

# ***RESOURCEFUL DISCIPL***

the **LIFE, TIMES, & EXTENDED FAMILY**  
of

***THOMAS EDWARDS BASSETT***

(1862-1926)

by

Arthur R. Bassett

## Prologue

### Purposed Audience and Prepared Authorship

#### *Part 1: For Whom the Bells Toll: Three Target Audiences*

It might be argued that every written composition, either by intent or subconsciously, has an intended audience to whom it is addressed; this biography, as indicated in the title, has three: 1) those interested in the facts surrounding the life of Thomas E. Bassett, 2) those interested in his times, and 3) those with an interest in his extended family.

#### *1) Those Interested in His Life*

In one sense, this is the story of a single solitary life, selected and plucked from a pool of billions. It is the life of Thomas E. Bassett. He is not only my grandfather; he is also one of my heroes, so I hope that I can be forgiven if at times this biography exhibits overtones of a hagiography.<sup>1</sup> I feel that his story deserves to be preserved, if for no other reason than his life was so extraordinary. It is truly a classic example of the America dream come true.

Like most of his immediate descendants, I had heard the litany of his achievements from my very early childhood: first state senator from his county, first schoolteacher in Rexburg, first postmaster, newspaper editor, stake president, etc. However, as far as I know, no one has laid out the entire tapestry of his life in such a way that the chronological order and interrelationship of these accomplishments is demonstrated. This has been a major part of my project in this biography.

Not only is he *my* grandfather; he also is the progenitor of scores of others. I trust that this biography will also prove of interest to them. Therefore, one of the audiences to which it has been directed is those others who have been endowed with his DNA. I have tried to put together the facts of his life in a meaningful manner for the edification of these others, if for no other reason.

#### *2) Those Interested in His Times*

Another major audience this biography is designed to address is those with a general interest in social history, especially in that of his times, stretching, as his life did, from the American Civil War to the Roaring Twenties in the US. Not only was this an extremely important formative era in

---

<sup>1</sup>A biography that idealizes its subject

American history, it was also a major pivotal period in Mormon history. This biography affords an opportunity to see what this time period looked like, lived from within.

Much has been written about Mormonism in the eastern US, and in mid- and southern Utah, but far less about Mormonism in the northern part of the Great Basin Kingdom. I have attempted to address that deficiency, especially as it relates to the Snake River Valley and life among the Mormons in early Rexburg, Idaho.

### *Those Interested in His Extended Family*

My third major target audience is those who are descendants of Thomas E. Bassett's extended family: both the posterity of his siblings (the William Bassett family, the Hughes family, the Muirs, and the Bakers); as well as the descendants of his own children (the Gudmundsens, the Comstocks, the Salmons, and those of his son, Myrthen).

The stories surrounding the marriages of Thomas E. and his siblings are a quintessential example of the Mormon version of the American melting pot. All their stories are saturated with intriguing accounts from early LDS church history. Converts from the mines of Scotland and the shipyards of Wales heeded the call to gather to Zion, settled in Mendon, Utah, and joined in marriage there with the children of early converts to Mormonism arriving from the eastern part of the United States (from the Mormon settlements in Kirtland, Ohio; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Nauvoo, Illinois, etc.), who came to Utah with its earliest pioneers.

One of the great tragedies of life is how quickly families lose track of each other. Within as little as two generations, the offspring of brothers and sisters often end up total strangers. Unfortunately, this has been the lot of the family in which Thomas E. was reared. A major goal I hope to accomplish with this biography is to reunite, even to a small degree, his posterity with those of his siblings, that they might not continue as total strangers and foreigners to each other.

### *Part 2: Divine Nudges or Simple Coincidences? The Author's Preparation*

Shakespeare, in one of his more inspired moments, penned the couplet: "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, Rough-hew them how we will."<sup>2</sup> Often, while compiling this biography, I have thought about that quote.

Increasingly, I have come to wonder if it is possible that divine powers beyond my own have ordained this story to be preserved, and if, for some unknown reason, I may have been chosen and

---

<sup>2</sup>*Hamlet* V, 2, 9-11.

directed by divine nudges at various points in my life to help prepare me to write it.

One of the major reasons for this prologue (this extended autobiography within a larger biography), is to examine the question, “Is it possible that one could be chosen and prepared by divinity from early in life for a project such as this?” Or, more specifically, “Were these apparent nudges in my life (leading me toward experiences that have aided me in the writing of this biography) possibly from divine forces, or were they just plain simple coincidences?”

Though I was never fortunate enough to know my Grandfather Bassett in this life (he died nine years before I was born), his impact on me has been profound. It certainly seems possible to me that events have prepared me to compile this, his biography.

### *Familiarity with the Setting*

I was born and reared in St. Anthony, Idaho, approximately twelve miles from Rexburg, the site where the major portion of his life was played out. Consequently, I grew up familiar with all the sites mentioned in the biography: Rexburg, Sugar City, Salem, Teton, Driggs, et al.

While I was growing up, on every Memorial Day, my mother would gather some bright red peonies and some deep purple lilacs from the bushes in our backyard, and as a family we would make an annual pilgrimage to place these flowers on my grandfather’s grave (and those of his wife, my grandmother Bassett, and their daughter, Elsie May) in the Rexburg cemetery.

And commonly, following church on a Sunday afternoon, my parents would pack up my siblings and me in our red 1939 Dodge, and drive to Rexburg for ice cream cones. The ice cream parlor (as they were called in those days) was less than a block from the house that forms the basis of Chapter 18 in the biography. If I remember correctly, the house was still standing at that time, and it was on those Sunday excursions that we were treated to my father’s stories about the house, stories about my grandfather and his accomplishments, and stories about Bassett Bridge (spanning the Teton River, just a short distance east of Evan’s ice-cream establishment, where we purchased our Sunday treat). Sadly, the house and bridge (as well as the ice cream parlor) are now all gone.

### *My First Two Years at BYU: An Interest Ignited*

From the time I was old enough to understand the meaning of the word “ancestor,” my father told us stories about his father. But my first serious interest in my grandfather was sparked when I was a freshman in college at Brigham Young University, and had begun a serious study of Mormon history in my religion classes, trying to figure out if/where, any of my ancestors played a role in that history.

I came home from my first quarter of college at BYU at the Christmas break in 1953, and was

telling my father how much I had been impressed by a talk given the preceding quarter at a BYU devotional by Elder Matthew Cowley of the LDS Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. In response, my father stated that his family had always felt that Elder Cowley's father, Matthias Cowley (also a member of the Council of Twelve), had been the one who encouraged my grandfather's entry into plural marriage in 1909 (nineteen years after the 1890 manifesto issued by President Wilford Woodruff—which manifesto ostensibly ended the practice of plural marriage in the LDS church at that time).

For some reason, I always took a perverse pride in the fact that I had ancestry involved in plural marriage, which pride surfaced whenever polygamy was mentioned in a Sunday School (or other church) lesson, and the teacher would ask if any of us in the class had polygamous ancestry. In my mind that fact somehow seemed to accord me a special relationship to the early history of the church.

But, as I attempted to find out more regarding my grandfather's involvement in polygamy by quizzing my father further on the matter, he always pleaded ignorance regarding the details of the marriage on the grounds that he was only six years old at the time the event occurred (though he obviously knew much more from later events). So I just left the matter sitting on a shelf in the back of my mind, assuming that I would never know the details, and moved on.

During my sophomore year at BYU, I took two classes that may have influenced this biography as well. At BYU we were required to take an English class every quarter for the first two years. During my sophomore year, for some reason that I still can't explain, I took a class in biography as a literary genre (focusing on such works as Augustine's *Confessions*, Rousseau's *Confessions*, Ben Franklin's *Autobiography*, and others). I'm not sure I picked up much of use from this course (as it relates to this biography), although subconsciously I may have. However, the idea that I would be writing biographies at a later date never even entered my mind for an instant during the course.

The other class that year that contributed to this writing was a genealogy class that I took to fulfill a religion requirement. It was in that class that I developed my first real interest in family history, and since we were required to send to our land of origins for at least two documents, I wrote to Somerset House in London, and obtained the wedding certificate of my great-grandparents (Thomas E.'s parents), and the death certificate of my great-great-grandfather (William Edward), both of which eventually found a place in this biography.<sup>3</sup>

It was also at this time that I began to assemble my own Book of Remembrance, complete

---

<sup>3</sup>Chapter 1 of the biography.

with pictures of my ancestors—which pictures I was able to gather from boxes around our home. I think that was the first time that I ever saw a picture of my grandfather (and was duly impressed).

*A Mission Call to Wales: Familiarity with the Ground and the Sea*

The next step in what might have been a divinely-guided journey occurred after my sophomore year at BYU. In 1955, I received a mission call to the LDS British Mission (which at the time encompassed all of the British Isles), and upon arriving at the mission headquarters in London, was assigned initially to the Welsh District, with headquarters in Cardiff (and not only in Cardiff, but in the segment of that city that had once been the village of Canton, the place where my grandfather had been born and lived for the first fourteen years of his life before emigrating.<sup>4</sup>) The morning after my arrival in London, I was on the train to the land of my fathers.

Subsequently, I lived for over a year in the general vicinity where my grandfather had grown up as a boy. Not only did I proselyte from door to door in the area, but often (when our train into Cardiff arrived after the hours that the city buses were operative) I also walked from the train station in the center of Cardiff to our lodgings in Canton. Consequently, when I wrote chapter two of the biography, I was well acquainted with Canton and the River Taff, with Cardiff and its docks, its castle, and other sites I was later to write about.

Also, during those months while I was in the missionfield, my cousin Margaret Comstock (Mackenzie)—whose husband was in the US military at the time—came through Cardiff and made arrangements for me and my missionary companion to meet her and her husband at the Welsh Baptist Tabernacle Church where our great-grandparents (Thomas Bassett and Margaret Edwards) had been married.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, it was night when we arrived at the Tabernacle, and the church was locked, so I never got to see the inside, except in pictures. (I regret that I never went back to the Tabernacle when I later visited Cardiff.)

Llandaff Cathedral, which my grandfather would have know intimately, was immediately across a large park (about the size of a soccer field) from the bus stop near our headquarters on 57 Conway Road in Cardiff, but I never visited it while on my mission, though I saw it across the field almost daily. (Later, while on a BYU Study Abroad in London with my family, I took them to Wales, and we visited the cathedral, and attended a portion of a service there.)

As a missionary, I often visited the village of Merthyr Tydfil and became well acquainted

---

<sup>4</sup>See chapter 2.

<sup>5</sup>Chapter 1, pp. 1-6.

with the coal-mining area of Wales.<sup>6</sup> Merthyr was much more Welsh at that time than Cardiff (which had become largely Anglicized). It was there in Merthyr, while attending church during my first Sunday in Britain, that I initially heard and learned to love the Welsh dialect as I imagine it would have been spoken by my grandfather and his family.

Also, while on my mission I attended two Welsh Eisteddfods<sup>7</sup> and thereby observed the Welsh people in native costumes, competing in music and poetry in Welsh. I also lived for a while in Moriston (a segment of Swansea, Wales), the home of some of the finest Welsh male choruses, and heard their concerts often on tape.

In addition, I traveled to Britain and home again from the mission field on ocean liners: the *Queen Mary* going over, and the *United States* returning. Therefore, though my ships were larger and more streamlined, with more sophisticated stabilizers, I did get the chance for two ocean crossings, and thereby to experience what that was like. Later, while writing about the Bassett family emigration, I was able to relive, to a degree, what it must have been like to travel by ship, as described in Chapter 4.

Also, at that time (in company with the other missionaries in our district), I crossed the waters of Swansea Bay on a small commercial boat from Swansea, Wales, to Ilfracombe, on the coast of North Devon in England. During that trip we were treated to a display involving a pod of porpoises surfacing and gliding through the air, as described in chapter 4.<sup>8</sup> Fortunately for me (since I was becoming seasick), the porpoises diverted my attention, and I was able to complete the journey without throwing up—just as the same scenario had played out in the case of the emigrants on the *Idaho*.

Years later, while teaching in the Humanities Department at BYU (now the Department of Comparative Art and Literature), I was involved in taking students on a six-month Study Abroad to London. During that time we took two excursions with our students to Liverpool, where we visited the emigration museum and the Liverpool docks. There I became familiar with the dock area, and its relationship to the Mersey River and to the city of Liverpool. This, and the aforementioned ocean crossings, contributed extensively to the writing of chapter 4.

Although I had the opportunity of crossing the US from Salt Lake City to New York City by rail on the way to my mission (again, a train experience akin to my early immigrants), I flew home

---

<sup>6</sup>Chapter 2.

<sup>7</sup>See Chapter 22, p. 4 .

<sup>8</sup>pp. 8-9.

from New York at the conclusion of the mission. Commercial flights were just becoming common at that time, and in less than a year after my return, the church began flying missionaries to their fields of labor on trans-Atlantic flights. Had I gone on my mission two years later than I did, I wouldn't have had the experience of crossing the nation by train, and the ocean by boat. Another coincidence? Perhaps.

*My Later College Experience: A Guided Choice of Vocation or Another Happenstance?*

When I came back from my mission I had to choose a major. (I originally started at BYU as a freshman majoring in chemistry, but when I returned, my interests had changed markedly.) I eventually decided to go into the LDS Church Education System (CES) and teach Seminary (and later Institute). Consequently, I changed my major to Secondary Education with an emphasis in history (primarily European history).

Upon graduating, I taught seminary at the secondary level for nine years. It was from that experience with adolescents in the classroom, and from my earlier studies in child psychology for my major that I drew much of the subject matter for Chapter 7.

And during those nine years I wrote two courses of study used in the seminaries church-wide. One of these was a Church History course of study, which helped me develop a background for much of the material on LDS church history in the biography. At the same time, I also wrote a textbook that was used to accompany the Church History course of study (which textbook centered in the lives of the Presidents of the Church) that helped me with information dealing with the church presidents who served during the lifetime of my grandfather.

When I went on for a Ph. D., I chose a Humanities emphasis at Syracuse University, which program was focused primarily in American social and cultural history (which, again, is reflected throughout the biography). To fulfill the dissertation requirement, I wrote a cultural history of the Territory of Utah, and during the writing of this project I was introduced to materials that I used extensively throughout the biography (e.g. the information on the *Juvenile Instructor*<sup>9</sup> and the conflict over plural marriage and statehood<sup>10</sup>).

During the nine years teaching Seminary and three years teaching at the Institute of Religion (adjacent to the University of Utah), and especially during the summer schools at BYU that were required of all teachers employed by the CES, I rubbed shoulders daily with others interested in the

---

<sup>9</sup>Chapter 7, pp. 3-5.

<sup>10</sup>Especially chapters 9, 11, 13-14.



more esoteric aspects of LDS history and doctrine, and often found myself in discussions and research papers concerning such topics as second endowments<sup>11</sup> and plural marriage in the church, as well as church politics surrounding the advent of statehood.<sup>12</sup>

During my first years of teaching at BYU (during the early 1970's), one of the most revolutionary developments in the realm of technology occurred. That was the advent of personal computers. They not only made writing infinitely easier (I doubt that I would have done one-tenth of my writing in magazines and conference papers, and especially on this biography, without this crucial tool), and it also made available a world of information, through search-engines (such as Google, etc.) on the internet. How fortunate that this development occurred just at this juncture of my life.

### *A Chance Meeting: More Plural Marriage Information*

During the ensuing years after my talk with my father about my grandfather's involvement in polygamy, I continued to wonder about the details. Shortly before my Aunt Gwladys passed away, I went to her home in Pocatello, Idaho, where she was living with her son, Dr. John Comstock. The one question that I wanted to ask her before she passed away was what she knew about the entrance of her father into plural marriage (since she was the last of my Grandfather Bassett's living children).

This led to a rather awkward situation, since I assume my cousin John (who was not a member of the LDS church<sup>13</sup>) knew nothing about the plural marriage, and Aunt Gwladys was very reticent to talk about it, especially in his presence. Fortunately, his living room was quite large, and at one end of the room he had an extensively-developed music library and an amazing stereo. So, while my wife Janet kept him occupied at that end of the room, demonstrating his stereo, Aunt Gwladys and I sequestered ourselves at the other end of the room for a few minutes.

We didn't have time to talk at length about the marriage, and I only got two bits of information from her: 1) That the presiding authority from church headquarters in Salt Lake "just came into the home and took his office away." (I'm still not quite certain what she meant by that. It certainly didn't jibe with the newspaper account of the experience<sup>14</sup>), and 2) She thought that the

---

<sup>11</sup>Chapter 15, pp. 5-8.

<sup>12</sup>Especially chapters 14 and 21.

<sup>13</sup>See chapter 24, p. 5 for the reason.

<sup>14</sup>Chapter 23, p. 2.

woman involved had the last name of “Hunter” (that I later was able to remember because President Howard W. Hunter was the president of the church at that time.) But that is all I got from her, so once again I just assumed I had hit another dead end.

At that time I was teaching a senior seminar at BYU titled “Victorian Art and Culture.” Occasionally members of the English faculty at the university attended to audit the class as background for their Victorian literature classes. One day I discovered that one of them was from Rexburg, Idaho. As I often did when I discovered people from the “home country,” I asked her if she would stay a few minutes after class and talk to me. (Whenever anyone from Fremont or Madison County in Idaho showed up in my classes, I tried to find if they had relatives or friends that I might have known while I was growing up in that area.) Since she was married, I enquired what her maiden name was, and she replied, “Hunter.”

That was all I learned during that conversation, since I was not aware of any Hunters in Rexburg (except a Hal Hunter, who had played basketball for Madison highschool). However, I woke up in the middle of the night, wondering if she might know anything about the plural marriage. The next class, I again requested her to stay, and asked her, “We have this story in our family. Is there any chance that you have the same story in yours?” She was unaware of any leads at the time, but said that she would ask her cousin Hal (who was the oldest of her living cousins).

Days after this conversation, I received a letter from Hal, who was indeed aware of the marriage, and he filled me in on the details that he knew.<sup>15</sup> His family also thought that Matthias Cowley was the General Authority who had performed the marriage, but we apparently will never have a way of substantiating that fact.<sup>16</sup>

This was followed by a telephone call from one of the daughters of Grandfather’s second wife, an aunt of Hal’s who was then living in a polygamous colony in Arizona. Hal had contacted her and told her of my interest in the Bassett/Hunter marriage. She filled in other details.<sup>17</sup> Next, I got a letter filled with their family genealogy from another relative living in Canada. Then my

---

<sup>15</sup>Appendix A of the biography,

<sup>16</sup>Later, while searching through the Thomas E. Bassett papers in the LDS Church History Library in Salt Lake, I found that my grandfather and Matthias Cowley had been business partners in a Beneficial Life Insurance venture. This seemed to clinch the matter for me. However, later, at the trial involving his membership in the church, Elder Cowley specifically denied helping with the polygamous marriage of my grandfather. (See chapter 22, especially pp. 6-8.)

<sup>17</sup>Chapter 25, pp. 3-4.

sister-in-law, Janice (Remington) Bassett, met still another second-generation member of the Hunter family while the two of them were serving in the Jordan River temple.<sup>18</sup>

Again I wonder, was it just a coincidence that Susan Hunter Miller (Hal's cousin) decided to audit my class (thus setting off this entire chain-of-events), or was there divine nudging occurring once again? In either case, I doubt that this biography would ever have been written, had I not received this information to prod me on.

After hearing from all of these individuals, I pieced together a history of the plural marriage, thinking it might someday serve as one of the chapters in a projected biography of my Grandfather Bassett, which biography I was considering doing by then (however, not very seriously), and sent the history to some of my relatives and to Hal.<sup>19</sup>

(I later heard from one of the descendants of the Hunter family that I had gone to high school with, utterly ignorant of the fact in school that we had this plural marriage in common, that some in the Hunter family were offended that I had written of the marriage, preferring to leave the matter in the past.)

### *Study Abroad in London, My Grandfather's Mission Field*

Some time later, again by virtue of my employment at BYU, I was privileged to live on several different occasions in London while directing Study Abroad programs (for an accumulated total of over two years<sup>20</sup>). This facilitated my becoming familiar with the areas where my grandfather had served his mission.

After writing the piece on the plural marriage, I decided to edit his missionary journal (which had come into my possession after the death of my father). Because of my Study-Abroad experiences (and with the help of a computer-generated search engine), I was able to annotate all of the places mentioned in the London segments of his missionary journal. My own mission also provided me insights into some of his missionary experiences. William Jarman, who is mentioned in the journal,<sup>21</sup> was still a subject of discussion among the saints in Merthyr while I was on my mission. Jarman stories were still afloat a century after the actual events.

---

<sup>18</sup>Appendix G,

<sup>19</sup>The material appears largely as it was first written as Chapter 22 in the biography.

<sup>20</sup>During this time I became so familiar with the city that I compiled a walking tour of London for our students to use.

<sup>21</sup>Chapter 12, pp. 2-4.

The edited journal later became the basis for Chapter 12 of the biography. I then sent copies of the annotated version of the journal to several members of the family, one of whom was my nephew, Curtis Bassett (both of his parents having passed away by that time), asking him to get copies to all of his siblings. Curtis was the oldest son of my brother, Richard, in whose home my father had lived for a summer shortly before his death.

When my father left Richard's home that summer, he left behind our grandfather's *Family Record*, that contains dates and places of the history of my grandfather's extended family. When Richard died, Curtis inherited the book, and later, seeing what I had done with the missionary journal, Curtis felt that I ought to have the *Family Record* and gave it to me. Throughout the writing of the biography, I relied extensively on information contained therein.

### *World Conference on Records: A Plan of Attack Twenty Years Before the Fact*

In August of 1980, I was invited by a former colleague<sup>22</sup> to present a paper at the World Conference on Records.<sup>23</sup> Why he should request me to do this is again a question I have often asked myself. I was not active in genealogical circles at the time, and certainly did not have a reputation as any kind of authority in those matters. Were the powers-to-be nudging him as well, or was I just someone who was convenient?

The topic I chose for my paper was "The Relationship Between Genealogy and History." At that time, genealogy (the bare-bones "Pedigree Charts" and "Family Group Sheets" showing relationships between ancestors and descendants, with vital information such as dates, places, etc.) was the major focus of the church genealogical program. (Family history was not stressed extensively until several years later.) My paper centered in a suggestion to put those names, etc. from the pedigree charts and family-group sheets into their historical setting, using my grandfather's case as an example. However, the idea of writing such a biography myself was totally absent from my mind at the time, and it would be over twenty years before I began taking my own advice (in the form of this biography).

---

<sup>22</sup>George Durrant, who had written curriculum for the LDS Native American seminaries during the same time that I wrote curriculum for the regular seminaries. During that earlier time, our offices had been next door to each other and we came to know each other well. The talk is currently online (as are many others of my articles).

<sup>23</sup>This conference was held in the Salt Palace in Salt Lake City, and the keynote address for the conference was given by Alex Haley, who was at the time at the height of his popularity after the publication of his book *Roots, The Saga of an American Family*, and its adaptation into a major TV mini-series, broadcast nation-wide.

*Mormon History Association Paper: The Early History of Rexburg*

By the late 1980's, BYU was putting a lot of pressure on all of the faculty to participate in scholarly journals and conferences. Because I was writing an American Humanities text at the time, I was reticent to drop that project to write a conference paper. However, when I heard that the Mormon Historical Society was holding their annual meeting in Rexburg, I thought this might be a good chance to add to my academic dossier. Therefore, I felt prompted to submit a paper on the early history of Rexburg. (At that time I was not even a member of the society.)

To write that essay I researched the archives of the Church History Department (such as it was at that time) in Salt Lake City for information on the church in Rexburg, and was able later to use much of that information on the early days of Ricks Academy/College in this publication.<sup>24</sup>

*A Letter From My Father Regarding His Home*

I had often heard my father talk about the fact that my Grandfather Bassett had mortgaged his dream home to help pay for the central building that served to anchor the Ricks academy in its infant days, only to lose that home due to his inability to pay on the mortgage during the harsh economic times of the 1920s.

