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Biographical Sketch

of

William Grant

by Hattie Grant Hendersen, daughter

Pioneer Year 1866

Sailed on the John Bright

Captain White Company

Born in Staffordshire, England

Married Harriet Foster in 1859

Died 2 Dec 1916

This brief life sketch of the life of William Grant has been taken from his own biographical sketches of his life written by himself and left as a heritage to his posterity. William Grant was born in Staffordshire, England. He was the son of John and Sarah Grant, the second child and first son. John Grant, his father was a locksmith by trade, and he was also a good singer, and delighted in entertaining in public places with comic songs.

Young William, at a very early age, showed marked musical talent, and it was the earnest wish of his father and mother that talent be developed, and though but poor working people they sacrificed that this might be possible, and with the help of some friends a cornet was obtained, and his education begun along those lines by his own efforts.

He was also of a religious nature. At the age of nine years he realized his associates used vile language and actions, and thought it made them big. After trying it for a few days he gave it up, realizing he had something better to do, and a nobler life to live so he preferred a life of loneliness rather than that kind of companions. [He] devoted his time to the study of music, which was far better, and prepared himself for a better and happier life to follow. He had wonderful opportunities in this study, which was a blessing to him throughout all his life.

He attended the day school of his uncle, where he learned to read and write. In the early part of 1850 John Grant and family, having heard the Mormon Elders preaching of the Restored Gospel of Jesus Christ on the streets of Willenhall, England, began investigating. Although they were attending the Methodist Church, soon saw the light of truth and applied for baptism in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. William was baptized Christmas Day, December 25, 18[blank] at the age of twelve years. They cut a hole in the ice, which was a foot thick, for his baptism. His parents later left the church. After joining the church he became quite active. Although a boy of twelve years he would go with the Elders and play his cornet, or sing on the streets to help gather crowds.

William started to go with his father to the factory. His father was paid for piece work so in order to make as much as possible, William would pick up the article which his father would accidentally drop, such as nail, screws and bolts; in this way he helped his father. So it wasn't long until other men had him pick up for them, and in this way he would earn a few pennies each day, which he would turn over to his mother on his return home. Each Saturday he would be given a two-pence for his week's spending money, the rest his mother would keep for his board. He served as an apprentice fourteen years, and learned the locksmith trade.

At the age of fifteen he entered a contest of wind blown instruments, which was to be held at Wolverhampton, and in the contest with thirty others which dwindled down to two of them. The decision was hard but the other fellow was awarded the gold-plated cornet. Queen Victoria, being in attendance at the contest, was not satisfied with the decision, and had a silver-plated cornet made with the Royal Crescent engraved and the words, "Presented by Queen Victoria in the year of 1853." Father highly prized this cornet to his dying day. Since his death it has been pulled apart and scattered until no one know where, much to my sorrow and disappointment. He was appointed bandmaster of a Willenhall band and acted in this capacity a good many years. He also belonged to several choruses, orchestras and opera companies.

At the age of 21, in 1859, he married Harriet Foster, who at that time was not a member of the church, but later she too joined the Latter Day Saints Church. After marriage father decided to still further his musical abilities and took up the organ and violin cello, also trombone, which he played and learned to teach.

The next few years was spent in struggling along as most young people do in their early married life; sorrow soon came to them in the death of their first born child, a baby girl which they named Henrietta.

In 1866 a great many English converts were leaving to come to Utah in the tops of the mountains to build up Zion, so William and his good wife soon were enthused with the spirit of emigration.

Accordingly, they sold what belongings they had, and with their three small children, Louisa 5, Lizzie 3, and William Jr., a baby, they left their native soil for American May 1, 1866 on the good ship John Bright. They were on the ocean five and one half weeks. Landing in New York, from here they traveled by train and steamer fifteen days when they landed at a frontier town called Wyoming. Here they lived in tents, and waited three weeks. During this time wagons and carts were put in shape for the trip across the plains. William was appointed trumpeter of the camp and with his cornet called the immigrants together for prayer and meetings.

But lo! At last the time had arrived to start the journey and Captain White's mule train started across the plains. The wagons being crowded, he footed it almost the entire way at twenty-five miles per day. He almost lost his eyesight it was so dusty.

One night as the mule train came to a halt it was quite evident that their little child, Lizzie, was seriously ill. Together they worked with her as best they could; she died August 13, 1866. That night he lay under the wagon with her little dead body in his arms. At daybreak a little grave was dug, she was wrapped gently in a blanket and wagon cover and laid to rest in the arms of Mother Earth, amid tears and heart throbs they left her there.

By and by the valley of the mountains was reached and although heart broken, with the loss of their little girl and absolutely penniless they rejoiced and thanked God. The first few weeks they were taken into the homes of the saints, where they were given food and allowed to rest.

