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Biographical Sketch

of

Arza Matson Adams

Pioneer Year 1848

by Mary A. Anderson, his daughter

Born January 22, 1804 in the district of Johnstown,

County of Leeds, Canada

Married 23 March 1831, to Sabina Clarke in Augusta, Canada

7 March 1849

Died 15 April 1889

Buried in American Fork, Utah

The subject of this sketch, Arza Adams, was born January 22, 1804, in the district of Johnstown, County of Leeds, Township of Bastard, Canada, the oldest son of Joshua Adams, and Elizabeth Chipman (commonly called Betsy).

His father, Joshua, was the son of Richard Adams, who was the son of Daniel Adams, who was the son of George Adams who came from England. Richard Saxton Adams, his great grandfather, moved from Rutland, Vermont, U.S.A. in 1798 and settled in the Township of Bastard, County of Leeds, Canada. His father and mother, daughter of Barnabus Lothrop and Buelah Chipman were married in Elizabeth, County of Leeds, Canada, A.D. 1803.

Arza Adams was the oldest of a family of ten children – six boys and four girls. His early life was spent in the wilds of Canada and the following years he followed the vocation of timber man and was considered one of the best ax-men of his district. He was married March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1831, to Sabina Clarke in Augusta, Canada, who was the daughter of Nathan Clarke and Nancy McCathan. She was born September 1, 1831. From this union there was ten children – three boys and seven girls. He joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and was baptized December 25, 1838, by Elder J. E. page. Two years later he, with his family and brother Barnabus, came to the United States and settled in New York state. While there he was called to fill a mission. After putting in a good crop, he left his family in the care of his brother, Barnabus, and returned to his native land of Canada to labor. On his return he joined the exodus of Saints that were then moving on to Kirtland, Ohio, but did not remain there, but continued on with a company of Canadians to Missouri.

It was at this time that the Saints were being subjected to persecutions by the mobs and Arza, who was credited having a tigerish disposition – which means that he was always ready to meet trouble half way or better – was in the thick of many of the hottest skirmishes. It is related of him, that one time he and fifteen others, mostly boys, were being driven by a mob of at least 200 men. They eluded their pursuers, but were being closely pressed, when Arza decided that they had gone far enough and induced the others to make a stand and fight it out. They accordingly entrenched

themselves on a hillside in a grove of trees and awaited the assault which never came, because when the mob came close enough to see them, they turned and beat a precipitate retreat. The boys were very much surprised and could not understand why they should leave them in that way as they were so much stronger in numbers – but about eight or nine years after, Arza became quite well acquainted with the leader of the mob; when they brought the matter up Arza asked him why they ran away. His answer was that when they caught sight of them on the hill side, there appeared to be hundreds of armed Mormons amongst the trees, and they thought they had run into a trap. Arza said that as long as he knew that man he could never get him to believe there were no more than sixteen boys in the crowd, but he stuck to his claim that they could see hundreds of men.

While Arza had a fighting disposition when aroused, ordinarily he was kind and free hearted and was credited with having helped many on their farms by his labor and also supplying the poorer classes with products from his mill. In 1846, while at Winter Quarters, he and his brother, Barnabus, built two houses for their families and when the start for the west was being arranged Arza had intended to go with the first company; but, at the last moment, he was detailed to stay and help build wagons, and to earn more money for future use. (It was at this time he formed the acquaintance of the mob leader above referred to.) The following year, however, he came to Utah, 1848.

After arriving in the Salt Lake Valley, he first located at Mill Creek and made his family as comfortable as was possible at that time, and for the first year did odd jobs for others for a livelihood, but being of an ambitious nature was only contented when laying a foundation where he could work for himself.

At this time there was more or less fear from the Indians and none of the Colonists were allowed to do much exploring unless accompanied by numbers in sufficient force to protect themselves. A settlement had been arranged for at Provo and surveyors were busy establishing lines. Arza being occupied as a chain-man to help the surveyors. The Indians were inclined to be peaceable and quite a business had been built up in trading with them for furs, buckskin,

horses, etc. It was while on one of these trips to Provo to trade with the Indians that Arza and his oldest son, Nathan, Father Chipman and his son, Washburn, John Eldridge and two sons, were camped on American Fork Creek in a large grove of trees, at where Washburn Chipman's home now stands, that Nathan Adams kept walking around, taking in the surroundings, when suddenly he said, "This would make a wonderful place for a settlement and I would like to live here." It made such an impression on the rest of them that it was practically the sole topic for discussion on the rest of the trip home. When they got back to Mill Creek, Arza and Father Chipman went to see President Brigham Young about it. He took the matter up with the other authorities of the Church and permission was granted to establish the settlement. They then came down and laid out their claims to land, put up fences, brought down cattle and other stock and laid the foundation for what is now American Fork City. They used the grove on Washburn Chipman's lot as a camp ground and one day while resting after dinner, Arza picked up his ax and started into the timbers. When asked where he was going said, "I'm going to get me some logs to build a house." Washburn said, "I'm going, too." That was the beginning. Arza built his home on the old Preston home site and Washburn built where his home now stands. These were the first two homes. It was not an easy task as the timber from which they were built were taken from cotton wood trees and very crooked, but by considerable trimming and patching they managed to get a shelter. The next thing Arza did was to build a grist mill and he followed that as his main business, including merchandise, for the balance of his life.

After the population began to increase by added settlers the town was surrounded by a mud wall and all were compelled to be inside at a set hour each night. After living thus for a few years Arza decided to go further up the creek to build a large mill, and was the first man to go outside the "Fort" as it was called. In all he built four grist mills, one back of his first home, next to where Billy Roberts now lives, next to where he lived when he died, and the other at the Robinson home.

Polygamy was then being practiced among the Saints and on March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1849, Arza took as wives, Marilla McOlney, daughter of Davis McOlney of Canada, who was born June 18, 1833, and Catherine Cunningham, daughter of James Cunningham and Elizabeth Nicholson of Fibeshire, Scotland, who was born August 17, 1838. From the union with Marilla McOlney seven children were born, five boys and two girls. From that with Catherine Cunningham, eleven children were born, seven girls and four boys. They were married in the Endowment House in the temple grounds at Salt Lake City. He lived a long and useful life having taken an active part in the upbuilding of this State, in all its up and downs – socially, religiously, politically and other way, and to him and his companions who faced the hardships of opening up a new and practically known part of these great United States, too much praise cannot be given, and we, their descendants should always hold their memory in the greatest reverence. He died April 15, 1889, and is buried in the American Fork City cemetery at American Fork, Utah.