This home had played a significant role in the life of my father, and he would always refer to it whenever we drove past the site. According to my father (and corroborated later by information I found in the Rexburg historical society), the house was a major showplace in Rexburg. Prompted by an article in one of the regional newspaper magazine inserts (that I seldom read—so why did this particular article come to my attention at that time?) discussing the importance of preserving the past, I wrote to him asking for a more extensive description of that home. Chapter 18 in the biography is primarily a summary of the letter he wrote back.

*Enter Ron Dennis and Dorothy Schimmelfinig: The Decision to Begin the Biography*

At BYU (by chance, or not) I became acquainted with Ron Dennis of the Portuguese Department. Though I had worked in the same building with Ron for several years, our paths had never crossed in a meaningful manner. Then one year, Norma Davies, who taught in our department (whose office was across the hall from mine) saw my miniature Welsh flag that I had pinned by my office door on St. David's Day, and enquired regarding my interest in Wales. Neither of us had known that the other had Welsh ancestry.

It was Norma who told me about Ron and his interest in Wales. (He is a descendent of

---

<sup>24</sup>It became the basis for much of Chapter 17.

Dan Jones of legendary Welsh missionary fame.) Because of this ancestry, Ron had become acquainted and enamored with all things Welsh. Next, Norma suggested that some of us on the faculty (including Ron, Norma's husband Gerald, and Leslie Norris—an internationally renowned Welsh poet who had become a much-beloved visiting professor in the English Department at BYU) pool our efforts and organize a Welsh Eisteddfod on campus, holding a university-wide competition in poetry. This competition was then held for a few years, culminating each year with a formal ceremony, complete with a crowning of a bard. It was through our organizing this celebration that I really got to know Ron.

One day, a few years later, while visiting with him on the stairwell of the building at BYU that housed our departments at that time, Ron asked me on what ship my grandfather had crossed the ocean when he came to America. When I told him I didn't know, he escorted me up to his office, and after a few minutes, he pulled up the names of the ships on which my grandfather (and earlier his older brother, and then his two sisters) had crossed, complete with brief biographical materials of those who had crossed on each of those ships.

Included as well were often a list of original documents, biographies, photographs and a list of journals that wrote of the crossing. That is how I found that my grandfather had crossed on the *Idaho*, and about the Ron's data-bank. This is also where I found information regarding the journals that I used for a day-to-day record of the crossing.<sup>25</sup>

It was through this serendipitous experience that I learned that Ron had spent a sabbatical year in Wales learning the Welsh language and preparing himself to teach a class in beginning Welsh at BYU. In these classes, he assigned his students to do extensive research on Welsh saints who had joined the Church and emigrated to the States. From this research he had created an extensive data-bank on the internet, filled with information on Welsh Mormon pioneers.

This experience piqued my interest, but I didn't do anything with the information, until much later when Ron called to tell me that he had recently acquired an extended biography that I might find of interest. It was titled *The Reluctant Bride*, written by Dorothy Schimmelfinig.

I found in reading that biography that Dorothy and I are distant cousins. Her grandmother, Rebecca Bassett Hughes (the subject of Dorothy's biography), was the sister of my Grandfather Bassett. This led in turn to a correspondence with her, and that was really the incentive that set off my determination to write a companion biography (after my retirement from BYU). Dorothy's research has been extremely crucial in the writing of this book, especially in regard to the family's early years in Wales and later in Mendon, Utah. Interspersed throughout her

---

<sup>25</sup>Chapter 4.

biography is also much crucial genealogical material. Had not this series of events transpired (by chance or by divine design), I likely would never have attacked this biographical task.

### *Other Contributions from Family Members Provide Early Versions of the History*

During the last years of his life, my father spent his time working in the Ogden LDS temple, and in compiling short histories of his family, including those of his father and mother. He was aided in this project by my sister, Ann. Between the two of them, several brief histories were produced that have been indispensable in the writing of this longer history. I would be amiss if I didn't acknowledge the significance of their earlier work.

### *Julene Settles in Rexburg: a Base of Operations For Research*

In November of 2009, my daughter Julene acquired a Ph.D., was hired at BYU-Idaho (formally Ricks College), and moved to Rexburg. Her home then provided me a convenient base in Rexburg from which I could do research in various collections throughout the county: the library at BYU-I, the Rexburg Historical Society (housed in the Rexburg Tabernacle), the county land-records office, and other sites, including the local cemeteries.

While visiting the Rexburg Historical Society, I discovered David Crowder's centennial history of Rexburg. Looking hurriedly through the index, and checking out the information on my grandfather, I initially decided that it didn't contain much new information that I didn't already know, so I left without buying a copy. (However, Julene and Janet later persuaded me to return and purchase a copy, for background material on Rexburg itself.)

Examining the volume more carefully later, I found much of help in filling out many of the blank spots in my grandfather's life, such as his relationship to Thomas E. Ricks and Grandfather's early callings in the church in Mendon and later in Rexburg, as well as the role that the Mendon saints in general played in the colonization of Rexburg (including the reason for the Bassetts' move to Rexburg in the first place).<sup>26</sup> I also learned much from that history about the Comstock family (that my Aunt Gwladys married into), and with the help of my cousin, Robert Comstock, was also able to round out their history in the biography as well.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup>Chapter 8, pp. 6-8.

<sup>27</sup>Chapter 24, pp. 2-5.

### *The LDS Church History Library in Salt Lake City: An Unusual Collection*

Later, Julene, Janet, and I visited the newly renovated Church History Library in Salt Lake City. There I found to my amazement that they have preserved a rather extensive file of my grandfather's business correspondence. For some unknown reason they have an exhaustive collection of letters relative to his work in the insurance business and other commercial ventures. I have no way of explaining why they have preserved this type of information. I can understand why they would have kept his ecclesiastical correspondence relating to his church callings, but why his business correspondence in a church history library? And, scattered throughout the midst of all of this business material, I also found letters of a more personal nature, written to family members and close friends.

### *Reuniting the Family: Step 1. The Mendon Connection and William Bassett*

In 2014, while writing the biography, I decided to visit the town of Mendon to see if I could find anything helpful there. Since there wasn't anyone out on the streets, Janet and I decided to visit the cemetery and look for gravestones. We were unsuccessful in locating any relating to our family. However, while we were in the cemetery, I noticed a house a short distance west of the north end of the cemetery, and remarked to Janet what a great example of post-modern architecture it was. I noted that if I were still teaching the American Humanities class at BYU, I would take a picture of it to use in my classes as an example of post-modernism,

As we finished moving through the cemetery, we noticed a road leading west from the north end, and decided to exit on it. (Initially we had initially entered at a southern entrance.) I noted that this road would take us past the house I had noticed earlier, and this would provide me a closer look.

As we passed the house I noticed that the name on the mailbox was "Bassett." About a mile farther on that road, I told Janet that I needed to go back and visit the house, so I turned the car around and returned. Then I did something that I still can't imagine my doing. I got out of the car, went to the house, and knocked on the door, which was opened by a young woman, possibly in her late thirties or so. I introduced myself, noting that we had the same last name, and asked if there was a Royal Bassett in her lineage. (I said "Royal," but should have said "William," except I couldn't remember his name, being overly flustered by the situation. Fortunately, the family came from the lineage of Royal, the son of William.)

She turned around, and addressing her mother, asked if there was a Royal in their lineage. She then excused herself and walked back into the house. I understood her to say that they were involved in a wedding that day, and that she had to rush to another appointment. (Had I come to



the house fifteen minutes earlier, I wouldn't have found anyone at home, and probably would never have returned.)

Soon her mother came to the door and invited me in. The mother (Cleta Bassett) was very gracious and eager to talk to me. When I introduced myself, she told me that she knew my parents, and had my sister Ann's family-history materials that Ann had sent to Cleta's husband, who had passed away some years before. She also told me that she had read all of my earlier articles in the *Ensign* (the LDS church magazine), so she felt that she already knew me.

Then she retrieved a large volume of family history that she and her husband had compiled before his death, and invited me to look through it. When I did, I found a lot of information regarding William Bassett (my grandfather's brother) and his family. I asked if she would consider sending me copies of some of those pages, and she seemed more than willing to do so. Therefore, much of the material on the William Bassett side of the family contained in this biography of my grandfather comes from that source.<sup>28</sup> ( I also told her of Dorothy's work, and later wrote to Dorothy to put her in touch with Cleta.)

One possibly divine nudge that I failed to respond to earlier also involved William's family. That had come in the form of constant prodding by my father, during my undergraduate years at BYU, to go visit his cousin, Catherine Pardoe (William's daughter), who was teaching at BYU in the theater department. However, I was too timid to follow through in pursuing an interview with her. I have deeply regretted that often during the writing of this biography, knowing that she could have supplied me with many more important family insights concerning her father and his life.

However, be that as it may, I probably wouldn't have known any relevant questions to ask her at that time in my life. Writing a biography involving her father hadn't even entered my mind. (Now, I could probably keep her talking for hours, responding to questions I would like to ask her.)

### *Step Two: Mary, An Unexplained Letter*

Having now obtained background information, first on my grandfather's sister Rebecca (from Dorothy Schimmelfinig's "Reluctant Bride"), and then on his brother William (from Cleta Bassett's family history collection), my attention turned next to his oldest sister, Mary, who had no posterity to contact regarding her history.

However, about this time, I discovered a letter, written by my Aunt Gwladys (Comstock)

---

<sup>28</sup>For example, see chapter 24, pp. 6-8.

to her cousin, Walter Muir, in response to his request for her memories of her Aunt Mary.<sup>29</sup> I'm not even aware of how a copy of it came into my possession, but I found it one day while looking through my genealogical materials.

Aunt Gwladys must have sent a carbon copy of it to my father (since my copy is not an original). It is full of information relative to the life of that compassionate soul (Mary), who lived out all her life tending to the needs of her parents.

### *Step Three: Teton and the Baker Family*

Sometime later, by accident (perhaps), I ran across an obituary for Sara Bassett Baker's grandson Simon, and from it discovered the names of two of Simon's sons living in Teton: Wayne and Phil Baker. So on a Saturday afternoon, while visiting Julene, we drove to Teton to look for them, and for Baker graves in the Teton cemetery.

Thinking that the cemetery was on the eastern boundary of the town on the main highway, we drove through Teton. The cemetery wasn't where I thought it would be, so we turned around and drove randomly around through the town hoping to run across the cemetery—with no luck. Since there was no one on the streets to ask where the cemetery is, we decided to drive back to Rexburg.

Just as we were driving past the LDS chapel in town, two pickup trucks drove into the parking lot, and the drivers got out and started talking to each other. So I stopped to ask them where the cemetery is. After getting directions from them, I asked them perchance if they knew either Wayne or Phil Baker. Fortunately, one of the workers knew them both, so I asked him if either of the Baker brothers might be at church the next day. He responded that he was relatively sure that Phil (at least) would be in attendance, because he (Phil) had just been placed in a newly organized bishopric a Sunday or two before.

Then we left for the cemetery. It's a good thing that we got directions because we probably never would have found it on our own. The cemetery is located far south of town, largely hidden among acres of dry farms. (Later that day, when we tried to return to it a second time, we couldn't find it, even though we knew about where it is.)

After a brief search, we found Sara's grave between those of her two husbands, Simon and John.<sup>30</sup> We were both excited and amused. That part of Idaho in the Upper Snake River Valley

---

<sup>29</sup>Appendix I.

<sup>30</sup>See Chapter 12, p. 5; 14, p. 1 of the biography.

area is known for its perpetual wind, and as mentioned, the cemetery is out among the rolling hills of dry-farm country, so the wind has miles of flat land in which to whip up a storm. We laughed because all of the vases containing flowers that had been brought to the cemetery during the earlier Memorial Day were blown over, and all were lying in the same direction, so it wasn't difficult to tell which way the wind had been blowing.

The next day we attended church in Teton, going to the 11:00 session, because that is where Phil had been installed in the bishopric, so we knew that we would probably find him there. I recognized him the minute he came into the chapel because he looks so much like the picture in his father's obituary. I introduced myself and visited with him briefly before the services began, long enough to ask him if he had any information relative to the early Baker line that he would be willing to share with me. However, he knew very little about his ancestry and, being busy in preparation for the services, suggested that I talk with his brother Wayne.

Wayne, who attended the earlier ward, was in a Sunday School class, and since it was the fifth Sunday, Phil knew he would be staying in the same room for the combined fifth-Sunday meeting. One of the local ward missionaries, who had introduced himself to us when we first arrived, showed me Wayne through a glass window in the door. He looks just like his brother Phil, only taller--both have that dignified Bassett look with a bright silver-white shock of hair.

So, when the Gospel Doctrine class ended, I rushed in to talk with Wayne before the next meeting began. I introduced myself as a distant Bassett cousin, and asked him if he knew anything about his Baker ancestry, or had any pictures or histories I might look at. Fortunately, he had just received (from a cousin) a well-crafted loose-leaf book of histories, much like the one that Clea and her husband had compiled about William Bassett, only centering in the Bakers and, to a lesser degree, the Muirs (descendants from Margaret Bassett Muir, another sister of my grandfather). Since Wayne had to rush home between meetings, he said he would bring it back to let me examine it.

He was kind enough to share it with me, and allowed me to take it back to Julene's home. I had it for two days and copied several items on the Bakers and the Muirs from it. That became the source of the material in this biography on those two families.<sup>31</sup> It was assembled by one of Simon's (the first husband's) descendants, so I am still looking for someone from the second marriage to get information on John Baker's posterity. However, I am relatively certain that there had been some bad blood between the immediate descendants of the two brothers, and Wayne didn't know where I could get information from the descendants of the first Simon.

---

<sup>31</sup>Chapter 8, p. 2; 9, 5-7; 12:5; 14:1; 20:3-4.

He also told me that all of the Muirs had moved from Teton earlier. There were apparently some Muirs descended from the original family still living in Rexburg, but I didn't get a chance to follow through on that lead. However, I did find that Margaret and her husband, Walter Muir, were buried in the Sugar City cemetery—just between Rexburg and Teton. So we went there and located their graves. That was all that I thought that I would find concerning the Muirs.

*Step Four: Carma Muir Golding and the Muirs*

Later, I found the name and email address of one of the Muir descendants: Carma Muir Golding, from the information provided by the Bakers and sent an email to her, informing her that I would be in Rexburg for the eclipse of the sun (that occurred in August of 2017), and that I would like to talk with her for a few minutes if I could.

Much to my surprise, Carma answered my email, informing me that she no longer lived in Rexburg, but was living just a few blocks east of my home in Orem, Utah, and that she would be happy to talk with me. Furthermore, she was a major genealogical consultant in our region, so she was deeply emerged in genealogical work and had volumes of information relative to the Muir line, which she was kind enough to share.<sup>32</sup> She also has served as a nearby consultant for questions raised in my mind as I got ready to publish this biography, and continues to do so to the present.

So, once more, after completing the biography to this point, again I find myself raising the question, “Divine guidance by a power beyond my own, or simply just a series of fascinating coincidences?” Either way, I sense that my preparation for writing the biography has been thorough.

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>32</sup>Chapters 7. pp.7-8; 20. pp. 3-4.

## INTRODUCTION

This is one of thousands of stories that beg to be told and retold regarding the Mormon diaspora from Wales to the Great Basin Kingdom in western America.

It is a saga that begins in the little hamlet of Canton, in southern Wales (within walking distance of the Cardiff docklands), during the British industrial revolution, and ends in Rexburg, Idaho (in the Upper Snake River Valley) during the American roaring twenties.

It is the story of one family out of a company of more than 600 Latter-day Saints who crossed the Atlantic en masse by steamship during the American centennial, and traversed the Great Plains by train that same year as part of the much heralded Mormon exodus.

It is a story of the Mormon version of the American melting pot, wherein a handful of disparate families from widely different geographical backgrounds coalesced into one extended family, first in Mendon, Utah and later in Rexburg, Idaho.

It is the story of two brothers from that family, who rose to prominence in Mormondom, to the end that each became a business partner with a modern-day LDS apostle.

It is a story of life during the final harrowing days of plural marriage in the LDS Church.

It is the story of the exasperating transition in Mormonism from the time that one's glory in the afterlife was thought to be contingent on one's entering into a plural marriage, until the time that contracting a plural marriage became grounds for excommunication from the faith—and the friction that transition created in Mormondom. ...

It is a story of a family in which one of the sisters unwittingly found herself a reluctant bride locked into an unwanted polygamous marriage ...

And one of her brothers, whose connection with plural marriage was contested in the courts of the land, all the way to the Supreme Court of the United States ...

And another brother, who, while serving as an LDS Stake President, entered into a plural marriage relationship eighteen years after the 1890 church manifesto forbidding the practice.

More specifically, it is the story of a young man who rose from near-obscurity in Wales, to prominence in the U.S. —first (at the age of 16) as the agent in his local railroad depot and manager of the LDS tithing office in his community, and then as the first postmaster of the town he helped colonize, editor of the local newspaper, insurance and loan agent, Mormon missionary in England, state senator, LDS stake president and educator, instrumental in founding what eventually became a significant church-owned university; in short, one of the most prominent citizens of his times in southeastern Idaho: Thomas E. Bassett—a transplanted Welsh LDS pioneer extraordinaire.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Chapter 1: A DEATH, A WEDDING, and A BIRTH

*The End of a Life Well Lived*  
*The Saga Begins*  
*William Edward (Tom's Maternal Grandfather)*  
*Rebecca Williams (Tom's Maternal Grandmother)*  
*Enter Sarah Philips*  
*A Soul Comes to Wales*

### Chapter 2: THE WELSH BACKDROP

*Three Villages, and a Fourth*  
*Cardiff, Showplace of the Industrial Age*  
*A Multinational City*

### Chapter 3: CAUGHT IN THE GOSPEL NET

*The Net is Cast*  
*The Flight of an Angel*  
*A House Divided*  
*Margaret's Spiritual Journey*  
*The Bassett Diaspora Begins*  
*Two More Leave for Zion*  
*Farewell to Wales*

### Chapter 4: ACROSS THE WIDE ATLANTIC

*The Good Ship Idaho*  
*The Docks of Liverpool*  
*The Emigrant Saints*  
*The Final Boarding*  
*The "Idaho" at Sea*  
*The Crossing*  
*The Arrival*

### Chapter 5: OVERLAND BY RAIL

*By Train to Zion*  
*Mormons and Indians*  
*The Mountains of Ephraim*

### Chapter 6: NEW HOME IN A NEW LAND

*The Mendon Years*  
*The Town*  
*Settling In*  
*Back to Farming*  
*Becca and Henry Hughes*  
*Becca's Parents Arrival*

Chapter 7: PREFACE TO MANHOOD

*The Adolescent Years*  
*The Silent Years*  
*The Juvenile Instructor*  
*Age Fourteen*  
*Reunion with Will*  
*Age Fifteen (1877)*  
*Age Sixteen (1878)*  
*Age Seventeen (1879)*

Chapter 8: FAREWELL TO MENDON

*The Family in 1880*  
*The Jubilee Year*  
*A New First Presidency*  
*Political Storms Intensify*  
*Religious Antagonism*  
*Decision to Go North*  
*Pulling up Roots*

Chapter 9: NEW BEGINNINGS IN IDAHO

*The Arrival*  
*The New Bishopric*  
*Rexburg's First School Teacher*  
*Rexburg First Postmaster*  
*The Evolving Community*  
*Sarah and the Baker Family*  
*The Second Winter*  
*The Polygamy Controversy Comes to Rexburg*

Chapter 10: THOMAS E. AND LUCY ANN

*Enter the Lutz Family*  
*Lucy's Pioneer Heritage*  
*Tom's Courtship and Marriage*

Chapter 11: PREFACE TO A MISSION

*Unsettled Times*  
*A Call From the Prophet*  
*Back to Utah*

Chapter 12: MISSIONARY TO BRITAIN

*Back to England*  
*Assignment to London*  
*William Jarman*  
*Proselytizing in London*  
*Drowning of Simon Baker*  
*Sight-Seeing in London*  
*Transfer to Kent*  
*District President in Norwich*  
*Home Again*

Chapter 13: A CHANGING NATION

*The 1890's*  
*Closing of the American Frontier*  
*Emergence of the New Rich*  
*The Nation v. the Church in Idaho*  
*The Woodruff Manifesto*

Chapter 14: POST-MISSION FAMILY AND POLITICS

*Returning to the Family*  
*Elder Bassett and Lucy Reunited*  
*New Responsibilities in the Church*  
*Political Happenings in Rexburg*  
*Utah Politics*  
*Thomas E. Elected to the State Senate*  
*Service in Boise*

CHAPTER 15: TURN OF THE CENTURY

*Newspaper Editor*  
*Spanish-American War*  
*Death of President Woodruff*  
*A New Epoch: The Railroad Comes to Rexburg*  
*Financial Concerns*  
*Second Anointings*  
*A Season in the Temple*  
*Sarah Philips*

Chapter 16: A CALL TO PRESIDE

*A Year of Death*  
*President Bassett*

Chapter 17: THE BIRTH OF AN ACADEMY

*Ricks Academy/College*  
*A Principal for the Academy*  
*The Academy Building*  
*Religion Courses*  
*Housing*

Chapter 18: THE DREAM HOME

*A Micro-Universe*  
*A Rexburg Showplace*  
*The Home as Dorm*  
*Behind the House*  
*The End of the Dream*



Chapter 19: THE TALE OF TWO SETTLEMENTS

*The Growth of the Stake*  
*Priesthood Reorganization*  
*Eighteen Wards*  
*St. Anthony*  
*Sugar City*  
*National Issues with Japan*

Chapter 20: TWO BIRTHS AND FOUR DEATHS IN THE PRESIDENCY YEARS

*Two More Children*  
*The Passing of His Parents*  
*The Death of A Brother-in-Law*

Chapter 21: POST-MANIFESTO PLURAL MARRIAGE

*Plural Marriage At the Turn of the Century*  
*A Simplified History*  
*A Heart Wrenching Transition*  
*The Woodruff Manifesto and Its Immediate Aftermath*  
*Senate Hearings and a Second Manifesto*

Chapter 22: THE BASSETT-HUNTER MARRIAGE

*National Elections*  
*Church Leadership and the Insurance Business*  
*Economic Problems*  
*A Second (Plural) Marriage*  
*Prelude to the Marriage*  
*Early Relationships*  
*The Economic Component*  
*The Religious Component*  
*All Things Considered*

Chapter 24: AFTERMATH OF THE PRESIDENCY

*Life Within the Marriage*  
*Release from the Stake Presidency*  
*The First Decade Following the Release*

Chapter 25: A NEW GENERATION AND THE DEATH OF A BROTHER

*A New Generation*  
*Gwladys and the Comstocks*  
*The Rexburg Commercial Club and the Presbyterian Church*  
*The Death of William*  
*Two More Marriages*  
*Financial Hardships*

Chapter 26: THE ENDING OF THE SAGA

*The Death of Thomas E.*  
*Postlude to the Death*  
*The Death of the Original Bassett Sisters*  
*The Passing of the Wives*

Appendix A: Hal Hunter Letter #1  
Appendix B: Hal Hunter Letter #2  
Appendix C: Newspaper Interview by Eastern Daily Press  
Appendix D: Response to Eastern Daily Press Interview  
Appendix E: Heman Hyde Hunter - Will  
Appendix F: From History of Lucy Ann Lutz Bassett by Thomas Myrthen Bassett  
  
Appendix G: The Day Mother Threw Out the Relief Society  
Appendix H: E-Mail from Carol White 11/22/04  
Appendix I: Fanny Frances Fawson Hunter by Hal Hunter  
Appendix J: Memories of Mary Bassett by Gwladys Bassett Comstock

Chapter One  
A DEATH, A WEDDING, AND A BIRTH

*The End of a Life Well-Lived*

Sunday afternoon, 22 August 1926. The U.S. was over half way into the Roaring 20s. However, few of the flamboyant fads associated with that era had made much of an impact on the rural community of Rexburg, Idaho. The music permeating the parlor of Fannie Hunter in Rexburg on this warm, lazy day of late summer, was about as far from Jazz as one could get. Rather, it was the more melodious, sedate religious hymns of the Mormon faith.

