria in the early part of the year 1852, and after a voyage of six weeks landed at New Orleans. They, together with other saints in the company, proceeded up the Mississippi River to St. Louis, and from here thence up the Missouri River to Kansas City, which then consisted of but a few houses, at which place they arrived May 1st 1852. Preparations were here made for the journey across the Plains. Among others in the company was William W. Jackson, the father of the Jackson family of American Fork.

In their preparations for the journey the company little dreamed of the calamity that was about to befall them. The dreaded cholera broke out among them, and before it subsided many of them--the strong and the weak alike--were carried away. Among the number that died were Henry Brown, his wife and three children, leaving three boys, William, age 9, Samuel age 7, and Cyrus aged 5, orphans in a strange land among comparatively strange people.

Their mother, realizing that she was about to die, said to William, "You are going to the valleys. Be a good boy," and then addressing herself to a good sister, a member of the company, Emma Hill, said, "If I but knew that my little boy (referring to Cyrus) would be taken care of, I should die happy." Sister Hill and her husband who were childless, took Cyrus and cared for him until Manhood, he sometimes going by the name of Cyrus Hill.

Samuel was taken in charge by a man by the name of Thompson who brought him to the valleys, but he afterwards left him and went to the home of his Aunt in Mountainville, now Alpine.

William though only a boy of nine years was obliged to practically work his own way across. He assisted Harry Staples who had charge of the loose cattle in driving them and Harry would befriend him by sneaking a little food from the other members of the company, which helped to satisfy the craving of hunger that the boy often experienced during the long trip. At night he would creep into one of the wagons sometimes unbeknown to the other occupants.

On one occasion when obliged to cross the swift stream of water with some loose cattle, Brother Staples told William to hold on to one of the cow's tails. He did so, but when partly across he loosed his hold and was fast going down stream. He succeeded, however, in getting hold of another cow's tail and thus succeeded in landing on the other side of the river safely. Harry Staples remarked, " You are sure born to be hung and not drowned!"

Brother Brown's memories as a boy in crossing the plains are that he was often hungry. Game was very plentiful; consisting of buffalo, deer, and antelope. Food was secured on many occasions from this source. They were cautioned, however, by the captain of the company, A. O. Smoot, not to kill more than they needed for their use. Once a herd of buffalo stampeded their cattle and caused much excitement and consternation among the members of the company. They were not molested by the Indians who at times came to their camp to beg for sugar, flour, and tobacco.

The company arrived in Salt Lake City on the 28th of September, 1852. They proceeded to Emigration Square where they unloaded their freight and packs.

William's parents' belongings which had been brought across the plains were dumped off, and for four or five days the boy wandered around the city in the company of another lad named Frank Turnbard, coming back to the family belongings at night to crawl in among them and sleep. One night when he returned he found the family effects had been taken away by the church, and then fully realized that he was an orphan boy in a strange land among strange people without food or a place to find lodgings.

Soon after this, he was taken into the home of John Whiting, a fellow bricklayer of his father's, in whose home he remained until he was 22 years of age.

Brother Brown relates that upon his arrival as a boy in Salt Lake City, he found a different Salt Lake than the one that exists today. On what is now Main Street, on the east side there was one store kept by a man by the name of Nixon, while on the west side of the street was a pole fence. Other stores soon after were established including those of Livingston and Kinkade and Gilvert and Garrish.

Food was scarce in those days, greens and segos forming a considerable part of the bill of fare, and it was not uncommon thing for people to go hungry.

He well remembers Lydia Riter (Young) the mother of our fellow townsman Clifford E. Young, who recently died in Salt Lake City. They were playmates together and Brother Brown recollects with kindly remembrance Sister Riter, Lydia's mother who on many occasions spread him a piece of bread and molasses and sent it out with the girl for him.

An interesting incident in the life of the subject of our sketch is how he got his middle name, "Thomas." This name was not given to him by his parents. When he arrived in Salt Lake City, he could read some, but a kind brother, Thomas Sutter, taught him other branches of an education and as compensation for his pains and trouble asked that William take his name, and from then on he took the name of William Thomas Brown.

During the time of the move southward in the fifties upon the approach of the Johnson Army, he along with the Whiting family moved down to Mountainville where he remained during the summer of 1857. His Aunt (Father's sister) Mrs. Dyer resided here having married Bishop Houston, the first bishop of Alpine. His brother, Samuel, was also here, having come to Alpine to make his home.

William returned to Salt Lake City in the fall and remembers returning to American Fork for a load of hay in 1859.

His recollections of Utah Valley in the fifties are that the benches were pretty well covered with bunch grass which later gave way for Sage brush, which he thinks was caused by feeding the grass off too closely by sheep, of which there were several herds in the valley, the houses were of the primitive type a good many with dirt roofs. Game was plentiful. William and a companion having killed 14 deer in a day near Alpine.

Brother Brown came to Mountainville to make a permanent home in 1864. Thomas S. McCullough was then Bishop and the young man endeavored to get a home and employment with the Bishop, telling him that he would make him a handy man. The Bishop however at that time was not willing.

Some time afterwards William noticed a crowd of people at Bishop McCullough's corral and upon investigating found that one of the Bishop's cows had become foundered eating alfalfa, or Lucern by which name it was then known. The bloated cow was in a serious condition and those present did not know what to do for it, as lucern was a new feed. William, who had been associated some with a veterinarian in Salt Lake City, had a sharp stick in his hand and he thrust it into the side of the cow allowing the poisonous gasses to escape. Bishop McCullough was enraged and hit him over the head with a rake, but the cow recovered and was a means of William getting a home and employment with the Bishop.

In the year 1869 William married Docia Preston in the old Endowment house in Salt Lake City, and from that time on, he became part of the community activity.

He says of the social life of the people that dances were held in the Old Alpine City Hall and the basement of the American Fork Meeting house. He recalled one occasion when he borrowed a pair of shoes from Brother Healey in Alpine. Wearing those shoes, a pink shirt and blue overalls he was a conspicuous figure dancing the old time plain quadrilles.

Brother Brown had charge of dances in Alpine for a number of years, was Marshal for three years and Justice of the Peace four years. He was also chairman of the Old Folks Committee for sixteen years.

During the Black Hawk trouble with the Indians, William enlisted for service in Alva Green's company and served for the period of 45 days. He had a little knowledge of the Indian language and at the request of General Pace, who was in charge of the military activities in Sanpete County and the area around there, he accompanied him as an interpreter practically all of the time he was enlisted.

Before coming to Mountainville in 1864, he drove four yoke of cattle back to the Missouri River, and assisted in bringing emigrants to Utah. He also went out to meet the Hand Cart Company that was caught by the snow in the mountains. Many members perished with the cold. Brother Brown states that when relief reached them that their condition was indeed pitiful.

Brother Brown is now eighty two years of age and resides at American Fork and is well. He takes joy in the thought that he has assisted some in making the Desert blossom as a rose, and that members of his family have carried the gospel message to the people of the earth.

*Sketch prepared by Geo. F. Shelley.*