

Autobiographical Sketch of Mary Hancock

I was born in Leeds, Washington County, Utah on Jan. 9, 1872. I was the ninth child in a family of thirteen. My father, Mosiah Lyman Hancock, was the son of Levi Ward Hancock, who was one of the first Seven Presidents of Seventies in the early days of the Church. My father was born in Kirtland, Lake County, Ohio during the early days of the Church and spent his life in connection with the church and its people. My mother, Margaret McCleve, was born in Belfast, Ireland and came to America with her parents and their family when she was sixteen years old. My mother was the daughter of John McCleve and Nancy Jane McFerren. Mother pulled a handcart all the way across the plains, coming in the Second Handcart Company.

My parents went to live at Leeds where I was born. Our home was near the Silver Reef Mines. I remember the boom when money was plentiful. Mother took in boarders and roomers and I remember as a child selling flowers for 50 cents a bunch to the miners. My father was a carpenter. We had a good orchard and garden and my parents operated a small store. My oldest sister, Clarissa, was my first teacher and school was held in the upstairs of our home, the teacher was paid by the parents.

We were getting fairly well fixed in Leeds when we were called to help settle Arizona. We moved to Taylor, Arizona in the fall of 1879, arriving there in January. We had been so long on the road; it was a bitter cold winter. Feed was scarce and when we reached Arizona there were lots of Indians that had sheep grazing which made the feed awfully scarce. The horses got along better than the cattle; we had to leave lots of the cattle on the road. I remember that when mother would be missing and someone would ask where she was, we would see her gathering weeds or something green she could find for the old cow we would have to leave behind.

Our father's youngest brother, Joseph Smith Hancock, came with us. When we left Leeds we had plenty of stuff and food, but food was so scarce and we ran out of grain so we had to feed our horses a few handfuls of flour in their nosebags. My father had come on a few years before and my brothers, being young, didn't understand just how much stuff to take on such a long journey.

Father came and met us just before we got to Tuba City. We found an empty house with just one room in it. We were awfully glad to find it as it was such a bitter cold night. We stayed there a few days then we traveled on to Taylor.

The first thing we did when we got to Taylor was to dig a dugout to live in. We had a fireplace built in it but it smoked awfully bad. We just couldn't buy flour, it was so high and scarce, but we could buy cornmeal but most of the time it was musty. Everything we got had to be hauled by team from Albuquerque, New Mexico, so everything was high. We used to go to our neighbors for a start of fire, or if we got ours started first, here would come all the neighbor's children with shovels to borrow a start of our fire. Matches were so scarce and expensive. When the river would freeze over the children would go skating and it would be so cold they would build a fire right on the ice to get warm.

About a year after we arrived there my sister, Annie, was born on Aug. 30, 1880. We didn't live in the dugout very long until my brothers built a log house; it wasn't very long then until my brothers hewed the logs and made us a pretty nice log house, which still stands in 1940.

We always raised our own garden and my brothers fished some. We just had one cow left when we arrived in Taylor. A few acres of land was given to us by President Jesse N. Smith, who had the supervision of the land in charge. We got seven or eight acres, but afterwards we had to pay for it.

Most of the young people's activities included swimming, fishing, dancing and skating on the river and similar things.

I lived here in Taylor until the time of my marriage. I met William Franklin (Frank) Butler, my husband-to-be in the fall of 1888 at a dance in Taylor. He told the boys that he was going to get that Hancock girl and he didn't even know my name. A year later, in the fall of 1889, on Oct. 16, we started by wagon for St. George, Utah to be married. It took three weeks for the trip; St. George was my husband's old home town, so we found many friends and acquaintances there who were very happy to see him. We were married Nov. 5, 1889 on a Wednesday. We stayed at Belle Atkins where my husband's half sister lived; we spent about three weeks there. We came back through Orderville and visited my sister, Clarissa Fackerell. We arrived back in Taylor about the third of December. We rented a place in Shumway and farmed there the first year. About fifteen months later, Feb. 23, 1891, our oldest son, William Franklin, was born at our home. By mother, Margaret Hancock was my midwife.

During the summer we traded animals and such for ten acres of land in the east field at Taylor. By the time fall came we had a chance to buy a house and lot that belonged to an old couple; they offered it to us for a team and wagon to go to Utah in. Frank made a trade for this place where three of our children were born: John Thomas, Jan. 29, 1893; Mary Adelinda, Feb. 12, 1895 and Margaret Cleo, Feb. 21, 1897.

Margaret Cleo was two years old when we decided to move down to the St., Joseph Stake. We heard so much about President Andrew Kimball just being put in as Stake President and all of the fine things that could be raised there that we sold our place in Taylor and moved down. My husband's father, William Franklin Butler, Sr. Had already moved down. My husband's father, William Franklin butler, Sr. had already moved down there.

When we left Taylor it was in January and terribly cold; it froze nearly to zero. Then we had nice weather all the way after we left. We had two teams and three wagons. Another fellow came along with us and had a team and no place to sleep, so he was very glad to let us use his team to pull the empty wagon and sleep in the wagon.

We spent a summer in Eden on a farm, then we went to Hubbard (now called Kimball) where we traded some of our teams and wagons for some land. A year later Amy Valine was born on Feb. 14, 1900.

We had cows, pigs, chickens and raised grain and melons; we had our own garden. We sold pigs, calves and a few cows.

On Feb. 25, 1902 Sarah Jane was born and three years later on Sept. 6, 1905 Joseph Hancock was born.

Frank filled a two-year mission between 1902 and 1905 to the Central States. Four years later on Aug. 19, 1909 Lester was born.

In the summer of 1911 a real sorrow came to our family. I was expecting my ninth child and there was a siege of typhoid fever hit the Gila Valley and many took the dreadful disease. Four of my children were among them—William Franklin, John Thomas, Mary Adelinda and Amy Valine all came down within a week or ten days. Oh, they were so sick with such high fevers! It breaks my heart to think about it after all these years. Will, John, and Addie were unconscious for days and days. We neglected everything on the farm to take care of the sick ones. The doctor came every day and sometimes more if necessary. The kind people of the wards of Hubbard, Bryce and Graham came to our rescue and helped us in every way possible. They irrigated, cut hay and grain, hauled it and had the grain threshed.

John took suddenly worse and we sent for the doctor; he came and said there wasn't one chance in a thousand for him to live. The terrible high fever he had had caused a stoppage of the bowels. It seemed as though nothing could be done for him but to make him as comfortable as possible. He passed away July 7, 1911 and was buried on the 8th. We thought that was all in the world we could stand when just a week later, lacking eleven hours, death claimed our oldest daughter, Mary, on July 14, 1911.