Fannie was at the piano. The small chorus assembled around her consisted primarily of her grown daughters. However, standing in the midst of them, in stocking feet, blending his rich tenor voice to those of the daughters, was the 64-year-old silver-haired immigrant, pioneer, and colonizer, Thomas E. Bassett: former state senator, former LDS stake president.

Suddenly, his hand that was resting on the shoulder of Fannie's daughter, Louisa, began to shake noticeably, and he excused himself to go lie down in a nearby bedroom. He entered the room, quietly closed the door, and lied down on the bed. That was the last door he would close in his lifetime. When another of the daughters, Cassia, went in five minutes later to check on him, she found his soul had taken flight from this world.<sup>1</sup>

*The Saga Begins*

Seventy-five years prior to the death of Thomas E. Bassett, his parents were married on Friday, 27 January 1851 in southeastern Wales. His father, (also named Thomas),<sup>2</sup> the son of a farm laborer from Canton in Wales, and his mother, Margaret Edwards,<sup>3</sup> the daughter of a Leckwith

---

<sup>1</sup>Correspondence from Hal H. Hunter, grandson of Fannie Francis Fawson Hunter, to the author, dated 3 October 1990. See Appendix A.

<sup>2</sup>To avoid confusion, since two of the major figures, father and son, have the same name (Thomas), I will refer to Thomas E. by the nickname Tom.

<sup>3</sup>The names "Edward" and "Edwards" appear interchangeably in the records of the family. Although Margaret's ancestors seems to have preferred the "Edward" form, I will use the "s" form for Margaret and Thomas E. throughout this volume because that is the one Thomas E. uses in his family record book and the one that appears on both the marriage certificate and the death certificate of his mother.

farmer,<sup>4</sup> bundled up against the winter cold, met at the Tabernacle Welsh Baptist church on Pen-y-wain road in the Hayes, Cardiff,<sup>5</sup> entered the massive wooden doors, and were joined together in holy matrimony. Both were 24-years old. David Jones officiated at the wedding, and Richard Bassett Jr. and Margaret David signed the marriage certificate as witnesses.<sup>6</sup> Then, as now, the service in the Tabernacle was conducted entirely in Welsh.

The major news throughout the British Empire that year was radiating from London, regarding the World's Fair that was scheduled to open there on May 1<sup>st</sup>, four months from the time of the wedding. Potential attendees from all over the world were making plans to gather in Hyde Park in London where the fair was being assembled. This was the first World's Fair in the western world and the Isles were abuzz with anticipation regarding all the modern mind-boggling inventions on exhibit—beginning with the architecture of the fair itself. The major exhibition hall, as its title “Crystal Palace” implies, was composed almost entirely of plate glass and cast iron, a relatively new development in the evolution of architecture.

In significant ways that event heralded the beginning of a new era throughout the entire western world.<sup>7</sup> Anticipation for the new industrial, mechanized future of mankind was a topic of discussion in nearly every pub and household throughout the land. However, in spite of all of this hoopla, this international event seemed far away and insignificant to the two lovers being joined together that day in a simple wedding ceremony in Cardiff Wales. The only new era they were interested in was that centered in their own future.

How the two met or what their courtship was like is not known. He was from the village of

---

<sup>4</sup>Family lore commonly refers to Margaret's father, William Edward, as a Welsh Baptist minister. However, official documents such as the wedding certificate for the marriage of his daughter and his own death certificate refer to him as a farmer or “land agent.” It appears that if he were associated with the Baptist ministry, it would likely have been as a bi-vocational minister, one who works another (secular) job while serving at the same time as a pastor—a practice commonly associated with smaller Baptist congregations.

<sup>5</sup>Though there had been a Welsh Baptist chapel on the site since 1821, the church in which the Bassetts were wed was the product of a major renovation in 1840. The Italianate structure on the site today is the result of a complete architectural overhaul in 1865, with the stained glass windows depicting the *Baptism of Christ* and *The Last Supper* being added in 1928.

<sup>6</sup>Marriage certificate of Thomas Bassett and Margaret Edwards. Richard Bassett Jr. (age 21) was the younger brother of Thomas, and Margaret David (age 18) was a second-cousin of the bride (being a daughter of Margaret's cousin Catherine Edward David).

<sup>7</sup>As suggested by the words “all Nations” in its official title: “The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations.”

Canton and she was from Leckwith.<sup>8</sup> But there in the Tabernacle they joined their lives together in a union that would eventually last until the death of Thomas, fifty-two years later, leading them to places and events they could not have imagined in their wildest dreams, even in the exhilaration of that day.<sup>9</sup>

The wedding likely was well-attended. The wedding party of the groom undoubtedly included at least two relatives: Richard Bassett (the groom's 76-year-old father), and Thomas's younger brother Richard Jr. (named after his father). The latter had farmed by Thomas's side during the preceding years on the Hackaford farm, six miles from their father's home in Canton.<sup>10</sup> Thomas's mother, Mary Millward (Bassett),<sup>11</sup> his father's second wife, had passed away at the age of 60, four years earlier.

Thomas' brother Richard was the only one in the immediate Bassett family, besides the marriage couple, who lived long enough to know of the birth of his nephew, Tom (the subject of this biography). We know no more of the brother Richard and his life after the wedding, except for the fact that he died one year after the birth of Tom.

Richard apparently never married. Consequently, Tom grew up never knowing the companionship of any Bassett cousins. Nor would he know any of his grandparents. All of them passed away prior to his birth. Perhaps this fact contributed in part to the insularity and tight-knit nature of the family in which Tom was reared.

#### *William Edward (Tom's Maternal Grandfather)*

The bride's family in attendance at the wedding was likely much greater in number. They undoubtedly included Margaret's 86-year old father, William Edward, and her 65-year-old mother, Rebecca Williams (Edward).

William's mature life appears to have been lived out primarily in the village of Leckwith. He was the eldest son of his parents, William Edward and Mary Ambrose, and he had one younger

---

<sup>8</sup>Both hamlets are now incorporated in the city of Cardiff.

<sup>9</sup>Later (1900) they were to participate in a second marriage ceremony, that one in a Mormon temple in Logan, Utah, according to the rites of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That second marriage was designed to last throughout all eternity.

<sup>10</sup>Schimmelpfennig, Dorothy J. *The Reluctant Bride*, 37. [http://welshmormon.byu.edu/Resource\\_Info.aspx?id=10647](http://welshmormon.byu.edu/Resource_Info.aspx?id=10647).

<sup>11</sup>Sometimes recorded as "Mary Miller."

brother (Edward Edward), and a younger sister (Margaret).<sup>12</sup> Edward fathered a daughter named Caroline, born in in1803.<sup>13</sup> Edward died the following year, and Caroline's birth mother remarried soon thereafter, and began a family fathered by her second husband. Somewhere around this time, Caroline was given (while still a baby) to her Uncle William and his first wife, Mary Morgan (who apparently had no children of their own), to be reared in the manner of a foster child.<sup>14</sup>

Caroline subsequently grew up in the home of her aunt and uncle. At the age of twenty-three (1826), she married Jonah (or John) David, and set up housekeeping in a home nearby the home where she had grown up.<sup>15</sup> That same year Mary Morgan, her aunt and foster mother, passed away in December, and the following January, Caroline's Uncle William entered into a second marriage shortly after Caroline's marriage.<sup>16</sup>

The fact that the first wife, Mary Morgan, passed away in late December of 1826 and the banns announcing the impending marriage of William and Rebecca Williams were published within two weeks after the death of Mary indicates that the couple had earlier made plans to marry upon the occasion of the first wife's passing. Mary's continued existence appears to have been the only obstacle in the way of their marriage.<sup>17</sup> When the couple married in January of 1827, Rebecca was 41 (nearly past the age of child-bearing) and William was 62. Later, in November of that same year, Margaret, their only child (and the future mother of Thomas E.) was born.

The Davids eventually became the parents of six children,<sup>18</sup> all of whom were about the same age as their mother's cousin, Margaret, making them second-cousins to the bride. They all grew up next door to Margaret and, being near the same age as Margaret, undoubtedly spent a great deal of

---

<sup>12</sup>The appearance of the name *Margaret* in the families of both of her two brothers, William and Edward, perhaps suggests an early death of this daughter and a desire on the part of her brothers to preserve her memory.

<sup>13</sup>This appears to be the Cate Edward in the Glamorganshire Parish Registers, 1538-1912.

<sup>14</sup>Wales, Glamorganshire, Parish Registers, 1538-1912.

<sup>15</sup>She was living there as late as the 1881 census, and was present at the death of William Edward.

<sup>16</sup>January, 1827.

<sup>17</sup>Mary Morgan died on 24 December 1826 in Whitecross, Eglwysilan, Wales. (Thomas E. Bassett's *Family Record*.) The fact that she died in a village other than Leckwith, where her husband William was living, adds another level of mystery to the story.

<sup>18</sup>Mary (1827); Catharine (1830); Margaret (1833); William (1837); Thomas (1837?); and Ann (1840).

their social life with her during their childhood. These second-cousins and their parents were also likely in attendance at the wedding. One of them (Margaret David), as mentioned, was one of the two who signed as a witness to the wedding.

Other guests from Margaret's family at the wedding may also have included relatives descended from the second marriage of Catherine's birth mother.

*Rebecca Williams (Tom's Maternal Grandmother)*

Meanwhile, during those same years, in the village of Llandough, two and a-half miles south of Leckwith,<sup>19</sup> another scenario was unfolding—this one in the home of Thomas and Elizabeth Williams, involving their daughter Rebecca. In 1808, at the age of 22, Rebecca (Tom's grandmother) became involved in an illegitimate relationship with a young man named William Rogers, and gave birth to a baby boy out of wedlock. The resultant child was given the name Isaac Roberts though the couple never married.

Family histories record Isaac's remaining with Rebecca until he grew to manhood.<sup>20</sup> For several years, Rebecca likely lived in Llandough as a single mother, perhaps enduring the stigma common to a "fallen woman," a designation typically passed on such a one by the strict moralistic code of Victorian society. Living in a small Welsh village Rebecca and her illegitimate offspring would certainly have been well known. Perhaps for as long as nearly two decades she and Isaac may well have lived largely isolated from the rest of their society, except for family connections.<sup>21</sup> Her siblings<sup>22</sup> were all old enough to know of the circumstances, and may or may not have been more sympathetic. But perhaps, like Hawthorne's Hester Prim,<sup>23</sup> she eventually paid the price for her societal transgression and demonstrated her sincere repentance, and gained the forgiveness (or at least the forgetfulness) of the inhabitants of the village.

Or, she may eventually have moved to Leckwith with Isaac in order to escape her continuing social embarrassment. Whatever the situation, she and William Edward eventually found each other,

---

<sup>19</sup>Since there are two Llandoughs in southeastern Wales, this one is typically referred to as Llandough Penarth because of its proximity to the city of Penarth on the Welsh coast.

<sup>20</sup>Isaac, was 19 at the time of the marriage of his mother to Wm. Edward. Twelve years later (1839), at age 31, he married Sarah Rimborn. He subsequently died a decade later. (*Family Record* of Thomas E. Bassett).

<sup>21</sup>During these years it is possible she may have continued to live with her parents.

<sup>22</sup>Elizabeth (age 27); Thomas (25); John (20); and William (17).

<sup>23</sup>The major figure in his novel, *The Scarlet Letter*.

fell in love, and the two were married in 1827, almost immediately after the death of his first wife.

### *Enter Sarah Philips*

We do not know how many friends of the bride and groom were in attendance. However it is quite probable that Sarah Philips (likely a mutual friend of one or both of the couple) may have been there. The 1841 census indicates that she had grown up in the same neighborhood in Canton as Thomas, and that the two were the same age (both born in June of 1827). Perhaps they attended the same classrooms in school.

Little did Sarah dream on that occasion that nearly half a century later she would become a third member of that marriage. In 1900 she was sealed by proxy to Thomas as a plural wife for eternity in the LDS temple in Logan, Utah, half way around the world. Sarah died in March of 1858 (seven years after the aforementioned wedding), at the age of 31.<sup>24</sup> This was eighteen years before the Bassetts emigrated to America, and therefore they could easily have been in attendance at her funeral.

### *A Soul Comes to Wales*

Eleven years after the wedding of Thomas and Margaret, on a chill late autumn day, their son Tom was born in the little village of Canton<sup>25</sup> in southern Wales. His birth, like his death, occurred on a Sunday afternoon, 29 November 1862. The American Civil War was raging across the Atlantic in the U.S. and the western frontier of America was still in the early stages of settlement.

Those in attendance to welcome the baby into the world were his mother, Margaret Edwards Bassett, and his father, Thomas Bassett—both 35-years-old. From each of them he inherited a portion of his name—*Thomas* from his father, and *Edwards* from his mother.

Siblings, who had been eagerly anticipating his birth for months, consisted of an eleven-year older brother, William Edwards (Will),<sup>26</sup> and three sisters: eight-year-old Mary (Mae),<sup>27</sup> five-year-old Rebecca (Becca or Beccy),<sup>28</sup> and three-year-old Margaret (Meg).<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup>Thomas E's Bassett's *Family Record*,

<sup>25</sup>Now a subdivision of Cardiff.

<sup>26</sup>Born 25 December 1851.

<sup>27</sup>Born 4 August 1854.

<sup>28</sup>Born 9 March 1857. Will uses the "Beccy" form in his letters as an adult.

<sup>29</sup>Born 26 September 1859.



All of these siblings were destined to play significant roles in their little brother's later life—especially Will, who eventually became not only Tom's closest friend, but also his mentor in several ventures. However, during Tom's earliest years, the age differential between himself and Will kept the two brothers widely separated socially. While Tom was growing up, the influence of his three older sisters was undoubtedly far more pervasive, largely because of the roles that older sisters commonly like to occupy as surrogate mothers and babysitters.

Hardly could the children or their mother have imagined at that time that one day this small baby would become their ecclesiastical leader and spiritual advisor in a land thousands of miles away from that little cottage in Wales. Margaret, who had been reared in the household of staunch Welsh Baptists, ironically would eventually find herself as the mother of a presiding elder in the Mormon religion which at that time was widely despised throughout Wales—a religion that her husband Thomas had already embraced by the time of the birth of this second son. But such was eventually to be her lot.

Later, Margaret would give birth to three more children: Sarah (when Tom was 3),<sup>30</sup> Jane (when he was 5),<sup>31</sup> and Frederick George (when he was 7).<sup>32</sup> However, of these three, only Sarah would live to see the new land of America. Jane and Frederick George, each died just at the age when they were beginning to relate meaningfully with other members of the family. Consequently young Tom would follow a funeral cortege to the cemetery in nearby Leckwith twice with his parents to bury the little bodies of these siblings—the first time, when he was 7, in the wake of Jane's death of pneumonia in 1869,<sup>33</sup> and later, at age 9, to bury Frederick, who died from diphtheria in 1871.<sup>34</sup>

Years later, when it was raining, their sister Becca, whom their passing seems to have impacted most noticeably (coming as they did just as she was in her early teens) recalls sitting by the window in her bedroom on the upper story of their home in Canton staring out the window into space, “thinking about the rain falling on the graves of her little sister and her little brother.”<sup>35</sup> Still later, when she bore her own children, Becca named her firstborn son *Frederick*, and her firstborn daughter *Jane*, in memory of her siblings who had passed away years earlier in Wales.

---

<sup>30</sup>Born 1 April 1865.

<sup>31</sup>Born 16 February 1867.

<sup>32</sup>Born 12 April 1869.

<sup>33</sup>16 December.

<sup>34</sup>4 April. Frederick had been vaccinated for smallpox two years previously, the same year Jane died, and had never been totally healthy afterward.

<sup>35</sup>Schimmelpfennig, Dorothy J. *The Reluctant Bride*, 37.

\* \* \* \* \*

Chapter Two  
THE WELSH BACKDROP

*Three Villages, and a Fourth*

Determining the activities of the growing family of Thomas and Margaret with any degree of certitude during the first years of its existence is problematic. However, it is possible to make some observations with relative confidence.

The early years of the Bassett saga were played out against the backdrop of three communities in southeastern Wales: 1) the sleepy little village of Leckwith, rising up steeply from the east bank of the Ely River to a height overlooking the marshland separating it from Cardiff<sup>1</sup>; 2) the slightly larger farming community of Canton (1.7 miles northeast of Leckwith), built on the site of what had originally been a major medieval market; and 3) Cardiff, a rising industrial center bordered on the east by Cardiff Bay (adjoining the Severn Estuary), and separated from Leckwith (a little over a mile away) by the Leckwith moors.<sup>2</sup> A fourth village, Merthyr Tydfil (twenty-five miles north of Cardiff) influenced the family only tangentially, largely through its economic ties with Tom's father's employment.

1) *Leckwith*. Tracing the couple's itinerary during the initial years of their married life, as noted, is difficult to do with certainty. Family lore has them moving originally into Cardiff, where Thomas, in an attempt to escape from a life of farming, established an independent business, hauling building materials. After a very short time there, Margaret, is reported to have begun to worry about the surroundings in which her children would be reared.<sup>3</sup> She wanted a more peaceful environment, and talked her husband into moving to her hometown of Leckwith.

Leckwith seems always to have been her favorite. She reputedly favored the little village primarily because of its tranquil setting, but there were undoubtedly other important concerns. Among other reasons for the choice of Leckwith might have been the bride's familiarity with the village, since that was where she had grown up. Many of her David cousins still lived there and she would have the benefit of their companionship and support. Further, her parents were aging, and Margaret's living with them and being able to help out would also be a powerful argument for a return to Leckwith. Though we do not know if the couple was living in the home of Margaret's

---

<sup>1</sup>The name, according to folk etymology, is rendered as "the slope of the cliff."

<sup>2</sup>Currently Leckwith and Canton are combined within the larger township of Cardiff.

<sup>3</sup>At the time she was pregnant with Will, their firstborn.

parents, or just nearby (as the cousins were), Schimmelpfennig suggests they may have moved to Leckwith to live with Margaret's family for economic reasons.<sup>4</sup>

Her son Will was born on Christmas day, just short of a year after their marriage. Medical facilities at that time, and a young Victorian woman's reputed naivete regarding the entire birthing process, may also have prompted the decision to settle in Leckwith in order that Margaret could be near her mother at the time of the birth.

2) *Canton*. Until the time of his marriage, Thomas had worked as a laborer on a farm just six miles distant from his father's home in Canton, but he was growing tired of this unfulfilling lifestyle with its drudgery and meager pay, especially as Britain was passing through the multiple crop failures and hard financial times of the "hungry forties."<sup>5</sup>

In addition, this was well into the era of the burgeoning industrial revolution in Britain. Thomas wanted more out of life than that available to a farm laborer. Hence his interests were constantly being drawn eastward to the growing town of Cardiff, just coming into its own as a major urban center. Since there was little work in Leckwith sufficiently profitable, other than farming, he reportedly acquired a job in Cardiff, and began walking three miles distance morning and evening to work on the docks.

After the death of Margaret's parents<sup>6</sup> the Bassetts moved to Canton. There their second four children were born, and there the family remained until emigrating to America.

In her later life, Tom's sister, Becca, described their living conditions in Canton.<sup>7</sup> She remembered their home as being a rather substantial eight-room house, four up for bedrooms, and four down. The home itself was surrounded outside by a typical English garden, bordered with flowers and vegetables, and filled inside by the laughter and daily activities of the children.<sup>8</sup>

3) *Cardiff and the Industrial Revolution*. When Tom was born, Queen Victoria had

---

<sup>4</sup>Schimmelpfennig, 35.

<sup>5</sup>Hit hard by the economic depression and poor harvests that devastated Europe in the late 1830's and 40's, jobs became practically non-existent throughout most of the western world.

<sup>6</sup>William on 24 December 1856 (at age 91), and Rebecca three years later, on 31 December 1859 (aged 73).

<sup>7</sup>Pardoe, T. Earl and Katherine Pardoe, "Interview of Rebecca Bassett Hughes, Christmas day, 1951," in Clela Robinson Bassett's "William Edward Bassett and Sarah Ann Williams Bassett." n.p.

<sup>8</sup>Their pride in this home may have been an inspiration for the house Tom would later have built for his own family in Rexburg Idaho.

reached the first quarter-century mark of her sixty-four-year reign. Her son, Edward, Prince of Wales, had just reached his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, and thereby his age of majority. The British Empire was at its zenith. Its colonies literally dotted the earth. The Crimean War, with its infamous “charge of the Light Brigade,” and the birth of the nursing profession through the efforts of Florence Nightingale (the “lady with the lamp”) had occurred a short five years before. Gilbert and Sullivan were about to go on stage with their extremely popular operettas. The nation itself had been joined closer together geographically, first by a system of canals, and then by rail. It was a proud time to be a Brit—at least to be an Englishman.

The Welsh however were of two minds. In addition to being citizens of Britain, in important ways southern Wales was more like a British colony itself, subject to the control of the English economic overlords and religiously dominated by the Church of England. The Anglicans and the Anglophiles who had moved into south Wales during the previous century now controlled most of the wealth, the properties, and positions of power in this once-proud ancient Celtic nation, stripping its Welsh citizenry of their native language, and demeaning their way of life.

In 1846 (5 years before the marriage of Thomas and Margaret) an inquiry into the state of education in Wales had been undertaken under the direction of three English commissioners who visited every part of Wales, collecting evidence and statistics involving educational matters. The commission was hampered from its beginning by the fact that none of the three spoke Welsh, and therefore were forced to rely exclusively on information from witnesses who were Anglican clergymen (at a time when Wales itself was a stronghold of Nonconformity). Reports of the commissioners were published in 1847 in three large blue-covered volumes typical of parliamentary reports.

The report, which came to be known among the Welsh as the “treachery of the blue books,” concluded that schools in Wales were totally inadequate, led by teachers speaking only English and using only English textbooks in areas where the children normally spoke only Welsh—and those who spoke Welsh had to rely largely on the Nonconformist Sunday Schools to acquire literacy.

The commissioners most commonly reported verbatim the prejudices of English landowners and local Anglican clergy. The report concluded that the Welsh were ignorant, lazy, and immoral, and that among the causes of this state of affairs were the use of the Welsh language and religious nonconformity. The report led to a indignant backlash in Wales that continued throughout the century.<sup>9</sup>

In the schools and the cultural centers of society, Welsh came to be considered the language of the lower classes. By 1871, five years before the Bassetts’ emigration to America, over a third

---

<sup>9</sup>“Treachery of the Blue Books.” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

of the population living in Wales could speak only English.<sup>10</sup> If a Welshman were to succeed in this setting, he would have to jettison his native language—at least in public—and follow the lead of the Anglophiles.

Thomas and Margaret Bassett were determined to elevate their own status and those of their children by conforming to this largely foreign environment. Both English and Welsh were spoken in the Bassett home. The children consequently were trained to be bilingual, and also to be bicultural. But they were also taught to love, and preserve as many of the customs of their people as possible. At their core they were Welsh, and steadfastly determined to remain as such.

### *Cardiff, Showplace of the Industrial Age*

Cardiff during the mid-nineteenth century was fast becoming one of the jewels of the British industrial revolution. At the beginning of the 1800s, it was primarily a sleepy little township, far less prestigious than Merthyr Tydfil, which was at that time a major producer of coal, iron, and steel. Since the industrial revolution was built on the back of the iron and steel industries, and Merthyr Tydfil was close to reserves of iron ore, coal, limestone, and water, it was an ideal site for ironworks.