He went to Brigham Young and applied for work and was assigned as a blacksmith helper at which he worked for two weeks, then President Young introduced him to Mark Crexall, chief musician of Salt Lake, and he offered him a position with the band. Mr. Crexall also got Pres. Young to give him a better job at \$3.00 a day. He was made a member of the Salt Lake Theatre Orchestra, and played there until October 1866, when a committee of four men from American Fork waited upon him at the shop and asked him to come to American Fork and organize a band. This he decided to do and went

an remained there a month and then decided to move the family there. That winter they lived there with different families in town until spring. Then they moved into a one room log house by themselves, which was a happy event for them.

It was soon evident to him that his musical education was of little value to him from a financial standpoint so now he must turn his hand to hard work. So he worked here, there and everywhere at odd jobs. His wife did the same, thus they struggled together in those early days. Many times they did not have proper food and clothing. During the summer he packed adobies, mixed mud, dug ditches, ran errands and anything he could find to make a few cents to help them live. At harvest time he worked in the fields loading hay and gathering crops.

September 27 a sad blow struck them by the loss of their youngest and first-born child born in Utah. She lay sick for several days then passed away. They were heartbroken with no relatives in this country, felt very much alone with their dead, as there was no one but their neighbors by the name of Steeles, came to help them. He hired John Mitchell to haul them to the graveyard with their dead, where she was buried in the new cemetery. The wagon was all that went and there was no song, speech or prayer. It was very hard, but they must rally and meet the struggles of life.

Finally, someone asked him to send for some violin strings, and this gave him an idea. He thought of a music store, and having one dollar to his name he decided to invest it in strings and etc., and have them on hand to sell. He took his dollar bill, put it on the table, slapped it, turned it over and prayed over it that God would bless his investment. Thus began his business career. He fixed a shelf in the little log house, which was situated just north of the Union Pacific Station, and prepared for the arrival of his goods. They finally came and were sold upon arrival, with a small profit, which together with the small principal, was again invested. From this humble beginning his business grew until one year his books showed a fourteen thousand dollar business in musical instruments, toys, chinaware and etc.

He was in Salt Lake buying goods for his store and hunting for a way to get back home when lo and behold who should he meet up with but Pres. Young, who invited him to go as his guest on the first train as far south as Lehi. His box of goods were hauled to Lehi on the engine tender, from Lehi to American Fork he wheeled his box of goods in a wheelbarrow, which he was very happy to do as he was always grateful for every kindness shown him.

He was postmaster and express agent at American Fork for many years. He also acted as a school trustee and he was the instigator of the first free schools in Utah. He was a bible student and gave to many of our leading churchmen of today their insight into the bible and principles of the gospel in their youth. He served as ward organist for over thirty years. He also acted as assistant superintendent of Sunday school for over twenty years. He preached many funeral sermons and was a true friend to the poor and needy. No sacrifice was too great, if he could help a neighbor or a friend who were in sorrow or distress. Many times he has locked up his store and gone to a funeral where he has been alone with the stinging, preaching and praying, and also go to the graveyard and dedicate the grave. His funeral sermons were spiritual, comforting and inspiring. He had a great healing power through his administering to the sick. He was an honest, devout Latter Day Saint in every deed.

He was the leader of the American Fork brass band for twenty-five years, a band that was considered one of the best in the state in those days. They were always hired for all the big functions in Salt Lake. The band always took part in all entertainments, especially Old Folks Parties. He taught hundreds of people to play and sing, among them was Prof. John J. McClennon. He sold his father an organ and Johnny's father would fetch him up from Payson every Saturday morning for his music lesson. He would spend the whole day practicing on a new pipe organ father had that no one else could touch.

On May 17, 1875 he entered into plural marriage with Rose Hannah Francis, and later served in the Utah State Prison for attempting to live this law. To this marriage a large family of ten boys

and eight girls were born. To Harriet, his first wife, 13 children were born, ten girls and three boys. Thus a family of 31 children was his to support and provide for.

He had a wonderful tenor voice and in some ways was always before the public as an entertainer. He was a composer in verse as well as music, and very often would compose both music and words to fit the occasion. He built the Grants Music Emporium in 1876.

He was of a kind, jovial disposition, always whistling or humming a bit of a tune, and although in his declining years he was almost forced out of his business by his competitors, he took a bundle of papers under his arm and on the streets of American Fork sought to earn an honest living, and with what little trade he got at the old store, he went on every smiling, ever cheerful and always happy. He remained true and faithful to his wives, his children and his God.

He was called to his heavenly home December 2, 1916, age 78 years, eleven months and seven days, leaving a wife, Rose Hannah, nineteen living children, fifty-two living grandchildren and fifteen great-grandchildren.

May he receive his eternal blessing he so nobly earned.

*Written and read by this daughter, Harriet Foster Grant Hendrickson,
February 1, 1932.*