The dream of an ironworks in the Merthyr Tydfil area went back at least to the time of Henry VIII. By the early nineteenth century, with the increase in demand for rails for the new railroad lines and other needs for iron (including cannons for the British warships), several new ironworks had sprung up in and around Merthyr Tydfil. Soon it was the site of the most productive ironworks in the entire world.

Later, in the early 1860s, the demand for iron and steel began to diminish and the population of Merthyr, as well as its industry, began to decline. Even so, the advent of increased coal mining in the 1870s gave a renewed stimulus to the local economy, leading once more to a population growth.

Initially Merthyr Tydfil's land-locked location hampered its international influence. This was solved partially in the last decades of the 1700s, as the two towns of Merthyr Tydfil and Cardiff were linked—first by the construction of the Glamorganshire Canal and then by the Taff Vale Railroad. In 1790, Cardiff excavated a sea basin large enough to allow ships to sail from its port into the mouth of the Severn and thence to the Bristol Channel, and from there into the Atlantic. In 1839 the Bute Dock, one of the major docks in the Cardiff Bay opened, creating the way for an even larger amount of sea traffic.

By the time of the Bassetts' sojourn in the area, Cardiff, as an international exporter—first of iron and then later of coal—had become one of the most important participants in the British

---

<sup>10</sup>Jenkins, Geraint. *Language and Community in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Cardiff*. 1467-68.

industrial revolution. Between 1840 and 1870, about the time that the Bassetts moved into Cardiff, the city was growing at a rate of nearly eighty percent per decade. By 1881, five years after the emigration of the Bassetts to America, Cardiff was not only the largest city in Wales, but also the greatest coal-exporting port in the world. Therein lie its major claim to fame.<sup>11</sup>

### *A Multinational City*

As a consequence of the iron works and coal mines, Wales quickly became a major magnet for the unemployed during the later “hungry forties.” English workers flowed in from across the county borders. Irish workers fleeing the potato famine of the 1840s arrived in ever-increasing numbers.<sup>12</sup> Spanish iron workers and miners seeking work came as well. As a consequence of this admixture of nationalities, Cardiff became one of the most nationally diverse cities in Britain, perhaps second only to London.

One of the features that made Cardiff so desirable as a city was the fact that although it was one of the major industrial centers of the times, it was never a “dirty” city like Birmingham, or Manchester, or Leeds. It did not have their coal-belching smoke stacks and foul air, or their pockets of poverty.

It was vastly different from its sister city of Merthyr Tydfil. Thomas Carlyle, who visited Merthyr in 1850, about the time of the Bassett-Edwards marriage, wrote that the town was filled with such

unguided, hard-worked, fierce, and miserable-looking sons of Adam I never saw before. Ah me! It is like a vision of Hell, and will never leave me, that of these poor creatures broiling, all in sweat and dirt, amid their furnaces, pits, and rolling mills.”<sup>13</sup>

Cardiff’s relative lack of pollution was due to the fact that it was a service city rather than a manufacturing center. As such, it escaped many of the blights associated with the other urban centers of the industrial revolution. Its new civic center was rapidly becoming one of the major showplaces in Britain. A major restoration of its ancient castle (from 1865 to 1872), was completed four years before the emigration of the last of the Bassett family. The restored castle became a major

---

<sup>11</sup>“Cardiff’s Millennial Make Over.” Cardiff, Travel, *The London Guardian*, 7 June, 2008.

<sup>12</sup>During that time Canton became one of the favorite gathering places for Irish refugees.

<sup>13</sup>James Anthony Froude: *Thomas Carlyle: A History of his Life in London, 1834-1881*. II, 52.

tourist attraction.<sup>14</sup>

All things considered, it was almost inevitable that Thomas Bassett, when looking for employment, found himself drawn to the Cardiff docks. Initially, when the new docks were being constructed, according to family lore, he found work there as a “coal heaver.” Later, he became a dock foreman for one of the major coal-shipping companies.

Canton was close enough to the new city center that the Bassett family could easily walk to Cardiff for outings. On their way along Cowbridge Road they would pass the tidal River Taff, ebbing and flowing according to the time of the day, as well as other inviting green spaces along the way. Later in life, Rebecca would fondly recall those trips to Cardiff, especially fishing for eel in the Taff River.<sup>15</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>14</sup>Coffein. *Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales. Cardiff Castle and Bute Park*. Both the Bute docks and the restoration of the castle were the projects of John Crichton-Stuart, the Third Marquess of Bute. The marquess was not only a landed aristocrat and industrial magnate, but also an antiquarian, a scholar, a philanthropist, an archaeologist, and one of the most active patrons of the arts (especially architecture). He was reputed to have been the richest man in the world at his time.

<sup>15</sup>Pardoe, “Interview of Rebecca Bassett Hughes ...”



Chapter Three  
CAUGHT IN THE GOSPEL NET

*The Net is Cast*

Mormonism officially entered the Bassett household with the baptism of Tom's father, eight years before the birth of young Tom. However, the seeds of this conversion go back years before. According to family lore, seven years before the Bassett-Edwards marriage, the senior Thomas heard of the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1844 from a neighbor over the back fence, and for some reason the name Joseph Smith stayed with him, and for years he could not get it out of his mind.

Although we do not know for certain the circumstances surrounding Thomas's initial meeting with the Mormon missionaries, nor his full conversion story, the same source suggests that he met the missionaries at a street meeting held near his home.<sup>1</sup> His baptismal date is recorded in his son Thomas E.'s Family *Record Book* as having happened in May of 1854, three years into his marriage. His son William was two-and-a-half-years old at that time, and his daughter Mary was born three months after his baptism. Hence he was a member of the LDS Church nearly the entire time his family was growing up.

*The Flight of an Angel*

Further, according to the same Bassett family lore, during the last part of his life, young Tom's grandfather, William Edward became somewhat obsessed with a semi-obscure biblical passage from the apocalyptic book of Revelation in the bible. Writing from his imprisonment on the Isle of Patmos, the Apostle John records:

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.

Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.<sup>2</sup>

Edward was convinced that the message of this passage was that the fulness of Christ's gospel was not on the earth at his time, but would come later. So strongly did he feel about this, the

---

<sup>1</sup>Whittaker, Thelma Muir. "History of The Life of Margaret Bassett Muir." <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/SRVIDaho3/id/1286/rec/1>.

<sup>2</sup>Revelation 14:6.

story continues, that shortly before his death he gathered together some of his closest friends to discuss the issue with them. On this occasion he expressed his opinion that the fulness of Jesus's gospel was not contained in the Baptist faith.

At that same time, Mormon missionaries in southern Wales were actively teaching that John's angel had already flown, and had appeared in 1827 to Joseph Smith, a young farm boy living in up-state New York, half way around the world. Further, they were teaching that the stone that the Old Testament prophet Daniel had prophesied would be cut out of the mountain without hands had begun rolling on its path to destroy all worldly kingdoms in preparation for the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth.<sup>3</sup> The Second Coming of the Savior, they taught, was at hand.

Gossip regarding the Mormons was rampant during the 1850s in south Wales, largely as a reaction to the success of LDS missionaries in Merthyr Tydfil a decade earlier. Most of the furor regarding the Mormons at that time centered in the ministry of Elder Dan Jones. Jones, one of the most charismatic of Mormon missionaries, had been called to serve in Wales by Joseph Smith himself on the night before the Mormon prophet's martyrdom.

During the years from 1847 to 1849, more than 60 people per month joined the new faith in the Merthyr Tydfil area. By the time that Jones departed from the British Isles in January of 1849, the Church recorded a membership of over 3,000 converts in that area, with many of them emigrating to the new Zion in America.<sup>4</sup> Coupled with accounts of miraculous healings in the collieries of Merthyr Tydfil, and other attendant gifts of the Spirit attributed to the missionaries, local church leaders of other faiths intensified their attacks on anything associated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

All manner of bizarre stories were circulated regarding the Mormon faith, claiming that this new faith was the work of the devil, and its rites obscene. Lurid statements such as the following were commonplace in the Baptist press of the time: "A number of the dregs of society are now Mormon believers. They baptize at night and those receiving baptism must undress for them and go into the water stark naked."<sup>5</sup> Having heard such prejudicial stories, William Edward was not prepared to listen to anything positive having to do with Mormonism.

However, his son-in-law Thomas had been caught up in the Mormon missionaries' message, and was baptized into the faith by David Pugh, perhaps as early as 1854, a decade after the martyrdom of the Mormon Prophet, and two years before the death of Thomas' father-in-law. We do not know what William's reaction to this conversion was, or what discussions he may have had

---

<sup>3</sup>Daniel 2:19-45.

<sup>4</sup>Dennis, Ron. *The Welsh and the Gospel in "Truth."* 255.

<sup>5</sup>Dennis, 242.

with his son-in-law, but we do know that William Edward died a devout Welsh Baptist. Thomas's father, Richard, passed away in 1855, a year after his son's baptism—also a firm opponent of the Mormon faith.

### *A House Divided*

Thomas's conversion continued to be a major concern in his marriage for nearly fourteen years. All this time his own family was growing up outside of the faith. Margaret undoubtedly had heard many of the same rumors circulated about the Mormons, including the following: "The Mormon missionaries are stealing away the young Welsh girls and shipping them off to a walled-off city by a great salt sea in the American west, where they are made to serve as concubines for Brigham Young," or a variation on the same theme that she heard from a distant relative, identified only as 'Aunt Kate': "Old Brigham will get you. They've got a wall around Salt Lake City, and he gets all the pretty gels [sic] who go there, and you will never get away."<sup>6</sup>

Margaret lived in this situation as best she could, divided between her commitment to her Mormon husband, and simultaneously to the faith of her own Welsh Baptist ancestry.

For Thomas, these were fourteen years of discovery, listening to reports of living prophets and apostles of Christ walking the earth once more, and accounts of modern-day miracles, and the contemporary evidence of spiritual gifts promised anciently by the Savior.

For fourteen years he listened to the conversion stories of scores of modern-day Saints, many of whom had become his close friends. Many of these same acquaintances left Wales to settle in the valleys of the mountains of western America. These were fourteen years of listening to the testimony of missionaries recounting the early history of the church, some of whom had experienced the events first-hand, stories of being driven from their homes in the eastern United States, and stories of their flight westward. And always the story of the new Zion in the Rocky Mountains.

Closer to home, in Wales, were the stories of Captain Dan Jones,<sup>7</sup> and his oftentimes miraculous missionary efforts among the saints in Merthyr Tydfil during the preceding decade—and accounts of the success of the church in the British Isles in general as recorded in the monthly church magazines: the *Millennial Star* in English and the *Prophwyd* in Welsh. Fourteen years of learning more concerning the reason for man's life on earth, and the role of families in the eternities, and the

---

<sup>6</sup>Schimmelpfennig, 39.

<sup>7</sup>So named because of the steam ship he operated on the Mississippi River prior to his conversion to Mormonism.

excitement of studying modern-day revelations recently translated into his native tongue.<sup>8</sup>

But above all, there was the sense of security and peace and comradery felt in the district conferences and other local gatherings of the saints. There was the excitement of mingling with scores of members of the church assembled together who shared his faith and believed as he believed. He, like the rest of the saints in attendance at those conferences, basked in the news of the growth of the church throughout the Isles. Eventually there came news that there were now more members of the church in Britain than there were in Salt Lake City and in the rest of the U.S. combined.<sup>9</sup>

But these were also years of heartache, watching his children grow up outside of the gospel net, and knowing that he did not have the support of his wife in his religious endeavors. In short, the pain of a divided family. For example, how could he possibly ask Margaret's permission for him to drain off tithes and offerings from their already stretched budget to support a cause to which she was tacitly, and at times adamantly opposed?

Nevertheless, he faithfully endured, hoping for a day that the family could be united once more in their religious beliefs.

### *Margaret's Spiritual Journey*

For Margaret, these were fourteen years of happiness and emersion in the activities of her growing family, in the births and rearing of her six little ones, nurturing them through times of sickness and health, watching them interact with each other as they grew older.

However, these were also fourteen years of frustration and disappointment for this Welsh woman who had grown up in a home fostering Baptist ideals. Scarcely three years after her marriage, she was forced by the circumstances to watch her husband and helpmate increasingly turn his back on the faith of their fathers, and link his fortune to a strange new—perhaps even Satanic—sect and watch him go off to meetings with new friends that she had not even met.

So far as we know from existing records, for most of this period she bore up nobly and quietly under the burden of this new faith that spiritually divided her family. These were not easy years for Margaret who was busy trying to rear her children while her husband was off to work early in the morning and back to home, often late at night. It was inevitable that there would be moments of anger and frustration, perhaps many of which unfortunately were witnessed by her children, including young Tom. One such event recorded in family lore occurred when their father arrived

---

<sup>8</sup>The Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants were translated into Welsh in 1851 (the year of his wedding) and 1852.

<sup>9</sup>Clark, James R. *The Story of the Pearl of Great Price*, 197.

home late one night from a church meeting, having missed supper.<sup>10</sup>

According to the story, this was at the conclusion of a trying day for Margaret—attempts to keep the older children in line, and at the same time meeting the demands of a little toddler. Supper time came and Thomas was absent from the evening meal. His supper, growing cold, lay on the table, silently bearing testimony to his absence. When he finally arrived and disclosed that the reason for his tardiness was a church meeting, angry words were exchanged. Tempers flared, and Margaret hurled a pan of cold and greasy dishwater at him. When he reproved her for the act, she shot back that she would like to throw scalding water on every Mormon who was trying to entice him away from the Baptist church. Likely that night, pillows were wet with tears as tempers cooled.

This outburst may also have been partially the result of the fact that their oldest son Will, who bore her Baptist father's name, was also becoming increasingly interested in the new faith. Thomas had taken their sixteen-year-old son to a series of Mormon meetings in Newtown, Cardiff. Will had been favorably impressed. He consequently expressed his desire to be baptized into Mormonism.

Margaret initially resisted her son's participation in the activities of the church, even going to the point that upon hearing of William's interest, she forbade him to attend their meetings. When it became evident that he was determined to go, even against her wishes, she hid his shoes. In response he informed her that he would then go to the meeting shoeless. She relented, returned his shoes, and he attended the meeting.<sup>11</sup> Eventually Margaret reluctantly acquiesced to his baptism, determined that their son should have his own free agency. He was at that time seventeen years of age. Will, the first of their children, was baptized in February of 1868.<sup>12</sup>

Eventually a crack began to appear in the wall that had been raised between Margaret and Thomas regarding religion. After much pleading from her husband and her son, Margaret finally agreed to allow the missionaries to come to dinner. She even consented to get supper for them, so long as she would not be required to meet them face to face. When the appointed night arrived, after the evening meal had been prepared, Margaret retired to her room while her teenage daughters served the meal.

After dinner, her husband, her son, and their guests gathered together in the parlor and sang hymns, accompanied on the piano by one of the missionaries. The music heard throughout their little eight-room dwelling was not the Baptist hymns Margaret was familiar with, those she had known and sung from her childhood. Rather, the men sang of a new Zion, of the Second Advent of her Savior, and other themes of early Mormonism. The music apparently softened her heart, and she

---

<sup>10</sup>Schimmelpfennig, 37-38.

<sup>11</sup>Whittaker, Thelma Muir. 2.

<sup>12</sup>Bassett, Thomas Edwards. *Family Record Book*.

began listening with interest. Before the evening was over, Margaret came quietly into the room and remained to listen further.<sup>13</sup> After singing, the missionaries held a cottage meeting, and thus began Margaret's introduction to the LDS faith.

In November of 1868,<sup>14</sup> less than a year after that initial meeting, Margaret entered the waters of baptism, likely in the River Taff near their home. At last, after a 14-year hiatus, once again the parents were united in their religious faith. Subsequently, Mary and Rebecca (ages 15 and 12) followed their mother's example on 28 June of the following year, and Margaret, Thomas E., and Sarah were baptized on 16<sup>th</sup> of March, 1874 (ages 15, 12, and 9).<sup>15</sup>

Less than five years after Margaret's baptism (in 1873) her husband Thomas was called to be the Presiding Elder of the Cardiff branch of the church. Their home soon became the central gathering place for the Mormon missionaries looking for a harbor from the storm of religious persecution.<sup>16</sup>

By this time Margaret had become the faithful companion standing by her husband's side, as Thomas counseled with those who turned to him for guidance and solace. But eventually the gospel net began its inevitable pull toward the Mormon Zion in the tops of the Rocky Mountains across the sea, and the Bassetts began to sense that their future lie elsewhere. They would respond to the call to join the other saints in the Mormon gathering.

---

<sup>13</sup>Bassett, Teresa. "William Edward Bassett," 3.

<sup>14</sup>This date is according to Thomas E.'s *Family Record Book*. Biographers of William E. record the date as 20 October 1869.

<sup>15</sup>Bassett, Thomas E. *Family Record Book*. The five-year delay between the baptism of the mother and those of her three youngest children is something of a mystery, especially since those baptisms apparently did not occur until after their father's calling as presiding elder in Cardiff. At that time, young Tom was the age that young LDS men currently are ordained to the Aaronic Priesthood.

<sup>16</sup>Later, in her interview with the Pardoes, Rebecca recalls those visits with fondness. One such visitor was Elder David John, who served as a presiding elder in Wales in the 1870s. In his journal, covering the years 1861-1881 (in Special Collections at Brigham Young University), John mentions staying overnight with the Bassetts on June 17, July 17, August 20, September 14, November 17 & 18 of 1871, as well as January 31 of 1872. His last Bassett entry, on 20 April 1872, is especially interesting. It reads: "Went to Cardiff and Canton, found Elder Thos. Bassett and 3 children sick with Scarlet fever, I administered to them all and returned to Cardiff. Lodged in the British House."

Rebecca's sister, Margaret, recalls sitting often on the lap of Elder Joseph F. Smith, listening to him as he taught the family the gospel. (Whitaker, Thelma Muir. "History of the Life of Margaret Bassett Muir." 2).

### *The Bassett Diaspora Begins*

By the early 1870s, the older children in the family were coming into early adulthood, and thinking of branching out on their own. Will was the first to leave. He had already had a taste of life outside the family. As a young man of 14, he had determined that he wanted to be a part of the industrial world by mastering the new skill of telegraphy.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly, in 1865 young Will studied briefly at the Great Western Railway station at Cardiff. Then he went to London to pass boards and qualify as a telegrapher.<sup>18</sup>

Telegraphy may have held a special attraction for Will, since from an early age he had stammered badly, leading to many occasions of extreme embarrassment. With telegraphy he would be able to communicate through his fingers as it were, rather than audibly, thereby bypassing this curse that troubled him continuously throughout his life.

When Will returned to Wales he worked for two years as a telegraph operator at the Great Western Railroad office in Cardiff before he was promoted to a clerkship in the locomotive department at the same company. There he served for another eighteen months.<sup>19</sup> Then his father informed him that there was a clerk's position open in the company where Thomas was working as a foreman.<sup>20</sup> William signed on.

When declining business caused him to lose that job, William moved to another company in Cardiff, where he worked as a public accountant. Working in an office setting was to be Will's lot through most of his adult life, although he always harbored a secret longing to be a farmer, as his father Thomas had been in his (Thomas') early life.<sup>21</sup>

About this time, Will became eager to emigrate to America, but did not have sufficient funds to pay the passage. Consequently he approached his father, asking his help in obtaining a job in the business as a coal heaver, where the wages were higher. Having worked as such himself, Thomas was not pleased with the thought of his eldest son leaving the much easier (and more prestigious) office work to labor in a condition involving such demanding physical effort. However, Will was

---

<sup>17</sup>Commercial telegraphy was developed in Britain in 1838 and independently in America in 1837. The Morse Code was also developed in 1838.

<sup>18</sup>Tullidge, Edward. *Tullidge's History*. Vol. II. 220 ff.

<sup>19</sup>It was during this period in his life that he was baptized into the LDS faith.

<sup>20</sup>Messrs. Coffin and Co. Coal proprietors and shippers.

<sup>21</sup>In the Pardoe interview, Will's sister, Rebecca, notes. "The biggest mistake William ever made was when he thought he could be a farmer."

determined, and Thomas eventually gave in.

While in this employment, Will made the acquaintance of Sarah Ann Williams, who lodged for a time in the Bassett household.<sup>22</sup> Against the advice of Will's parents, the two were married and set sail in 1872, bound for the USA. William was 21 years-old at the time, and certainly old enough to know his own mind. His wife Sarah was 22. However, his father warned him before he sailed that he would repent the decision he had made to marry Sarah.<sup>23</sup>

Later circumstances were to confirm his father's warning, when the marriage ended in an acrimonious divorce.<sup>24</sup> Little could William have dreamed when departing Wales that his name and that marriage would eventually provide the basis of a major trial before the Supreme Court of the United States.

### *Two More Leave for Zion*

Two years later, in 1874, Mae (age 21) and Becca (age 18), the two oldest daughters in the family, were the next to leave the Bassett household. Their departure, however, was under very different circumstances.

One of the missionaries who began frequenting the home of the Bassetts in Canton was Henry Hughes from Mendon, Utah. He was forty-years old and the bishop of the Mendon Utah ward.<sup>25</sup> If there is a villain in the Bassett saga, Hughes is it. Ingratiating himself with the parents of the girls, he persuaded Thomas and Margaret to allow their daughters to emigrate to America with him as their chaperone.

News of plural marriage among the Mormons in Utah was widespread in the British press

---

<sup>22</sup>According to the 1871 England and Wales Census, Sarah was boarding with the Bassetts. This provided a chance for Thomas and Margaret to get to know her well enough to form an informed opinion of her character.

<sup>23</sup>We do not know how much Will's younger brother Tom was aware of this friction between his father and his older brother, nor how excited he was with the addition of a sister-in-law.

<sup>24</sup>Tullidge. 220 ff.

<sup>25</sup>Schimmelpfennig, 51. Hughes was bishop of the Mendon ward for 28 years. According to Bassett accounts, he ran the ward like a dictator, destroying anyone who crossed him. In short, he was everything that D&C 121: 34-46 warns against concerning those with power. During Hughes' time as a missionary another member of the ward served as a substitute.



at the time,<sup>26</sup> and the Bassett parents were wary of sending their daughters into such a setting without accompanying the girls themselves in order to shield them from those they considered potential predators. However, Hughes, a polygamist himself, had ingratiated himself with the parents and assured them that their daughters would be safe with him. He even gave Thomas and Margaret his solemn promise that he would personally protect their daughters from any polygamists who would attempt to court them with marriage in mind. However, less than two months later, in Utah, Hughes would lure Becca into matrimony as his fourth wife.<sup>27</sup>

Mary, the older of the two, was leaving behind her first—and far we know, her only—romance, vowing that she would never have another. She previously had the misfortune to fall in love with a young man who was not a member of the LDS church. Furthermore, her former suitor had intense anti-Mormon prejudices, and therefore Mary’s parents had adamantly opposed a marriage between the two, knowing that it would permanently tear her from their family. Mary, unlike her older brother, heeded their advice, and when she set sail in company with her younger sister, she may have sensed this was the end of romance for her. Several decades later Mae died without ever marrying.

Becca, on the other hand, was just coming into her courting years, and was much more venturesome than her older sister. She was pleased by any attention from the opposite sex, and eager for adventure—just ripe for someone like Hughes, who was well practiced in the art of seducing younger women from his position of power.

### *Farewell to Wales*

Finally, in 1876, at the age of 49, Thomas and Margaret, along with their son, Tom (age 14) and his remaining sisters, Meg (age 17) and Sarah (11), closed the door of their home on Leckwith Road, with all its memories, for the last time. Bidding farewell to Canton and their friends in the little LDS branch, and to many of their cherished possessions, the last of the family left Wales, and set off for Liverpool—their first stop on the long journey to Utah ... and to Zion .

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>26</sup>The official pronouncement of plural marriage in Britain came in the first edition of the *Millennial Star* in 1853. It was officially announced in the U.S. in 1852. Missionaries in Britain were prohibited from entering into plural marriage, or even to court the women in the church with the end of marriage in mind. The *Manuscript History of the London Conference* (2 August 1857).

<sup>27</sup>The entire affair is recounted in Schimmelpfennig’s *The Reluctant Bride*. (pp. 38-42.)

Chapter Four  
ACROSS THE WIDE ATLANTIC

*The Good Ship Idaho*

Wednesday, 28 June 1876. Fourteen-year-old Tom Bassett could be found weaving in and out and around knots of people shuffling aimlessly on the docks of Liverpool, England, trying not to lose sight of his parents and two sisters. As a teenager he was preparing to leave behind the land of his fathers to travel with his family to life in a new world.

His older brother Will, and Will's wife Sarah Ann, pioneered the way for the family by emigrating four years earlier. Tom's older sisters, Mae and Becca followed Will three years after that (in 1875) when they left for Utah with Bishop Henry Hughes at the conclusion of Hughes' mission. Now the rest of the family was preparing to make the long and sometimes dangerous journey across the ocean to the new Zion.<sup>1</sup>

Moored nearby in the Mersey River was the *S. S. Idaho*, the ship on which the family would make the crossing. Occasionally young Tom would cast an eye toward the ship as it rolled gently from side to side in the water. "I-da-ho"—such a curious and poetic name. Little did he realize the role that this name would play in his later life.

The ship itself was one of a new variety of transatlantic vessels created during the industrial revolution. Rather than relying on the oft-unpredictable winds, as the sailing vessels of the past had, it was powered by steam-driven propellers. Whereas it often took earlier ships a month or more for an Atlantic crossing, the *Idaho* was capable of doing the journey in under two weeks, averaging over 200 miles per day.<sup>2</sup> However, for those in the steerage of the ship, these twelve-day journeys could seem an eternity, especially in rough waters. In 1876, sophisticated stabilizers on ships were still a thing of the future.

---

<sup>1</sup>Unfortunately the Bassetts left no known written record of their journey. The information contained in this chapter has been drawn primarily from the journals of George Lionel Farrell ([Ms 5671], fd.3, vol. 3, pp. 38-44, Church History Library) and Thomas C. Griggs ([Ms 1593] reel 2, 1<sup>st</sup> group, book B, pp. 42-68, Church History Library.) Both men were with the Bassetts from Liverpool to Ogden. Farrell would later employ Will Bassett, Tom's older brother in the Mendon and Logan regions of Utah. Griggs, who later became the conductor of the Tabernacle Choir, was the composer of the hymn, "Gently Raise the Sacred Strain."

<sup>2</sup>On this particular crossing the *Idaho* averaged 264 miles/day.

## *The Docks of Liverpool*

Some aspects of the docks were familiar to Tom because of his father's work on the docks in Cardiff: the smell of fish and the sea, the drone of the ships' engines, the bustling crowds. But much of the setting in Liverpool was like a different world from what he had experienced in Wales. Transporting coals was not like transporting people; the latter attracted a far different clientele to the docks.

The crowd milling around the docks of Liverpool was more like that on the docks of London, as described in detail sixteen years earlier by Charles Dickens on the occasion of his visit to another Mormon emigrant ship, the Amazon.<sup>3</sup>

Speaking of the various dingy structures on the docks in London, Dickens notes:

the eating-houses, the public-houses, the slop-shops, the coffee-shops, the tally-shops, all kinds of shops maintainable and unmentionable ... the shabby undertaker's shops [that] will bury you for next to nothing, after the Malay or Chinaman has stabbed you ... the apothecary ... the pawn brokers that lend money on Union-Jack handkerchiefs, on watches with little ships pitching fore and aft on the dial, on telescopes, nautical instruments in cases, and such like.

Writing of those inhabiting the docks he records:

The drunks quarrel with anybody drunk or sober, and everybody ... the red shirts, shaggy beards, wild head of hair, bare tattooed arms ... the daughter of wave-ruling Britannia clad in silken attire, with uncovered tresses streaming in the breeze, bandanna kerchiefs, floating from their shoulders, and crinoline not wanting.<sup>4</sup> ... the children of Israel that creep into any gloomy cribs and entries they can hire, and hang slops there, scraping fiddles go in the public-houses all day long, and shrill above their din and all the din, rises the screeching of innumerable parrots.

To this list one might add with certainty the pickpockets, the prostitutes, and other nefarious types who commonly are found in like crowds, watching for an opportunity to take advantage of any unwary traveler. Some emigrants coming into similar settings are known to have lost their entire life savings, either at the port of departure or upon arriving in New York.<sup>5</sup>

In short, the docks were not a safe place to wander alone. As a result, Tom took in the entire scene with excitement, mingled with apprehension and uneasiness.

---

<sup>3</sup>Dickens, Charles. *The Uncommercial Traveler*, Chapter 22. Electronic Classics Series, Pennsylvania State University.

<sup>4</sup>Griggs also notes the female gender in his journal in the following manner: "large numbers of barefooted women & girls, many with bruised faces."

<sup>5</sup>Hamlin, Oscar. *The Uprooted*, 40-45.

### *The Emigrant Saints*

Also in the crowd on the dock were hundreds of Latter-day Saints waiting to board the *Idaho*. In addition to the British Saints, Mormons from Scandinavia, Germany, and Switzerland gathered at the docks for the trip to Zion.<sup>6</sup> Some days before, those responsible for each group of saints had reported to the mission headquarters in Liverpool to receive a last-minute briefing prior to sailing.

At the same time that Dickens was writing his account, Nathaniel Hawthorne had been appointed to serve as an American consul in Britain for four years. He reported at that time that Liverpool boasted a population of over two hundred thousand people and “two thousand pubs.” His first-person account of the maritime city presents an extremely bleak picture of the migrants of his time—few of whom were Mormons.

The people are as numerous as maggots in cheese; you behold them, disgusting, and all moving about, as when you raise a plank or log that has long lain on the ground, and find many vivacious bugs and insects beneath it.<sup>7</sup>

Dickens likewise describes the frenzied activities of the emigrants on the *Amazon* in a similar manner, but without the derogatory tone.

My Emigrant Ship [the *Amazon*] lies broadside-onto the wharf. Two great gangways made of spars and planks connect her with the wharf; and up and down those gangways, perpetually crowding to and fro and in and out, like ants, are the Emigrants who are going to sail.<sup>8</sup>

His anti-Welsh bias, typical of the English at that time, surfaces throughout his writing.

The faces of some of the Welsh people, among whom there were many old persons, were certainly the least intelligent. Some of these emigrants would have bungled sorely, but for the directing hand that was always ready. The intelligence here was unquestionably of a low order.<sup>9</sup> ...

There were many worn faces bearing traces of patient poverty and hard work, and there was great steadiness of purpose and much undemonstrative self-respect among this

---

<sup>6</sup>The company numbered 626 LDS souls. The largest group were from Scandinavia (399). Next in size (121) were from Great Britain (25 members of which were from Wales). The smallest group were from the Swiss and German missions (106). Farrell, 37. *Welsh Mormon History*, Center for Family History and Genealogy at BYU. University/Voyages/ Idaho/28 June 1876.

<sup>7</sup>Hawthorne, *English Notebooks*, 18.

<sup>8</sup>Dickens, 213.

<sup>9</sup>Dickens, 221.

class.<sup>10</sup>

Mormon emigration had been ongoing for over three decades prior to the Bassett family's departure. Thousands of latter-day saints had preceded them, and the procedures the Bassetts followed that day had been worked out like a well-oiled machine that went into action even before the uprooted saints arrived in Liverpool.

Those planning to emigrate sent in their names, ages, and money for fare to the church emigration agent ten days in advance. Following instructions, they commonly planned not to arrive in Liverpool until two or three days before sailing. That way they could go directly on board, and avoid the cost and danger of renting lodgings in Liverpool, which lodgings were often raided by thieves on a regular basis under cover of night.

In order to avoid anyone taking advantage of them, once the emigrants arrived, they were ushered on board their ships by those appointed by the mission office to aid them. After they boarded, they were carefully guarded by watchmen from the church who were appointed to prevent unwanted intruders coming aboard while the ship lie in the harbor.<sup>11</sup>

### *The Final Boarding*

Early in the morning on the day of sailing, the Bassett family boarded preparatory to the departure. An almost palpable anticipation was evident. Part of the process of boarding required each of the emigrants, as well as the crew of the *Idaho*, to submit to a hasty medical exam in order to prevent disease from coming aboard the ship. This was a moment of frightening anticipation. To fail the physical would result in being left behind when the ship sailed.

Then their tickets were examined. Hopefully they all knew where these were. Through the entire procedure Mormon agents stood ready to guide each emigrant and pass them along through each stage of the process.

Many years earlier, in conversing with the captain of the *Amazon* regarding the Mormon emigrants on board his ship, Dickens was informed:

The most of these came aboard yesterday evening. They came from various parts of England in small parties that had never seen one another before. Yet they had not been a couple of hours on board, when they established their own police, made their own regulations, and set their own watches at all the hatchways. Before nine o'clock, the ship was as orderly and as quiet as a man-of-war.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup>Dickens, 213.

<sup>11</sup>Woods, Fred. From Liverpool to Keokuk: *The Mormon Maritime Migration Experience of 1853*, 4; *Mormon Historical Studies* 4, No. 2 (Fall 2003).

<sup>12</sup>Dickens, 214,

Once aboard, the emigrants were free to wander and mingle at their own pleasure. Again, Dickens records:

Nobody is in an ill-temper, nobody is the worse for drink, nobody swears an oath or uses a coarse word, nobody appears depressed, nobody is weeping, and down upon the deck in every corner where it is possible to find a few square feet to kneel, crouch, or lie in, people, in every unsuitable attitude for writing are writing letters ...<sup>13</sup>

I think the most noticeable characteristic, as a mass, was their exemption from hurry ...<sup>14</sup>

I should have said they were in their degree, the pick and flower of England.<sup>15</sup>

At 2:00 p.m., the bells of the *Idaho* sounded, and with the removal of the gangway, the last tether to the shore was severed. At 2:30, the ship began to slide slowly down the river as the emigrants crowded together at the rear of the ship for a final look.<sup>16</sup> As was customary on such departures, some of the saints began to sing the hymns of Zion. It is the one activity that all the saints, regardless of national origin, could join in together in their disparate languages.

Very likely one of the hymns was “Ye Elders of Israel,” a favorite of emigrating saints since it was first sung by Mormon emigrants as they set sail from England aboard the *George Washington* in 1857, nearly twenty years earlier.

Ye elders of Israel, come join now with me  
And seek out the righteous, whereer they may be  
In desert, on mountain, on land, or on sea  
And bring them to Zion, the pure and the free.

And then the poignant chorus:

O Babylon, O Babylon, we bid thee farewell/  
We’re going to the mountains of Ephraim to dwell.”<sup>17</sup>

As one final observation, following his visit aboard the *Amazon*, Dickens concludes:

After this “Uncommercial Journey” was printed, I happen to mention the experience it describes to Lord Houghton. That gentleman then showed me an article of his writing, in “The Edinburgh Review” for January, 1862. ... I find in it the following sentences: “The

---

<sup>13</sup>Dickens, 214.

<sup>14</sup>Dickens, 216.

<sup>15</sup>Dickens, 215.

<sup>16</sup>Griggs, 46.

<sup>17</sup>The hymn appeared in the *Millennial Star* (11 April 1857), one month after the sailing of the *George Washington*.

Select Committee of the House of Commons on emigrant ships for 1854 summoned the Mormon agent and passenger-broker<sup>18</sup> before it and came to the conclusion that no ships under the provisions of the ‘Passengers Act’ could be depended upon for comfort and security in the same degree as those under his administration. The Mormon ship is a Family under strong and accepted discipline, with every provision for comfort, decorum, and internal peace.”<sup>19</sup>

### *The “Idaho” at Sea*

While the *Idaho* was slicing a path through the Mersey, even before it reached the open waters, an organization was being established. A president to preside over the entire company on board was selected and sustained by all. Also chosen were three assistants (one to watch over each linguistic group on board), a captain of the guard, and a secretary.<sup>20</sup>

Next the company was divided into ten wards with a president over each. Each ward was assigned a chaplain (two chaplains for the Scandinavians), and a captain of the guard. All such personnel were then sustained by a vote of the entire company.

During the course of the trip, breakfast was served at 8 o’clock, and lunch (“with dessert”) at 12:30. Dinner was served at 4:30 and “tea” (the evening snack) at 7:30 p.m.<sup>21</sup> Chaplains were to conduct prayers in their group every morning at 7:00, and at 9:00 each evening. Everyone was expected to be in bed by 10:00. This was largely for the benefit of the crew who were otherwise kept awake at night by the singing of the Saints. The captains of the guard were to see that all of these schedules were met.

Tom was intrigued to watch and learn from the entire procedure as it evolved. Likely lessons for future use were taking root in the future stake president’s mind.

### *The Crossing*

Griggs cabin, which was in all probability like most, is described as follows:

---

<sup>18</sup>Samuel Richards, the British mission president at that time, was called before the House of Commons to testify regarding Mormon emigration practices, as described in *Millennial Star*, 16 (19 August 1854), 523.

<sup>19</sup>Dickens, 223.

<sup>20</sup>N.C. Flygare was chosen as President with G.L. Farrell, J.U. Stucki and William H. Maughn as assistants. V.L. Halliday was chosen captain of the guard with J.H. Parry as his assistant, and G.L. Farrell as secretary for the company. Elder Farrell was chosen also to supervise the British Saints. Farrell, 38-39.

<sup>21</sup>Griggs, 48.

Our comfortable cabin ... about 3 1/4 feet wide at one end, and 6 feet the other, 7 feet long, and 7 high. 2 berths ... with a certain cupboard, each duly furnished, & a rack with water bottles, glasses, tooth and soap dishes, wash stand complete, mirror, carpet, and well-cushioned seat at stern end, a bulls eye admitting light, 5 hat hooks & lamp case, bed with linen sheets & cases, 2 pillows each, & a blanket apiece.<sup>22</sup>

The ocean crossing of the *Idaho*, as many at that time of year, involved some good days and some bad. The weather during the first day was “beautiful and the sea calm,”<sup>23</sup> as the ship edged past the Isle of Man and the coast of Wales. Many memories undoubtedly raced through the minds of the Bassett family, each from a different perspective, as they bade one last farewell to their homeland, doubting they would ever see it again.

While they began to get their sea legs, the saints engaged in shuffleboard, chess, singing, and walk-arounds, as well as other activities. We are not told how much mingling of the different national groups occurred, but the setting could have provided an ideal opportunity for language study. The time at sea also provided an opportunity for schooling both young and old. The Bassett daughters were likely engaged in the women’s saloon, as were many of the women on board, in the production of various crafts. If nothing else, this trip provided an excellent opportunity for the Bassetts to bond even closer as a family for nearly a fortnight, as they reported their day’s activity to each other in the evenings.

Day 2: Thursday 29 June. By Thursday the ship was just off the coast of Ireland. The weather was still ideal. At 10 o’clock in the morning they stopped at Queenstown for one hour to replenish their water supply and to send and receive mail for the last time before setting out into the open sea. While there N.C. Flygare sent a letter to the *Millennial Star* to report the progress of the emigrants to that point.<sup>24</sup> While the *Idaho* was moored in Queenstown some Irish hawkers came on board selling “newspapers, oranges, strawberries, milk, lace goods, etc.”<sup>25</sup>

At 4:30, just before dinner, the *Idaho* passed Fastnet Rock lighthouse, and the reality of the trip began to settle in as the ship entered the waters of the Atlantic for the first time. Tom felt a strange new sensation as if the earth were moving under him as he walked around on the deck. Soon he could see nothing on all sides of the ship but water rushing past their side and churning into foam in their wake. To help improve the circulation of air in the steerage, a large canvas tunnel was hoisted, providing much needed air to the lower decks.

---

<sup>22</sup>Griggs, 52.

<sup>23</sup>Griggs, 46.

<sup>24</sup>*Latter-day Saints’ Millennial Star*. 38:28 (10 July 1876), 445.

<sup>25</sup>Griggs, 47.



The passengers on the *Idaho* were fortunate in being blessed with a congenial captain. Some of the officers on other emigration ships of that time shared the common prejudice of the times against the Mormon people. Farrell records, “The captain, Mr. Beddoe, is a kind, pleasing speaking man and the other officers are generally unostentatious in their conduct.”<sup>26</sup>

Day 3: Friday 30 June. By the third day, the wind had picked up, and a slight rain began to fall—a harbinger of what was to come. Griggs records, “about 60 set down to the tables and we are now fairly settled down to the voyage; some feeling a little queer.” Damp tablecloths had been placed on the tables to keep the dishes from sliding around with the movement of the ship.

Days 4 & 5: Saturday and Sunday, 1 & 2 July. The next two days brought with them the reality of the worst aspects of an ocean voyage. The experiences of the Bassetts were likely very similar to those recorded by Griggs:

Rolling badly. Our getting up felt rather uncertain. Retched 2 or 3 times, laid down and felt better. The decks have been covered with almost lifeless forms. Ate a little for lunch, sat down to dinner but got up soon. The tables are poorly patronized. Great majority sick, dismal sounds in all directions. Felt miserable, went to bed early having some crockery ware handy in case of an accident.<sup>27</sup>

As far as we know, this was a new experience for the Bassetts. One they undoubtedly hoped never to undergo again.

Day 6: Monday 3 July. The next day was somewhat better:

The gale has gone down, leaving a bad roll. Weather fine with a cold breeze. A general layout on deck. Some being quite lifeless. The day ending with an interesting sunset and rainbow.<sup>28</sup>

Remembering the account of Noah’s ark in Genesis, with its accompanying rainbow, the company on board the *Idaho*, may have hoped that the rainbow they had witnessed was somehow another sign from God that he had not forsaken them.

Day 7: Tuesday 4 July, 1876. The Saints celebrated the centennial of America’s birth. The ship’s crew honored the day by flying the Stars and Stripes along with the Union Jack. Emotions were likely close to the surface as the Saints viewed this symbol of their newly adopted homeland. Nature provided the only celebratory activity for the occasion, as porpoises began to surface and play alongside the ship. The Saints were beginning to recover somewhat from their sickness, as their attention was diverted in part by the appearance of the porpoises and “plenty of ships and singing

---

<sup>26</sup>Farrell, 39.

<sup>27</sup>Griggs, 51.

<sup>28</sup>Griggs, 50.

made the day pass pleasantly.<sup>29</sup>

Day 8: Wednesday 5 July. Tuesday's performance by the porpoises was only a warmup for Wednesday. Many of the Saints went to the rail and watched "thousands of porpoises pass the ship, skipping out of the water every few minutes." Again, this was a show that the Bassetts likely had not witnessed before (at least to this degree, since porpoise pods occasionally appear off the coast of Wales). Their appearance coincided with the day that marked one week on the water.

That morning had witnessed a very dense fog, so foghorns could be heard blaring every few minutes throughout the day. The deep bass moaning of the horns were as if the *Idaho* itself was joining with other ships, all suffering from sea-sickness. However, that cacophony may well have provided some comfort to the Bassetts, reminding them of similar sounds from earlier days on the docks in Cardiff.

Days 9 & 10: Thursday and Friday, July 6-7. After one short day of reprieve Thursday, on Friday, while off the banks of Newfoundland, the migrating Saints experienced the roughest waters to date. "Scores of the folks are seasick," Farrell records. "Some of them are very bad." So persistent was the pitching of the ship that it constantly threw the propellers up out of the water "so much, producing an almost constant jar which was very disagreeable."<sup>30</sup>

Day 11: Saturday 8 July. By Saturday the sea was as smooth as oil. The passengers began to recover, and were soon back out on the deck. Passing a steamship with several emigrants on board, their hopes were rejuvenated. It was an indication that they were getting nearer to the end of their journey—at least the liquid part of it. Spirits began to rise.

Day 12: Sunday 9 July. On the Sabbath, many were awakened at 5:00 a.m., as the continuous droning of the engines that had been with them from the first of their journey stopped, creating an almost death-like silence. The stoppage was the consequence of the captain of a pilot ship coming aboard. The *Idaho* had reached the St. George's Banks. The arrival of the pilot signaled the nearness of land, and the beginning of preparations for disembarking the following day. In the afternoon the Saints held a sacrament meeting at 1:30 p.m. and a public meeting at 2:00 o'clock.

Black fish, whales, and sharks were now seen from the ship. Inside his quarters, Elder Griggs made a discovery of something on his berth "not quite as large as a grasshopper but as good on the jump."<sup>31</sup>

Although this was the centennial year of the nation, there was no Statue of Liberty with torch

---

<sup>29</sup>Griggs, 51.

<sup>30</sup>Farrell, 54.

<sup>31</sup>Griggs, 55-56.

raised aloft to greet them. She would not be placed in the New York harbor for another decade.<sup>32</sup>

### *The Arrival*

The original plan had been to dock at Castle Garden (America's first official immigration center from 1855 to 1890). However, the Garden, which was a pioneering collaboration of New York State and New York City, was also not there to receive them. It had burned to the ground the very night before their arrival, and all they found to greet them were a few smoking isolated posts that had been left standing. "It was an immense hive all in a hum," Griggs records, as curious onlookers came to visit the burned-out site.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, the *Idaho* had to change plans, and dock at Pier 46.

Day 13: Monday 10 July. The ship arrived off Sandy Hook at 5:00 a.m. At 6:00 a.m. a doctor came on board and began medical exams similar to those they had undergone prior to their departure from Liverpool. Again, anxious anticipation was evident on the part of some lest they manifest symptoms of some malady, causing them to be taken into quarantine for days, while the rest of the company journeyed west. Tom and his family exhaled a collective sigh of relief as all of them successfully passed the inspection.

At 8:00 a.m. the ship docked. The luggage was all placed on a large barge, and a ferry boat transported it to Pier 1, where it was loaded onto awaiting trains. The entire ship's company had reason to rejoice in the fact that the journey had been undertaken without a single death or serious mishap. Except for a sense of motion that remained in their legs, and the slight case of vertigo that continued for hours after such a voyage, they could now turn their backs on the sea. The Bassetts were now a little less than half way to their destination, but they realized that the more threatening part of the journey was now behind them.

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>32</sup>In August of 1876, one month after the arrival of the *Idaho* in New York harbor, the head and the upper torso (complete with the raised arm grasping the torch), arrived in the U.S. and were taken to the centennial exhibition in Philadelphia for viewing. Tourists visiting the exposition were allowed to go up into the head to view the surroundings in the Exhibition Hall through the windows in the crown. After the centennial year, this part of the iconic structure was returned to France, awaiting completion of the entire statue—which was returned ten years later.

<sup>33</sup>Griggs, 55.

Chapter Five  
OVERLAND BY RAIL

*By Train to Zion*

While on the train, the westward-bound emigrants were in more restricted quarters than they had been on the ship, but had a more interesting view of their constantly changing surroundings that could be seen from the windows. The drone of the ship was now replaced by the hypnotic click-clack whisper of the train's wheels on the rails.

Day 1: Monday, 10 July, 8:00 p.m. At the conclusion of the day the saints were transported from the docks in New York over the river to New Jersey, and gathered together into sixteen chartered railcars on the Pennsylvania Railroad. An average of 40 passengers were fitted into each car. The Bassetts excitedly chose a car where they could all be together, and settled in for a long adventure. Their heavy luggage, such as their trunks, was stored in a seventeenth car.

Unfortunately, from this time until they arrived in Utah we know little about the organization of the group, nor the prayer schedule, nor their eating arrangements as they traveled westward. Two references hint at the process.

Found the balance of our folks, hot, hungry, and sweating. Ran up town several times making purchases.<sup>1</sup> ... [and]

We then went to and organized each company into messes of 15 persons with a commissary over each mess. Took them to pier number 1 and started the commissaries out to buy their provisions.<sup>2</sup>

That same night, the group departed from Mantua at 10:00 p.m. Tom watched the entire procedure with renewed interest, happy to be on land once more.

Day 2: Tuesday, 11 July. At 3:00 o'clock in the morning the train passed West Philadelphia, the site of the Centennial Exhibition that had been constructed for the first World's Fair held in the U.S. The exhibition hall, where the head and torso of the Statue of Liberty would temporarily reside one month later, could have been seen in the distance. The building was lighted, but few probably even noticed it in passing. Few likely even cared, because though this year marked the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the nation, the exhibit was not the lead story in the press.

That position in the nation's newspapers belonged to the defeat of General George Armstrong Custer by Chief Crazy Horse at the Battle of the Little Bighorn River in Montana. This event, better

---

<sup>1</sup>Griggs, 5

<sup>2</sup>Farrell, 43.

known as “Custer’s Last Stand,” had occurred two days prior to the *Idaho* setting sail from Liverpool, but was still a major topic of discussion throughout the nation when the immigrants arrived.

The battle, set off by a series of visions claimed by Sitting Bull, a Lakota Indian Chief, resulted in the deaths of nearly 300 U.S. soldiers, and a humiliating defeat for the prestige of the military. This was just one battle of the Great Sioux War (a.k.a. the Black Hills War) that unfolded in the west during 1876-77. Though this war was limited to the Montana, Wyoming, and Dakota Territories, for these LDS immigrants traveling westward into what was still considered by most to be Indian country, it undoubtedly created some concern for the newly-arrived immigrants. For the Bassetts, including Tom and his sisters, who had undoubtedly heard their share of Indian stories, it was likely a topic of excitement.

### *Mormons and Indians*

The Mormons were generally of two minds concerning the Indian nations in the U.S. On the one side of the issue, it was a common belief among the members of the church at that time (stemming from the Book of Mormon) that Native Americans were the descendants of the ancient tribes of Israel. Consequently, the Mormons had been eager to engage with the Indian nations with the intent of bringing to them their book (the Book of Mormon) and converting them to the gospel of Christ in fulfillment of ancient prophecies.

Even before the Book of Mormon was completely translated, Joseph Smith revealed that the gospel should be taken to the Indians.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, in September of 1830, a delegation of four missionaries was appointed to go to the Indian Territory to proselytize.<sup>4</sup>

As a result of the Indian Removal Act (enacted five months earlier) a new territory for relocating American Indians had been established in present-day Kansas and Oklahoma. Therefore the missionaries proceeded to go west from Independence, Missouri, into the Indian Territory. Even before departing for the major geographic goal of their mission,<sup>5</sup> while yet in New York, the missionaries called on the Seneca nation near Buffalo, and spent part of a day with them.

Later, arriving in the Indian Territory, the group preached first to the Shawnees and then to the Delawares. The Delaware Indians were receptive, and the missionaries were requested to return in the spring to teach them more about “the Book of our fathers, and the will of the Great Spirit.” However, because of an antagonistic federal Indian agent the missionaries were soon expelled from the Indian Territory and forbidden to do any further proselytizing to the Native Americans.

---

<sup>3</sup>Doctrine and Covenants 3:20.

<sup>4</sup>Oliver Cowdery, Peter Whitmer, Parley P. Pratt, and Ziba Peterson.

<sup>5</sup>Located in present-day Kansas.

The missionaries in that group—especially Parley P. Pratt (who was extremely influential in the later development of LDS theology)—commonly taught that the Native Americans had descended from the House of Israel, and had been lost to history after their flight from Jerusalem at the time of the confusion surrounding the Babylonian Captivity in 600 B.C.

Elder Pratt and others further maintained that the forced displacement of the Native Americans<sup>6</sup> into the Indian Territory (and later onto reservations) by the U.S. government, unbeknown to the government was a fulfillment of prophecy, and that act on the part of the government was a major first step in the prophesied gathering of Israel in the latter days.<sup>7</sup>

Pratt's book, *The Voice of Warning*, which was extremely popular among the Mormons,<sup>8</sup> both in America and in Britain, would have been well known by the Bassett family. The chapter on the Book of Mormon and the origin and destiny of the Indians in this popular volume occupies nearly one-fifth of the material in the book.

On the other side of the Indian issue, members of the church were also well aware of the atrocities and ferocities (both actual and contrived) that had occurred in the Indian wars associated with the westward expansion of the U.S. The Walker War of 1853-54 near Springville in Utah and the Black Hawk Wars of 1865-72 in central and southern Utah were still fresh in the minds of many Mormons. Therefore, news of Custer's Last Stand must have been unsettling, at least to some of the immigrants from the *Idaho*. Not only was the train carrying them to their Zion in the mountains, it was also catapulting them deeper into Indian territory.

Day 3: Tuesday, 11 July. Leaving Harrisburg Pa. just before noon (11:40 a.m.), the train arrived at Altoona, the headquarters of the Pennsylvania Railroad, at 7:00 p.m. At Altoona three additional engines were added to the train in order to climb the steep terrain between there and Pittsburgh. All that day the weather stormed, with extensive lightning and heavy rain.

Day 4: Wednesday, 12 July. After a night of climbing up through the mountains, the immigrants from the *Idaho* arrived at Pittsburgh about 2 o'clock in the morning, exhausted and worn out. There they were off-loaded from the cars. Three-quarters of them were then housed outdoors under an open shed and the remainder were relegated to the street. There, especially after sun-up, they all lie sweltering under the hot July sun for the better part of their ten-hour stay in that factory town of smoke-belching steel plants ... "being treated very poorly."

Farrell describes their stay at Pittsburgh as being "about as pleasant as it would have been

---

<sup>6</sup>Shawnee, Winnebago, Sac, Fox, Choctaw, Cherokee, and Osage tribes.

<sup>7</sup>*Evening and Morning Star*, I:8 (January 1833), 62; 1 Nephi 22:12.

<sup>8</sup>Edward Tullidge commented in 1870 (6 years before the arrival of the Bassetts in America): "Ask the people what brought them into the church, and you would hear from every direction Parley Pratt's *Voice of Warning* or Orson Pratt's tracts, ..." (Givens, Terryl L. and Matthew J. Grow. *Parley P. Pratt*. 6.)

in Purgatory,” and comments that he thought every person in the company would always remember Pittsburgh with unpleasant feelings. Pittsburgh was more like the industrial cities of Birmingham and Manchester of Britain than it was like Cardiff, in that it was one of America’s “dirtiest” industrial centers.

When no action on the part of the railroad personnel was evident throughout the morning, Farrell and William Maughn went to the station master to ask when the company would go forward. When they got only an evasive answer, the two told the railroad manger that they would give him half-an-hour longer, and then they would take measures to force him to come up with the cars. The cars accordingly were produced post-haste, and the company was on its way again by 1:00 p.m..

At 11:00 that evening they stopped briefly at Columbus, Missouri, where Parley P. Pratt and other Mormon leaders had been imprisoned earlier, during the Missouri persecutions of the Saints, in the late 1830's. Likely the group was informed of the significance of its place in Mormon history by the leaders of the group. Because of rumors of thieves on the train, they added a guard in each car.

Day 5: Thursday, 13 July. The company made their way through Indiana without a major incident. At the border between Indiana and Illinois the group was split into two components. We do not know which group the Bassetts were assigned to. On one of the trains, the engineer jerked the train until he broke the coupling. The jarring woke up most of the passengers. Elder Griggs commented that it seemed as though the engineer wanted to break their necks if he could. However, they were soon able to fix the connection and be on their way.

Although it had been over thirty years since the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph, the Mormons had not been forgotten in Illinois. All along the route of immigrants, large numbers of the local citizenry turned out to view the saints in about the same spirit as they would have gathered to watch a circus menagerie passing through. In Peoria the passengers passed through a large assemblage, “some of whom had been waiting about 3 hours to see the 300 Mormon elders with their 8 wives each.” Rudeness and want of civility were evident everywhere the train stopped. Elder Griggs dubbed it “the land of swearers and blasphemers.”<sup>9</sup>

Day 6: Friday, July 14. At six o’clock in the morning, the trains arrived at Burlington, Iowa on the Mississippi River. The Father of Waters was a major milestone as well as an exciting sight in itself for the Bassetts, especially when compared to their own little Taff, or even the Mersey they had left behind in Liverpool. At the Mississippi the saints changed to the Chicago, Burlington, & Quincy Railroad. Now, according to Grigg’s reckoning, the course traveled on through a more interesting country than that of Illinois.

They were now in the region known as the Great Plains, the home of the American bison. Had the travelers come decades earlier they might have been stalled for hours while a single buffalo

---

<sup>9</sup>Griggs, 60.

herd crossed the tracks in front of them, but those days had passed. Hunters, some of whom had fired on the herds from the open windows of trains, had slaughtered these majestic animals by the thousands. As recently as the 1830s, the population of the bison was estimated to have run around 40,000,000. Now that figure had dropped to 395,000.<sup>10</sup> At noon the travelers were joined at Ottumwa by several of the passengers who had been left behind earlier in the trip.<sup>11</sup>

Day 7: Saturday, July 15. One week had passed on their journey westward overland, and it had been a little over two weeks since leaving Liverpool. Dawn found them at Council Bluffs in Iowa, a famous church history site established during the earlier days of Mormon migration. This had been the final staging point for earlier saints going westward by wagon train and handcart.

It had also been the final stop before entering Indian Territory. Many of the original Mormon pioneers had settled here for a spell to save up money before the last leg of their journey into the Salt Lake Valley, and a small Mormon contingency still remained, although no mention of such is recorded in Grigg's account.

At this juncture the immigrants from the *Idaho* changed cars again, this time to the Union Pacific Railroad and passed over the Missouri River Bridge to Omaha, Nebraska. Here, Griggs records, "We had a most disagreeable time having to vacate two of our cars." (However he never reveals the reason behind the problem.) Tom noted that the weather was now noticeably cooler.

### *The Mountains of Ephraim*

Day 8: Sunday, July 16. In Wyoming the caravan entered the Great American Desert. Gone was the high humidity, the brilliant greenery, and the plentiful waterways of Wales, England, and the eastern United States. In their place were the "mountains of Ephraim," surrounding them on every side. Young Tom and his family had never witnessed anything quite so awe-inspiring, even among the rolling hills of Wales.

This is what Charles W. Penrose had envisioned when he penned the words to another favorite hymn of British Saints, "O, Ye Mountains High."

O, ye mountains high, where the clear blue sky  
Arches over the vales of the free,  
Where the pure breezes blow and the clear streamlets flow,  
How I've longed to your bosom to flee!  
O Zion! dear Zion! land of the free,

---

<sup>10</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American\\_bison#Horning](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_bison#Horning)

<sup>11</sup>Griggs, 61-62.



Now my own mountain home, unto thee I have come;  
All my fond hopes are centered in thee.<sup>12</sup>

In Wyoming, the newly-arrived immigrants noted a plentiful supply of snow fences piled up on both sides of the tracks, and near Cheyenne, where they arrived at 8 p.m., they passed through their first snow shed. This also was a curiosity for the immigrants from the *Idaho*. The Bassetts had witnessed snow in Wales, but not to the extent they were to see it in the Rocky Mountains. However, this was mid-summer, and the snow season seemed far in the future.

Day 9: Monday, July 17<sup>th</sup>. The procession arrived at Lookout Station for breakfast in the morning, and Bitter Creek for supper. The weather was now even cooler. One of the company caught a prairie dog for his menagerie. Excitement was noticeable on every side as they anticipated their arrival at their final destination.

Day 10: Tuesday, July 18<sup>th</sup>. By this point the weary travelers had been on the trains nearly as long as they had been on the *Idaho*. At Evanston the second division of their train caught up with them.<sup>13</sup> At noon all the Saints were at Echo City near Coalville, Utah. Everyone was “washing up and putting on their clean shirts, and fixing up generally.”

At long last the Bassetts came to the end of their pilgrimage by rail, arriving in Ogden at 6:30 in the early evening. Unfortunately we know nothing about their reception there. We do not know who was there to greet them, or to transport them and their luggage to their destination in Mendon, a journey of nearly two hours away by wagon. Contrarily, they may have even caught another train from Ogden to Mendon, since the railroad had come into Mendon four years earlier.

Marveling all along the way to Mendon at the mountain ranges surrounding them, as well as the lush grasslands that typified the area, they must have had a wide variety of responses concerning what was to be their future home.

Finally they arrived in Mendon just as the lights were beginning to appear in the homes of their future neighbors, too late to get a panoramic view of the town.

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>12</sup>Interestingly, Penrose, a British convert, had written the lyrics to this hymn while living in England, before he ever visited Utah.

<sup>13</sup>The division had apparently occurred on Day 5. The account to this comes from Grigg’s journal, who was in the first division. As noted, we do not know which division the Bassetts were in.

Chapter Six  
A NEW HOME IN A NEW LAND

*The Mendon Years*

Mendon was, at it were, an extended layover on the Bassett's pilgrimage to Idaho. Though that stop lasted only seven years, these years played a significant role in the change of the family dynamics. By the time all of the family (with the exception of Becca) left Mendon the children had all reached marriageable age and were setting out to establish their own families and determine their own goals. During these years the spotlight shifted subtly from Margaret and Thomas (who were 53 years old upon their arrival and 60 upon their departure) to their posterity, as the parents' central importance to our story began to recede into the background.

*The Town*

11 July 1876. After a comfortable night's sleep in a good bed (after nearly two weeks of sleeping sitting up on the train) and a hearty breakfast, and perhaps a warm bath and some visiting with the family, Tom stepped out of the dwelling where he spent his first night's lodging, into the warmth of the July sunshine of Mendon, into the bustle of the northern Utah village where he would spend his adolescent years (he arrived at age 14 and departed at age 21).

Mendon was a sleepy little farming community in the *Cache* Valley (which name from fur-trapping days fittingly indicates a "resting place"), located approximately 80 miles north of Salt Lake City in the Territory of Utah. It was one of several such small settlements in what eventually became known as the Great Basin Kingdom, an area that blossomed during the thirty years following the arrival of the Mormon pioneers in the Salt Lake Valley in 1847. In important ways it was tethered to the church headquarters in Salt Lake City 1) through a railroad, 2) through regularly-scheduled visits and conferences from the general authorities of the church, and 3) through the church's printed media.

Its nearest contact with a larger town was with Logan, the stake center and county seat of Cache County, approximately 10 miles to the east. It was surrounded by the Wellsville range of mountains, and directly west of Mendon, rising in its majesty, was Mendon Peak, the tallest point of the range. Lush grass, watered by the many streams running through the valley, covered the valley floor. The streams had been a major factor in attracting its early settlers.

Established in the late 1850's-early 1860's, Mendon's total population at the time was somewhere around 500 people,<sup>1</sup> a few of whom Tom already knew from the crossing. The

---

<sup>1</sup>The 1870 US census records a population of 345 people. The 1880 records 543. One history of early Mendon suggests 427. ("History of Mendon, Utah," OnlineUtah.com)

overwhelming majority milling around that morning (as they did every day) were Mormons. Other than that it was a village much like Leckwith, in Wales. Looking around, Tom could easily take in the whole of Mendon in a single glance.

In the daylight, the surrounding mountain range seemed to loom up even more majestically than it did when the Bassetts arrived the evening before. It was as if the mountains were meant to protect the little settlement from the outside world. The peaceful feeling one sensed in this new setting was noticeably different from the energy evident in Cardiff. A bustling city life, typified by diversity and chaos, had given way to the sameness and tranquility of rural life. The silence, except for wagons on the streets and animals on the farms, was almost deafening.

The village was laid out in much the same manner that Joseph Smith had earlier envisioned for the City of Zion when the saints were living in Kirtland, Ohio.<sup>2</sup> Although a handful of rock houses, and a 28' x 45' native-rock church had been under construction by the late 1860s, the community itself had not been incorporated until 1870, six years before the arrival of the Bassetts. Two major points of pride in the town were a branch of ZCMI<sup>3</sup> and a native-rock hotel, where they may have stayed for the first few days after their arrival.<sup>4</sup> Unlike most small towns on the western frontier, Mendon had kept itself free of saloons and billiard halls.<sup>5</sup>

### *Settling In*

When the Bassetts first settled in Mendon they rented a two-room log cabin with a dirt roof.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>Each of its 9 major blocks was divided into eight lots, each ten rods wide and twenty rods long, with all the houses set back a uniform distance from the six-rods-wide streets. All of the farmland was laid out on the outskirts of the town.

<sup>3</sup>The town mercantile establishment. James G. Willie of Willie-Martin handcart fame was the general manager of the store, and undoubtedly Tom would later hear first-hand the story of the ill-fated journey of the handcart pioneers multiple times, and likely he would become personally acquainted with Willie, who became the Elders quorum president one year after the arrival of the Bassetts. Willie also served multiple terms as mayor of Mendon and a counselor in the Mendon bishopric.

<sup>4</sup>Another possibility for their early residency in Mendon may have been the Hughes' home, that abutted the Town Square on the east.

<sup>5</sup>Sorensen, Isaac. "History of Mendon," n.p. [http://www.mendonutah.net/history/city\\_ward/the\\_history\\_of\\_mendon.htm](http://www.mendonutah.net/history/city_ward/the_history_of_mendon.htm)). 1878.

<sup>6</sup>"Sketch of the Lives of Thomas Bassett and His wife, Margaret (Edwards) Bassett" by Thomas E. Bassett for a meeting of the Daughters of the Pioneers held at Rexburg, Idaho, in the Stake Tabernacle, May 20<sup>th</sup> 1926, three months before his death. (Hereafter cited, "DOP

Initially it had been a chicken coop, located on a one-and-a-quarter acre lot. However, it served to keep the elements at bay for the new arrivals.

Surrounding the lot was a quaking-aspen stake fence interwoven with willows.<sup>7</sup> Since the fence had been badly neglected, Tom and his father immediately set about tearing it down and replacing it with one made of hawthorn starts that they gathered from a nearby river bank. Then the two began digging and walling a well.

While the male members of the family labored outside, Margaret and her unmarried daughters Mae, Meg, and Sarah were hard at work on the inside. These early days in their new home had to have been difficult days for Margaret, who undoubtedly missed their comfortable little home in Canton, especially when comparing it to their new interim home in Mendon.

### *Back to Farming*

In the 1880 census, Thomas Bassett's vocation is listed as "farmer." After so many years of working in the more prestigious job as a foreman on the docks in Cardiff, the elder Bassett was once more reduced to his earlier vocation, working with the soil. Needing to provide for his family at a time when jobs were hard to come by,<sup>8</sup> Thomas, as the family bread-winner, initially obtained work on a threshing machine during the fall of 1876, laboring from early morning to late evening for a wage of one and one-half bushels of wheat daily. In the following spring he secured work as a section hand on the Utah Northern Railroad, working ten hours a day for \$1.50.<sup>9</sup> Careful planning and budgeting were needful for the family to eke out a living in that new precarious setting.

Shortly after arriving in Utah, Tom's father discovered that when he became an American citizen he had the right under the Homestead Act of that time to file on 80 acres of land at little or no cost to him. This became a major goal.<sup>10</sup> Later, under the same act, Thomas homesteaded an

---

Sketch.") Apparently two different versions of this document exist.

<sup>7</sup>Barbed-wire was yet to be invented.

<sup>8</sup>This was during the time of the "Panic of 1873," a financial crisis lasting from 1873 to 1879 in the U.S. Jobs were hard to come by nation-wide.

<sup>9</sup>Utah Northern was in financial trouble itself at the time, although that year the railroad was completed as far as Franklin, Idaho, connecting the Cache Valley with the outside world. This connection had the effect of increasing the value of real estate in the valley and of making grain worth more at home.

<sup>10</sup>It appears that Thomas Bassett may have become a naturalized citizen sometime near the end of 1876 or the early part of 1877. There is an "Intend to Naturalize" form listed under the name of "Thomas Bassett" in the Salt Lake City Naturalization Office, dated 12 December

acreage on a hillside two miles from the town, and began to dry farm.

One of the requirements for homesteading was that the new owner improve on the property. To do so, Thomas purchased a one-room log cabin for \$15.00, tore it down and, with his teen-aged son working by his side, rebuilt it on his new holding as an indication of the required improvement on the property.

In order to work the land, he signed a note for \$12.50, and sent away for a twelve-inch hand plow weighing about 125 pounds. When it came, rather than asking Bishop Hughes for the loan of a wagon,<sup>11</sup> Thomas carried it on his shoulders the two miles from the railroad station in the center of Mendon out to his farm. Soon thereafter father and son set to work, plowing and planting. After the crops were in, they fenced about 20 acres on the homestead.

The first years on the farm proved to be especially difficult years. In a letter to the editor of the *Millennial Star*, dated 5 July 1877 (the Bassetts' first summer of homesteading in the valley), Bishop Hughes wrote:

We are suffering severely from the grasshoppers this season, they have destroyed a large portion of the grain crop, and in many parts they have destroyed nearly all the grass on the range. Hay will be very scarce this season and if the winter should be heavy, I fear there will be great loss of stock, but we put our trust in Him who orders all things wisely and for the best.

Tom's mother, Margaret bore up stoically through all of this, remaining the spiritual anchor for the entire family. While the men were engaged as the providers for the family, Margaret was the emotional support around which the family clustered. Looking back at their early life in the new world, Tom later wrote of his mother:

... this one thing I can truly say of my honored mother, that I never once heard her complain or find fault, but endured all with the most gracious fortitude. In all their struggles, Mother was his [Thomas's] true and faithful companion and helper, both working equally hard and untiring until the day of their exit from mortality.<sup>12</sup>

Less than a fortnight after their arrival, even before they had time to comfortably settle in to their new life, the Bassetts likely witnessed an LDS 24<sup>th</sup> of July celebration (perhaps enhanced that year to include a commemoration of the U.S. centennial). Such celebrations were typically held annually in the small Utah communities. However, Mormon festivities, such as the one described in detail below, were entirely new to the recent immigrants. Such celebrations served to help them

---

1876. Although there is no way to verify that this is Tom's father, the name and the date lend probability to that assumption.

<sup>11</sup>Likely so as not to be indebted to Hughes in any way.

<sup>12</sup>DOP Sketch

realize that Mendon was indeed a Mormon community.<sup>13</sup>

Pioneer Day, July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1878, was fittingly celebrated at Mendon. At early dawn the firing of fourteen guns announced the beginning of festivities. An excellent vocal serenade by the choir to many homes in the city was next in order. At nine o'clock the public were called together for a salute of eight guns. Elder Alfred Gardner writes: "A procession was formed in the following order: 1<sup>st</sup> A covered wagon drawn by two yoke of oxen, representing the way the Pioneers crossed the plains, then wilderness and arriving [sic] in Salt Lake Valley; 2<sup>nd</sup> Mayor [Hughes] and members of the City Council; 3<sup>rd</sup> Twelve young men; 4<sup>th</sup> Twelve young ladies; 5<sup>th</sup> Fathers in Israel; 6<sup>th</sup> Mothers in Israel; 7<sup>th</sup> Choir; 8<sup>th</sup> Sunday school. We marched a short time on the public square then to the meetinghouse which was handsomely decorated for the purpose, a noticeable feature of the decorations was, two handsome pictures, of Utah as it was, representing a train of wagons crossing the plains and around it was woven a wreath of pine limbs, sage brush and sunflowers, the other, Utah as it is, representing a basket of fruit, around this was a wreath of evergreens and beautiful flowers.

Our meeting was very interesting with orations, singing, recitations, etc.

The afternoon was spent in horse and foot racing and other amusements and a dance for the juveniles; in the evening we had a dance for adults, which was a good one interspaced with songs, etc. All were well satisfied with the day's amusements.<sup>14</sup>

The new arrivals from Wales knew they were home in Zion at last.

### *Becca and Henry Hughes*<sup>15</sup>

Ironically, the Bassett years in Mendon came about in part, as a result of some misplaced luggage. When the train carrying Mae and Becca arrived in Ogden, the daughters initially planned to transfer to Salt Lake City, where they would meet up with Will. However, upon arriving in Ogden the girls discovered that the baggage car with their luggage had been rerouted, and that they would have to wait a few days for it to catch up with them.<sup>16</sup>

Seizing on their dilemma, Bishop Hughes convinced the two sisters to come home with him

---

<sup>13</sup>Since the festival described here occurred in 1878, two years after their arrival, the Bassetts may have been participants in some of the activities mentioned, such as the choral groups, the parade, and almost certainly the youth dance.

<sup>14</sup>*Deseret News* 27:413.

<sup>15</sup>Schimmelpfennig, 40-43.

<sup>16</sup>Actually the errant baggage car had arrived days before them, and then had been rerouted nearly back to its point of origin; hence it was not there when they arrived at Ogden late in the evening of 2 June 1875.

to Mendon and spend some time there as his house-guests, resting up and awaiting their errant luggage. Once there, he was able to talk them into an extended stay, and taking advantage of their time in his home, Hughes was eventually able to talk Becca into joining him as his fourth wife. Since Hughes was also a Welsh transplant (from northern Wales) the marriage was a totally Welsh affair.<sup>17</sup>

### *Becca's Parents' Arrival*

One of the Bassetts' major reasons for settling in Mendon was to support Becca in her ill-conceived marriage, and this Margaret set about doing with a mother's love and concern throughout their residency there.

The initial meeting of Thomas and Margaret with their daughter Becca had to have been simultaneously euphoric and strained, due to her polygamous marriage to Bishop Hughes. Obviously they were glad to see her again, but they were also now well aware of the darker side of their new son-in-law, the bishop who had broken a most sacred promise made to them a year earlier.

While serving as a missionary in Wales, Hughes had given his solemn word to the parents to protect their daughters from plural marriage if they were allowed to emigrate to Utah with him. Within two months after that promise, the 51-year-old Bishop Hughes<sup>18</sup> had taken the 18-year-old Becca as wife number four.

We do not know what transpired at the initial meeting of Hughes and the Bassetts. For the first time since the marriage of Becca, and Hughes' colossal betrayal, the bishop and the parents came face to face. The stare-down of the two men began. The outward appearance of this encounter may perhaps have appeared cordial, but the reality was undoubtedly far different.

In fact, it might well have been characterized by the metaphor, "the elephant in the living room," which refers to an obvious unpleasant fact that is either intentionally being ignored or going unaddressed in a discussion. Since an elephant in a room would be impossible to overlook, those in the room who pretend the elephant is not there have chosen to avoid dealing directly with the larger issue, though the problem endures. In this case, Hughes' broken promise was the elephant to which he would be chained forever so far as the Bassett parents were concerned. There was no doubt in their minds that the bishop of Mendon had ruined their daughter's chance for greater happiness

---

<sup>17</sup>Much of Henry's early life was lived out in the coalfields near Mold in Flintshire. Through a series of tragic events he later moved first to Hanley, and then to Newcastle-upon-Tyne in County Durham. Finally he relocated in Wingate, where he joined the Mormon church and married his first wife, Ann Howell. From there it was just a matter of time before he was persuaded to gather to Zion, where he eventually (after a eight-year sojourn in the Salt Lake Valley) settled in Mendon. (Schimmelpfennig, 14-18.)

<sup>18</sup>Born in 1825, he was two years older than her father and her mother.

in her future.

The LDS thirteenth Article of Faith states, “We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, [and] virtuous ...” In the minds of Thomas and Margaret, their new bishop possessed none of these attributes.

Since it was impossible to undo the damage that had been done in the marriage, the only thing Becca’s parents could do was to gather their family around them in Mendon to lend their moral support to their sister in her present unfortunate situation.

For Tom, Becca had changed markedly from the flighty eighteen-year-old sister he had said farewell to just one year earlier in Wales. Now she was a married woman with matronly duties, living in the mayor/bishop’s two-story brick house as a plural wife with two of his three previous wives.<sup>19</sup>

History has left no record of how Becca and her parents reacted upon meeting. In her later life she chose to portray herself as an innocent victim in the matter of her marriage.<sup>20</sup> The situation was likely quite different, however, since it seems highly unlikely that Hughes could have trapped her into a marriage against her will, especially since she was known to be a very head-strong woman. Hughes admittedly could have pressured her,<sup>21</sup> but giving in to that pressure was undoubtedly entirely her own decision.

Though it might have required greater resistance than she exhibited on the occasion of his proposal, she needed only to have said “No.” Hughes’ third wife, Sarah Findley, apparently originally resisted his offer of marriage, despite the fact that their marriage had been planned earlier by Hughes and her first husband.<sup>22</sup> Finley’s second wife (Agnes Muir Finley) though pregnant from her first marriage at the time, also refused his proposal and later married another man.

If family lore is accurate, Hughes also had designs on Becca’s older sister, Mae, but she had resisted his advances. Mae was at hand for moral support, and Becca’s brother Will was also in the

---

<sup>19</sup>Sarah Shaw Findley, Hughes’ third wife, to whom he was sealed for time only, had been married earlier. When her first husband, William Findley, died and Hughes married her as a plural wife, she continued to live in her original home.

<sup>20</sup>The is the underlying thesis of Dorothy Schimmelpfennig’s *The Reluctant Bride*.

<sup>21</sup>Such as he did by maintaining that in the pre-mortal existence, she had chosen to be his wife. (Schimmelpfennig 43.)

<sup>22</sup>Hughes and Findley had made a pact that if one of them died, the survivor would marry the other’s widow as a plural wife to provide for her.



near vicinity to help her if he were called upon to do so.<sup>23</sup> At least, Becca certainly must have known of her parent's plan to join her the following year. Considering all of these factors, it seems at least plausible that Becca wasn't as helpless in the situation as she later claimed to be.

It has been maintained that "power is the ultimate aphrodisiac."<sup>24</sup> Becca, as a young woman still in her teens, certainly had many opportunities to observe and admire her future husband functioning in various positions of power. She had watched him as a missionary before they left Wales and later as a leader of the emigrants on their journey from Wales to Utah. Upon their arrival in Mendon, she had observed him in the role of bishop of the Mendon saints, and as a charismatic leader in the community.<sup>25</sup>

For a young teen-aged girl who had come out of near obscurity in Welsh society, the thought of becoming one of the town's leading ladies, and the wife of the bishop, certainly must have seemed enticing. Ultimately he won her over. Regardless of whether or not she entered the marriage as a willing participant, it is fairly evident that Becca came to reconsider and even regret the decision. She soon became in truth a "reluctant bride," according to her granddaughter and biographer, Dorothy Schimmelpfennig, who had ample opportunity to interview Becca on numerous occasions. Becca soon discovered that living in such a close relationship is very different from admiring at a distance.

Apparently the rift between her husband and her parents never healed. It certainly would not have been difficult for Hughes to discern Thomas' feelings and he (Hughes) was never one to be bested in a power struggle. He was, after all, two years senior to Thomas. In addition he held the upper hand in this situation, both in the religious and the secular realms. Even though Thomas had been a branch president in Wales while Hughes was simply another missionary, Hughes saw to it that Becca's father never held a position of responsibility in the church or the town in Mendon.<sup>26</sup> Further, as late as 1890, at which time Becca was suffering through a severe bout of depression and wanting to visit her family in Idaho for relief from the situation, Hughes refused to let her go, claiming it was simply a ploy to steal Becca away from him.<sup>27</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>23</sup>Although Will may have been somewhat complicit in the marriage in that he seems not to have made any effort to come to Mendon to fetch his two sisters.

<sup>24</sup>Henry Kissinger, *The New York Times* (28 October 1973).

<sup>25</sup>Hughes was also known as a respected herbologist in the town, with a reputation for healing much like a doctor has today.

<sup>26</sup>Schimmelpfennig, 45.

<sup>27</sup>Schimmelpfennig, 53.

Chapter Seven  
PREFACE TO MANHOOD

*The Adolescent Years*

Four months after arriving in the new world, Tom turned fourteen. Later, when the family moved away from Mendon, he was nearing twenty-one. Thus Mendon was the site of his seven-year journey into manhood, i.e. the setting for his adolescence. Mendon is where he experienced those sometimes awkward, dangerous, exciting, and critical years in any young man's life.

The teen years are typically the time when youths begin to question and explore on their own, and unfortunately it is often a rebellious age, as teenagers begin to distance themselves from their parents and other authority figures in an attempt to take more control of their own lives. Unfortunately, it is a time when many youth pull away from religious and other support groups, and become rebels with, or without a cause. In Utah this youthful rebellion was manifest in several different ways: tipping wagons over at night, turning out people's stock, throwing stones at passers by, robbing orchards, drinking, swearing, fighting, and other such activities.<sup>1</sup>

Fortunately, this does not appear to have been the case with young Tom as he morphed into early manhood. Instead he apparently chose to follow another path, one advocated often in the youth magazine of the territory:

Listen attentively to the instruction of parents and teachers, avoid bad company, swearing, lying, and evil in every form. Learn all you can about the gospel, and have faith in its ordinances. Read good books instead of racing in the streets at nights. Attend Sunday School and meetings on the sabbath day, and give heed to what is said; instead of sitting in crowds outside the meeting house, talking or playing cards. Remember that "a wise son maketh a glad father," and store your mind with useful knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

*The Silent Years*

There are so many interesting questions one could ask of these years in Tom's life: What was it like to move from a major urban center like Cardiff to a small farming community? Who were his friends in this new world? What did he remember of his life in Wales? What was it like to be a teen-age boy growing up in a family composed primarily of sisters? What did he learn about girls from his sister's friends? Did he ever date, or fall in love? Who were his models in the community,

---

<sup>1</sup>*Juvenile Instructor*, XXIII:17 (Sept. 1, 1878) 197. (Hereafter abbreviated JI.)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

other than his father and his brother Will? What type of relationship did he have with his parents?<sup>3</sup> How did he relate to his teachers—both in school and in church? What was the nature of his church life? What type of formal schooling did he have in Mendon? When and how did he learn the beautiful calligraphy that would later provide him opportunities for employment and callings in society? What was his home like after the family left the remodeled chicken coop in which they originally lived?

In a day before organized sports and cinema and television etc., what did he do for recreation and amusement?<sup>4</sup> In the international melting pot that was Mendon, how did he relate to his peers who were immigrants from other nations (or those who had grown up in the U.S.)? Did he travel often to Logan to experience life in the larger community? What newspapers and books was he reading to acquaint him with the wider world?<sup>5</sup>

So many questions; so few answers. Regrettably the records of the time regarding these aspects of Tom's life are totally silent. As a result we do not know definitively the answer to any of these queries. One can only speculate regarding his growing-up years, using the few facts we do know. We do know, for example, that young Tom was no stranger to hard work during these years, and that the days of his boyhood were dramatically truncated through service in the adult world.

Fortunately, a window on the past, revealing what life was like in general among Mormon youth at that time, is to be found among the pages of the *Juvenile Instructor* (the magazine of youth in the territory of Utah). Through perusing its pages, one can get glimpses into what it meant to

---

<sup>3</sup>Oscar Handlin, in his book *Children of the Uprooted*, notes that the second generation, i.e. the children of emigrants, often experience a sense of shame regarding their parents who do not seem to fit in comfortably in their new culture, despite the fact that the parents had sacrificed almost all that they had to provide a better life for their children in the new land.

<sup>4</sup>Mendon had a drama association that functioned at his time, primarily through the winter months. Dancing (other than the waltz, which was frowned upon as semi-indecent) was popular. The game of baseball had been invented near the beginning of the 1840s; American football in 1869; lawn tennis in 1873. Bicycles were being developed about the same time as the Bassetts came to America, but we do not know if they were popular in Mendon. Interestingly, bicycles, by virtue of the fact that they enabled the youth to escape further from home, were said to be responsible for a majority of the cases of fornication in the territory.

<sup>5</sup>The LDS bias against novels of the period is intriguing: “As you value your children’s future, banish novels from your habitations. Discourage the reading of fiction. It poisons the mind; it destroys the memory; it wastes valuable time; it warps the imagination; it conveys wrong impressions; it unfits the person indulging in it for the stern and important duties of life.” *J*, XVI:8 (April 15, 1881). 90. (In one article from the *Juvenile Instructor*, fiction was said to have led to a patricide, committed by a youthful reader of detective novels.)

grow up in nineteenth-century Utah.

### *The Juvenile Instructor*

Throughout all these years of Tom's adolescence, the family was in all probability reading the *Millennial Star* (copies of which were likely passed around in the village) to keep the populace apprised of current happenings in their homeland. But the major reading material for Tom and the girls was likely the *Juvenile Instructor*, that was begun in 1866 as a private publication by George Q. Cannon. (Later, it became the official organ of the Deseret Sunday School Union.) By virtue of his calling as a counselor in the the church leadership, President Cannon was keenly aware of all that was happening in the church during those years. At the same time, Cannon was also serving in the U.S. House of Representative as Utah's representative in the Congress. Thereby he was also aware of happenings at the national level. Each edition of the *Instructor* (as the name suggests) contained an editorial by President Cannon. These contained advice directed primarily to the youth (juveniles) of the church, such as those in the Bassett family.

Edward Tullidge, a noted Utah historian of the times wrote regarding the *Instructor*:

... the *Juvenile Instructor* has been a power in every city and hamlet throughout Utah. Its class of literature for variety, instruction and entertainment, and also in the quality of its subjects [not to mention its outstanding woodcut illustrations] entitles the *Juvenile Instructor* to a first rank among church magazines.<sup>6</sup>

As early as January of 1833, the Lord had instructed the church leadership:

Teach ye diligently and my grace shall attend you, that you may be instructed more perfectly in theory, in principle, in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God, that are expedient for you to understand;

Of things both in heaven and in the earth, and under the earth; things which have been, things which are, things which must shortly come to pass; things which are at home, things which are abroad; the wars and the perplexities of the nations, and the judgments which are on the land; and a knowledge also of countries and of kingdoms. (D&C 88:78-79.)

It was as if Cannon were using this passage from the Doctrine and Covenants as a template for his magazine. Any young man or woman who faithfully read the magazine would have been introduced to all these subjects during the course of a year,<sup>7</sup> and would have

---

<sup>6</sup>*History of Salt Lake City*, Appendix. 11. It was also the first magazine published for children west of the Mississippi in the United States. (*Ensign*, August 1999. 15.)

<sup>7</sup>The magazine was published semi-monthly, on the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month. It was the custom to share issues throughout the community for the benefit of those who could not

received an outstanding education from the magazine alone, even if it were his or her only source of instruction.

Tom's inquisitive nature, as demonstrated in his later missionary journal and connection to all things educational, is a good indication that he was likely among those digesting the magazine from cover to cover. It is even probable that the early germs of his educational ideas came from such passages as the following from the magazine:

Our elders can now reach people of a different class to those to whom they preached in the beginning. This will be more and more the case every year . We shall be able before long to get access with our doctrines to the leading people and ruling classes in every land. To accomplish the Lord's purposes in this direction the Elders should be educated. They should know all that the world knows, and in addition have the wisdom and knowledge which God bestows upon his true servants. We hope to see the day before very long when our schools will be the best and most thorough in the world, in which every useful branch shall be taught, and to which every child, however poor, can go as a scholar.<sup>8</sup>

Every issue contained a letter or two from missionaries living throughout the world, supplying extensive instruction for the LDS youth regarding the history and customs of the area in which these missionaries were serving, as well as offering encouragement for the young men of the territory to prepare for missionary service themselves. Remote areas, such as India and the South Sea islands, the Near East, Europe, and South America, as well as China and Japan in the Orient were well represented, along with information regarding life among the American Indian nations.

The magazine also contained articles of general interest from all around the world, such as "Surfing in Samoa" and "How the Japanese Pull Teeth" suggest. Informative articles regarding various world religions and famous historical figures also made an appearance designed to keep the saints entertained and informed at the same time. A series of articles regarding LDS church history and the life of Joseph Smith also played an important role in the periodical's content.

Current events such as the U.S. Centennial and the death of prominent figures, both church leaders and national leaders, also made their way into the pages of the magazine, as did the news of the friction between the church and the nation regarding the church's practice

---

afford the cost of the magazine (a fact that the magazine lamented, since it cut into their margin of profit).

<sup>8</sup>XVI (Feb 15, 1881), 42.

of plural marriage.

### *Age Fourteen (1876)*

Had Tom lived a century later, this year would have been his freshman year in highschool. Although every young man is unique, this is a year when young men are generally willing to accept without question most things they are told by parents and other authority figures. Peer relationships are crucial to their well-being.

The first year of Tom's life in the valley apparently was largely taken up with settling in and connecting with other teens in the valley. The creation of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association (YMMIA) in the church occurred just one year before the arrival of the Bassetts, and it may have been through attendance in MIA and in the ward Sunday School (which had been in operation church-wide for ten years) that many of Tom's first social contacts were made in the months before school began in the fall or winter.

The same may have been true for his sisters Meg and Sara, although the Young Ladies Mutual Improvement Association (YLMIA) did not become operative until the year after the Bassett's arrival in Mendon. Their mother Margaret also likely found a good deal of her social life initially in the local Relief Society (re-organized church-wide under the direction of Brigham Young in 1867).

Likely Tom attended school in a meetinghouse with a row of desks around the entire room, with reading and reciting classes in the middle.<sup>9</sup> However, a school house costing more than \$2000 was in the late building stage.

### *Reunion with Will*

Reuniting the family was an important part of their first year in the valley. Meeting with Will would have been something of a shock for all of the recent immigrants, but especial so for Tom. It was questionable which of the two brothers had changed more. It had been four years since they had seen each other. Tom was only 11 when Will emigrated, and had likely grown considerably in that four-year period, and Will had morphed into a full-blown adult. At twenty-five years of age, he was now operating in an entirely different social realm than his younger brother. Their age differential would still have been a major obstacle to their bonding, perhaps even more so now that Will was married and fully involved in the adult activities of the community.

Life had not been easy for Will and his wife. Coming to Utah had undoubtedly been more difficult for him than it was for the rest of the family who came later. He had arrived with no family

---

<sup>9</sup>Sorensen, Isaac. "History of Mendon," n.p. [http://www.mendonutah.net/history/city\\_ward/the\\_history\\_of\\_mendon.htm](http://www.mendonutah.net/history/city_ward/the_history_of_mendon.htm))

in the new world to counsel him regarding the new life, and no familial community awaiting to embrace him. Initially Will had settled in Cottonwood Canyon looking for employment in mining, smelting, and other odd jobs.<sup>10</sup> During those four years he had fathered two children who had passed away, and a third that was born shortly before Tom's arrival. (Tragically that baby also died during the first year that Tom was living in Mendon.)

### *Age Fifteen (1877)*

This is a crucial year for anyone passing through adolescence. It is typically the point at which youth seriously begin to question what they are being (and have been) told. It is a time in their life when they begin to think that they alone know what is best for them. The sophomore year in highschool (which this age would currently represent) can be a very difficult time, both for students and their teachers. Perhaps it is even more true of the relationship between parents and children.

The fact that 15 was the age of Joseph Smith at the time of his epiphany involving God the Father and Christ perhaps suggests something more than is commonly realized. No priesthood keys were bestowed, no gold plates delivered, no movement organized; just a simple, short, direct answer to the question troubling him—and an implicit warning to behave himself, since much more was ahead in his future when he was more mature.

1877 was an eventful year throughout the Cache stake. The major news of the year was the death of President Brigham Young. But before President Young passed away he had been extremely active in bringing about several important reforms church-wide, changes that dramatically changed life in the Cache Valley. He had traveled throughout the intermountain west wherever there were settlements of saints, creating and organizing stakes. One of which was the Cache Stake where the Bassetts lived (with Moses Thatcher of the Twelve as its president<sup>11</sup>). Quarterly conferences that met every three months were commenced in every stake.

After the extended organization of stakes, the organization of wards followed. Until this time Bishop Hughes had served without counselors, but now the Mendon ward bishopric was organized with counselors and a ward clerk and, at least outwardly, Bishop Hughes was forced to share his previous power monopoly with others.

In the beginning of May the site for the temple at Logan was dedicated, and a large number of saints from Mendon attended the dedication. That year the general conference of the church was held in southern Utah, and the St. George Temple dedicated.

Political storm clouds were beginning to gather around the church. Isaac Sorensen, an

---

<sup>10</sup>Tullidge, Edward. *Tullidge's Histories*, II:226.

<sup>11</sup>Soon to be replaced by William B. Preston.

historian of Mendon, writes regarding that year:

The United States officials did not seem to improve, but continued their slanders about the Mormons, and using their best efforts to induce Congress to enact oppressive laws wholly to work against our people ..., but to an extent it became an old song, and although very annoying did not so much disturb the peace and happiness of the people as might have been supposed it would. It is true that after many years of their incessant toil Congress did pass laws that really led to persecution of the Mormon people.<sup>12</sup>

The saints in Mendon were well aware of these as well as most other national and international happenings. The Utah territory was not as isolated as some may assume. As noted, Mormon missionaries worldwide, like foreign news correspondents, were constantly streaming news back into the territory, in letters to their families and to the Utah presses.<sup>13</sup> The citizens of the territory were thereby well-informed regarding happenings all around the globe; perhaps even more so than citizens in other territories.

1877 was also an eventful year for the family. In September of that year, the twenty-year-old Becca gave birth to her firstborn—a boy, the first nephew that Tom came to know well. The baby was given the name George Bassett Hughes, named for the little brother whose body was buried in the Leckwith cemetery so far away in Wales. Shortly after the birth, Hughes built a new simple house for Becca and her sister-wife, Sarah Ann, a one-story framed house with two front doors, resembling a duplex of today. This paved the way for more comfortable visits from the family.

Perhaps the biggest event of the year for the Bassetts, however, was the marriage of Tom's older sister Meg (now 18), who had come over with him on the *Idaho* just a year and one-half earlier. Four days after the Christmas festivities of the family, in December of 1877, Meg wed Walter Muir<sup>14</sup> (age 33) of Scotland in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City. Now Tom had two brothers-in-law, this one much more acceptable to his parents.

Walt had previously been endowed in the Salt Lake City Endowment House, and was at that time active as a Free Mason and a member of the local School of the Prophets<sup>15</sup>—and thereby well

---

<sup>12</sup>Sorensen, (1878)

<sup>13</sup>Both the *Deseret News* (begun in 1850), and the *Salt Lake Tribune* (begun in 1871) as well as other local newspapers, such as the *Herald* (in Salt Lake) were available in Mendon at that time.

<sup>14</sup>Walt's sister Agnes was the second wife of the aforementioned William Findley, the wife who had turned down Hughes' marriage proposal following Findley's demise.

<sup>15</sup>A gathering of Elders designed to teach theological principles to augment their secular instruction. Initially created by Joseph Smith in Kirtland, such schools were revived in several towns in Utah, first by Brigham Young and then by John Taylor.



connected in the community. The Muirs, who resided in south Mendon, had joined the church in 1848 in the little mining community of Crofthead, Scotland, which at that time was in the Glasgow Scotland Conference. (Walt was four years old when the family joined the church). At the age of 19 (1864), Walt had been ordained a teacher in the Aaronic priesthood, and ordained an elder the following year,<sup>16</sup> so when he emigrated to Mendon he was already well-seasoned in the church.

At the time of the family's emigration, Walt was the man of the family since his father had passed away earlier (in 1860), leaving his mother a widow at the age of 44. Six years after the death of his father, at the age of 22, Walt emigrated from Scotland to Mendon with his widowed mother and four siblings. His sister Jane was living in Mendon at the time, and she was the magnet that drew the Muirs to Utah.

Walt, who had worked in the mines of Scotland since the age of twelve,<sup>17</sup> began farming in Utah, but while the Muirs were living in Mendon, he often became impatient with farm work, and traveled to Logan to help in the building of the temple. Ofttimes, during the winters, he went north to work in the coal mines at Rock Springs, Wyoming, to get enough money to last until the next summer.<sup>18</sup>

When the Bassetts arrived in town, Walt had been residing in Mendon for ten years, and the arrival of Meg soon attracted his attention; a quick courtship ensued, culminating in an 1877 wedding.

Earlier in December of 1877, a son (Royal Clarence Bassett) was born to Will and Sara, the first of their children to survive to adulthood. Will's fortune was changing. One year after his parents arrival, as fate would have it, Will met George L. Farrell, the missionary who had been in charge of the British saints aboard the *Idaho* (and therefore was well acquainted with the family). Farrell asked Will to assist him in the Logan Tithing office.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup>Golding, Carma Muir. "Walter Muir and Margaret Bassett Story." <https://familysearch.org/photos/stories/9530541>.

<sup>17</sup>He is listed as an "ironstone miner" in the 1861 British census. Therefore, he had something in common to talk about with Bishop Hughes, his wife's brother-in-law, since both had worked as miners in their youth.

<sup>18</sup>Later, when the Muirs moved to the Upper Snake River Valley, it appears that he also did some mining in Wyoming, traveling from his home in Sugar City, Idaho.

<sup>19</sup>Farrell had been appointed the tithing clerk in Logan in 1859, prior to the mission that later had placed him aboard the *Idaho*.

### *Age Sixteen (1878)*

However, the following year, Will was informed that there was not sufficient work in that office to keep him employed. At that point, Farrell offered him work on his (Farrell's) own farm near Mendon. It may have been at that time that Will moved to Mendon, since he is listed in the 1880 census as living next door to his parents. His vocation at that time is noted as "Temple Clerk."

Will was subsequently called to serve in the Logan Temple office by William Preston, who had replaced Moses Thatcher as the stake president of the Cache stake. In that capacity, and in his earlier work in the stake tithing office, Will and Preston became close friends.

Further, President Preston likely became aware of Tom through Will, and found the two brothers to be similar in their personalities and abilities, despite the eleven-year difference in their age. Likely it was through this connection that Tom was called to two very responsible positions in Mendon while still in his teens. Initially that year Tom was called to be in charge of the tithing office in Mendon.<sup>20</sup> The job of tithing agent at that time demanded a very responsible person. In a day when tithes were paid in kind, the LDS tithing office was something akin to a large co-op, and the person in charge had the daily task of receiving and dispersing everything from eggs to pigs, from grain to livestock .

Until 1869, the tithing houses were the only general stores in most Utah communities. Each kept an elaborate bookkeeping system, with debits and credits for each customer; the accounts were 'settled,' but not necessarily balanced, at the end of each year. Thus, individuals and village shops and industries could 'save' by accumulating credits and 'borrow' by withdrawing commodities in excess of their accumulated credits. The tithing offices, particularly the General Tithing Office in Salt Lake City, issued a kind of currency called 'tithing scrip,' which facilitated accurate bookkeeping and generally circulated throughout the territory. Tithing resources were used in supporting laborers engaged in making roads, constructing dams, building schoolhouses, and erecting telegraph lines."<sup>21</sup>

The fit was a natural for Tom; he would be doing the same work as his brother Will had done in Logan. Like an apprentice, he could go next door to Will for help with any problems. His father Thomas (who was enjoying a bumper crop on the farm,<sup>22</sup>) was also available if needed.

Tom's second major job that year was with the railroad. That same year he was employed

---

<sup>20</sup>September 16. (*Fremont Journal*, 31 January 1902).

<sup>21</sup> *Utah History Encyclopedia*, "Banking and Finance" [www.media.utah.edu/UHE/b/BANKING.html](http://www.media.utah.edu/UHE/b/BANKING.html)

<sup>22</sup>"1878 was a prosperous year; a very good crop was raised. President Young had promised the people that if they would be liberal in helping build the Temple, they would be prospered, the people did well in forwarding their means & going over there to work, this was the principle business outside the usual labor." (Sorensen, 1878.)

as the railroad clerk at the Mendon depot.<sup>23</sup> At that time the Great Northern line was in the process of being linked into Montana.

### *Age Seventeen (1879)*

At age 17, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century he would have been be a senior in highschool. By the time of a youth's junior year, one's character (whether good or ill) is fairly well set, depending on how they weathered the sophomore year. Seniors have more in common with college students than they do with highschool students. They are more mature and capable of dealing with adult responsibilities, as is evidence in Tom's simultaneously holding down the two jobs he had at the time.

Not much out of the ordinary went on in Mendon in 1879. Sorensen records that the main labor that year, outside of regular farm work and providing for the families, was assisting in building the Logan temple.

However, it was a fruitful year for the Bassetts. Meg, at age 20, produced her first baby in May—a healthy baby boy whom they named after his father and his mother (Walter Bassett Muir). Becca was blessed with another daughter (Rosa Jane) in December—around the time of moving to her third house in Mendon, and two months later, Will's wife Sarah gave birth to another boy (in February of 1880). Tragically, however, this child only lived for six months.<sup>24</sup> Four out of that couple's first five children were now buried in Utah.

For Tom, this year also brought ordination to the office of a teacher in the Aaronic priesthood—this at a time when the majority of individuals in a teacher's quorum were usually mature men (at least in their 20s), and relatively few younger men were called to that position. In turn, this calling was later expanded, with Tom's call to serve as the president of the teacher's quorum in the Mendon ward one year later.

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>23</sup>1880 census.

<sup>24</sup>The pain of this death may have been softened somewhat by the birth of another boy, Charles Winden, who was born to Will and Sarah four year later (in 1883), one month after Tom and his parents had moved to Rexburg.

Chapter Eight  
FAREWELL TO MENDON

*The Family in 1880*

1880 was the fifteenth anniversary of the founding of the LDS church and a time for celebration. Tom was 18 years old that year, the age of a modern college freshman.

Margaret and Thomas were now officially middle-aged, having passed the half-century mark three years earlier. Both were still in good health however, and Thomas was still working the farm. By now they had resigned themselves to the role of grandparents, and found their successes vicariously in the accomplishments of their children.

In March of that year, Will had been elected as the city recorder of Logan (a position he was to hold for four years), and with the appointment of George Farrell to be the Bishop in Smithfield, Will was appointed the chief clerk in the Logan Tithing Office.<sup>1</sup> He, his wife Sarah Ann, and his son Royal were living next door to his parents. He was 29 in December of that year.

Mae, also in her late 20s, was still living at home with her parents and her younger siblings, Tom and Sarah. She continued to be a source of strength for her parents, especially for her mother. Eight years older than Tom, Mae, like Will, moved in social circles in the community composed of a generation older than her younger brother.

Becca was a 23-year-old youngish mother with two little ones in tow. In addition to her two-year-old George, she had added a baby girl just the year before, whom she had named Rosa Jane (again, after her little sister Jane who had died in Wales). She was still settled in the one-story frame house with the two front doors with Sarah Ann, her sister-wife. Within the next year, however, she would move to a pleasant four-room cottage complemented by a nearby pond, three miles south of the city center. That was to be her third home in Mendon. Although Bishop Hughes had this new home built for her and Sarah Ann, and had equipped it with a menagerie of cows, pigs, ducks, laying hens and a rooster, Becca remained a virtual prisoner of Hughes.<sup>2</sup>

Meg, just turned 21, was enjoying motherhood with her little one-year-old son, as well as life with her Scottish husband. Though Walt was 15 years her senior, the two of them had passed that time in life when age differences are thought to be a consideration; love had obliterated any perceived age-gap.

---

<sup>1</sup>At that time the tithing office in Logan (a stately two-story structure) also functioned as a post office of sorts, and a community center where much of the business in Logan was transacted.

<sup>2</sup>Schimmelpfennig, 46-47.

Sarah was still living at home, the teenage sister at 15, with all the exotic fantasies common to girls of that age. Too young to court, but not too young to think about it. By that time she may even have had her eye on the Baker boys, Simon (1 year her senior) and John (1 year her junior), who lived in the northern part of Mendon. (She would later be a wife to both.)

Tom, at age 18, was morphing into adult life, wearing three hats: railroad depot clerk, tithing office manager, and president of his teacher's quorum.

### *The Jubilee Year*

As noted, in 1880 the LDS church commemorated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. President Taylor, the president of the Quorum of the Twelve, felt this occasion merited a special celebration, and therefore called for a jubilee year, based on the pattern of that celebrated by ancient Israel.<sup>3</sup> To those assembled in the April general conference of 1880 he announced:

It occurred to me that we ought to do something, as they did in former times, to relieve those that are oppressed with debt, to assist those that are needy, to break off the yoke of those that may feel themselves crowded upon, and to make it a time of general rejoicing.

At that time several of those assembled in the tabernacle, as well as others throughout the church, owed significant debts to the perpetual emigration fund. Many were behind in their tithing payments. Adding to the indebtedness among the saints were the losses of herds and farms during the preceding year. Drought had been excessive and crops sparse throughout the church. So severe was the winter that many sheep and cattle had died as a consequence.<sup>4</sup> Residents who had lost all their cows and sheep faced serious financial difficulties. Upon the recommendation of President Taylor, the worthy poor throughout the church were released from these debts and losses as much as possible.

In addition, during the jubilee year, the church raised funds for one-thousand head of cattle and five-thousand head of sheep to be given to the worthy poor.<sup>5</sup> Thirty-four thousand bushels of wheat that had been stored in the past by the Relief Society were loaned to those who had been ruined by crop failure. (Tom, as the keeper of the tithing office in Mendon was likely involved in many of these transactions.) Private businessmen were encouraged to erase debts of the poor who

---

<sup>3</sup>Leviticus 25: 10-17.

<sup>4</sup>Some among the flocks and herds in Mendon were so weakened that a committee was organized to go from yard to yard to lift those cattle and horses to their feet that were unable to get on their feet without being assisted. (Sorensen, 1879.)

<sup>5</sup>Cache stake was the recipient of 18 cows and 120 sheep. Roberts, B. H. *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (hereafter CHC). v:392.

could not pay such debts at the time.<sup>6</sup>

### *A New First Presidency*

At the October conference of that year the First Presidency of the church was reorganized for the first time since the death of President Brigham Young. In the interim between 1877 and 1880, the church had been directed on a day-to-day basis by the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, with John Taylor as the senior apostle and official spokesman for the group. In the October general conference he was sustained as the president of the church, with George Q. Cannon (his nephew) as his first counselor and Joseph F. Smith as his second counselor.

Brigham Young's successor was a very different type of individual than Brigham, with a more scholarly bent. Whereas Brigham made his theological contributions in his conference talks, President Taylor made his in books.<sup>7</sup> Born in England, and later serving as a missionary in the Isles, President Taylor had a special concern and understanding for the plight of the British saints in the valley. Further, he had been in the Carthage jail with the Prophet Joseph at the time of Joseph's martyrdom, and was badly wounded himself in the fracas. Consequently President Taylor was no stranger to mobs and persecution. While he was president of the church the anti-Mormon forces ratcheted up their attacks on the leading men in Utah, and President Taylor, who bore much of the brunt of those attacks, was hailed at his death as a "double martyr."

He had opinions different from those of his predecessor, and one could easily recognize several changes in church practices when the mantle of leadership was passed to him. Some of these changes, however, were traceable to President Young and some of the reforms Young instituted during the last year of his life.

Soon a spiritual awakening was evident throughout the church, culminating in the dedication of the Logan Temple in 1884. Because Logan was such a short distance from Mendon, Tom and his fellow Mendonites were following the construction with eager excitement. The proceeds from a one-hundred-acre farm, owned by the entire local community, were contributed to the building of the temple, as was financial support from the Mendon sabbath school.<sup>8</sup> Even the local housewives

---

<sup>6</sup>Roberts, B. H. *The Life of John Taylor*, 333.

<sup>7</sup>*The Government of God* (1882) and *Mediation and Atonement of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*. (published 1943).

<sup>8</sup>This farm is described by Orson F. Whitney in a letter to the *Deseret News*, dated 18 February 1870.

in Mendon participated by donating the greater part of their egg money<sup>9</sup> to the project.

### *Political Storms Intensify*

In 1881 Tom was 19, the age of a college sophomore, today. This year witnessed the beginning of a stepped-up political attack on Mormonism in the territory, one that was to last unabated until 1890.

The Utah territorial election of 1880 signaled the beginning of these conflicts. Because Utah was a U.S. territory, some of the officers in their state government<sup>10</sup> were federally appointed. Contrary-wise, the citizens of the territory were allowed to elect their own representatives to Congress. However after the election of 1880, when Elder George Q. Cannon had been duly elected by an overwhelming majority to represent Utah in the U.S. House of Representatives,<sup>11</sup> a national grass-roots movement emerged designed to block the seating of Elder Cannon. The battle for that seat was long and bitter, and was fought all the way from the territory to the halls of Congress.

Though Elder Cannon had served as Utah's representative for the four preceding sessions of Congress, he was eventually disqualified through some highly unethical political maneuvers, and his seat in the house was left vacant, awaiting a second election in the territory. The saints in Utah were stunned.<sup>12</sup> This was the beginning of an anti-Mormon crusade that swept through the nation from 1879-1884, culminated eventually in Congress's passing the Edmunds Bill (one of the more stringent anti-polygamy bills) in 1882.

### *Religious Antagonism*

Churches nationwide joined in raising their voices in opposition to the church. Perhaps the low point of such attacks was represented in a sermon delivered by the popular divine, T. DeWitt Talmage of the Brooklyn New York tabernacle, as he attempted to tie Mormonism to the

---

<sup>9</sup>Those who raised chickens kept out a portion of their income from the sale of the eggs, to contribute to the building of the temple. This became known as their egg money.

<sup>10</sup>Most notably the governor and federal marshals.

<sup>11</sup>18,568 to 1,357. (Roberts, CHC vi:7).

<sup>12</sup>This was the first of three such cases involving general authorities of the church. Later, Elder B. H. Roberts of the LDS Seven Presidents of Seventy was refused a seat in the House on the grounds that he was a polygamist, and still later (1903), Elder Reed Smoot of the Council of the Twelve had his seat in the senate contested in a hearing lasting three years; however, that battle ended in victory for Elder Smoot.

assassination of President James A. Garfield.<sup>13</sup>

Less than four months after his inauguration in 1881, Garfield was shot by a mentally deranged, frustrated office-seeker by the name of Charles J. Guiteau. People worldwide were riveted to the news while the president's life lie in the balance for eleven weeks before he eventually passed away.

Talmage, in reporting the event, implied that Guiteau was a Mormon, and that he (Talmage) should not wonder if in the great day, when all such things are revealed, it should be found that he was a paid agent of that old bag of hell [the Mormon church] who sits making mouths to heaven between the Rocky Mountains and the Sierra Nevada.”

Further Talmage claimed that “while all the good people throughout the world were praying for the president's recovery, the Mormons were praying for his death,” adding,

If the death of Garfield shall arouse the nation to more hatred of that institution of Mormonism which was Garfield's special disgust, he will not have died in vain.

Finally, in the sermon, Talmage maintained that Guiteau had “the Mormon ugliness.” “He had the spirit of Mormon licentiousness; of Mormon cruelty; of Mormon murder,” and was undoubtedly the paid agent of the Mormon church. The venom that he spit out throughout the sermon was noted and echoed in pulpits, especially throughout the eastern United States.

Since the attempted assassination had occurred on the morning of July 2, and celebrations had been previously planned for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July throughout the territory, President John Taylor issued the following instructions to the saints:

We ought not only in appearance, but in reality, in our hearts, have feelings of sympathy toward those who have suffered with the honorable president of the United State in this dire calamity which has overtaken him: and to feel to execrate the wretch who has perpetrated so foul a deed. ... I propose to send word to all our prominent men throughout the territory to cease from any exhibition of jubilation on the Fourth of July; and to act in sympathy with our injured president ... that we may truly sympathize with the chief executive and with his family, and with the nation ... .<sup>14</sup>

Later, on the occasion of the death of the president, Garfield's successor, Chester A. Arthur, called for a day of humiliation and mourning, and asked that the people of the nation gather together in their respective places of worship to pay their tribute to the memory of the late president. Following this request, President Taylor wrote to the Utah governor, offering the tabernacle for such a unified service for all interested citizens in the area, regardless of their religious affiliation.

The offer was rejected on the grounds that several of the Salt Lake churches were planning

---

<sup>13</sup>Press dispatches of 4 October 1881 in the *Salt Lake Tribune* of 5 October 1881, as cited in Roberts, CHC, vi:26-27.

<sup>14</sup>*Deseret News*, weekly, of July 6, 1881, as quoted in Roberts, CHC vi:32.



their own services and that Governor Murray had already committed himself to attend one such gathering. However, the Mormon leadership went ahead and held their own service in the tabernacle, and George Q. Cannon, who was reputed to be an intimate, personal friend of President Garfield's, delivered the major address.<sup>15</sup>

### *Decision to Go North*

The following year, during the Christmas holidays of 1882 (when Tom was 20), news of plans for a new Mormon settlement northward in Idaho in the Upper Snake River Valley swept through Mendon. Will had learned from President Preston of a projected ward to be called the Bannock Ward of Cache Stake in that area. This stake would embrace all of the settlements north, east, and west from the mouth of the Portneuf Canyon near Pocatello, Idaho, to the Teton range of mountains.

Previously, President Brigham Young had counseled the saints not to go north, especially after Indian attacks had forced the abandonment of Fort Lemhi in the Salmon River area of Idaho in 1858.

Brigham had opined:

The farther we go north, the less good characteristics are connected with the valleys, except in articles of fish, water, and in some instances timber; and when the people are obliged to live in the north country, that will be high time for them to go there.<sup>16</sup>

But that policy soon changed after President Young's death. By that time the railroad was pushing north into Montana, enticed by mineral strikes during the latter part of the 1870s. John R. Poole, a member of the church and an employee of the Utah Northern became interested in the Snake River Valley area and was convinced that it had the potential to support a community of saints.

In 1881, during the political and denominational attacks on the church, Elder Marriner W. Merrill, one of the Cache stake presidency, along with another unnamed ecclesiastical leader from Logan, was sent by President Preston to check on the saints living in that area of Idaho, and to assess the region for the possibility of colonizing. The two emissaries organized two of the settlements<sup>17</sup> into branches within the Cache Stake, and returned to President Preston with a glowing report of the area.

---

<sup>15</sup>Raised in Ohio, Garfield is also said to have been personally acquainted with a number of the early elders of the church, among them Parley P. Pratt and Sidney Rigdon. (Roberts, vi:32.)

<sup>16</sup> *Journal of Discourses*, 4:325-26. (Hereafter JD.)

<sup>17</sup>Poole's Island (later Cedar Buttes and now Menan, Idaho), and Egin (now Parker, Idaho). Both are located a short distance from what is now Rexburg, Idaho.

Because of that and other similar positive reports, Preston visited the area himself in mid-October of the following year (1882). He, like those who had visited before, was highly pleased and upon returning to Logan set about creating a ward that would include all of the saints living in the Upper Snake River Valley. After reporting this to President John Taylor, the stake president proceeded to organize the new Bannock ward of the Cache stake. On 18 December of that year, he called Thomas E. Ricks to be the bishop.

President Taylor and his counselor, Joseph F. Smith, then sanctioned the action by personally setting Ricks apart in the calling. In a letter of instruction, the presidency also recommended that Preston and Ricks visit the country, and

make such locations of settlements as may be desirable ... And have your town lots surveyed. ... There can be no disadvantage in having the farms outside, within easy reach, as the peculiarities of the country may admit, the same as in our older settlements.”<sup>18</sup>

Soon after, upon the advice of Ricks, President Preston and other church leaders began encouraging saints in the Cache Valley area who were interested to move north and form settlements in southeastern Idaho.

### *Pulling up Roots*

In January of 1883, President Preston and Bishop Ricks again went north, looking for a site to found a central LDS settlement. At Parker, the members were counseled to fence a field and cooperate in making the area productive, in order to provide for all. In Menan, the saints were instructed to go forward with the building of a meeting house.<sup>19</sup> But the site eventually chosen for the central settlement was the one that became Rexburg, which was nearby these already-existing branches of the church.

Upon the return of the two brethren, Preston immediately called a civil engineer to go to southeastern Idaho and survey the townships he and Ricks had chosen. Then he gathered a small cadre consisting of a dozen men who agreed to settle in the new area.<sup>20</sup> On 23 January of 1883, this pioneer party left Logan for the north with several wagons and sleighs carrying tools, supplies, and equipment—especially those items required for farming. They also took with them a good supply of grain and hay for the horses that were pulling the wagons, arriving in the vicinity of Rexburg in mid-

---

<sup>18</sup>Crowder, David L, *Rexburg, Idaho. The First One Hundred Years, 1883-1983.* 13.

<sup>19</sup>Crowder, 14.

<sup>20</sup>Crowder, 16. This group was composed of Frances C. Gunnell, Thomas E. Ricks, Jr., Brigham Ricks, Heber Ricks, Willard Ricks, Daniel Walters, Lorenzo Thorp, Fred Smith, Leonard Jones, and James M. Cook—all working under the direction of Thomas E. Ricks, Sr.

February. By early March the town-site had been surveyed. The pioneer party then immediately set to work cutting timber for fences and houses.

The next step was to establish a bishopric for the new ward, and in consultation with President Preston, Bishop Ricks chose J. Henry Flamm as his first counselor and Francis C. Gunnell as his second counselor. Tom Bassett, who at the time was only four months past his twentieth birthday, was called to be the ward clerk.<sup>21</sup> Thereafter the Bassetts became even more directly involved in the northern settlement. Soon the move north became a major topic of discussion around their supper table.

This was the year of Tom's majority, an appropriate time for him to leave Mendon and launch out into a new life. But shortly before Tom and his father left Mendon, his sister Maggie gave birth to another niece whom she named Margaret Muir, born 12 February 1883. Tom's mother would be needed in Mendon to help with the new little one.

So, in April of 1883, two months after the birth of this niece, Tom walked out of their home in Mendon, and closed the door of their house for the last time, climbed aboard a wagon, and set out toward the third phase of his life, to be played out in the new settlement to the north. Tom and Rexburg would come into their own together.

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>21</sup>The bishopric was completely organized by 14 March 1883. (Crowder, 22.)

Chapter Nine  
NEW BEGINNINGS IN IDAHO

*The Arrival*

April, 1883. The wagon wheels stopped turning and stood motionless on the mud-caked road. The two Bassett men, Thomas and his namesake, Tom, climbed down from their wagons and looked around in silence. They had just completed the 180 mile journey from Mendon, Utah, to Rexburg, Idaho. At the time, Tom was six months shy of his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. His father was 56.

For both, it was another new beginning. But this time was different. First, the town was totally new, having been officially established only days before their arrival, and second, they already knew a large number of their neighbors-to-be. So many had migrated from the Logan area that Rexburg resembled Cache Valley North, with several familiar faces.

Visiting with some of those friends may have been among their early order of business. But an even higher priority involved the business of staking out a site to homestead. If they didn't get crops into the ground for harvesting in the fall, no one would eat the next winter. In addition they needed to establish a home. Therefore, one of the most pressing tasks on their to-do list was to search out the land office to file a homesteading claim. The acreage eventually chosen was just south of present-day Sugar City, and east of the recently established village of Rexburg.

In significant ways, their time in Mendon had been like a dress rehearsal for Rexburg—father and son working side by side on a newly-acquired homestead, plowing and planting and constructing a new home for their family. Together they had gone through it all before. Yet, in some ways the situation was now very different than that of their arrival in Mendon. At 160 acres, this homestead was twice as large, and the power for the plowing was being supplied now by animals, rather than by hand.

*The New Bishopric*

Certainly, one visit they intended to make as soon as possible was to the recently-called bishop, Thomas E. Ricks. One month earlier, on 14 March, Tom had been released from his calling as the Teacher's Quorum President in the Mendon Ward of the Cache Stake. Then the stake president, William Preston, had set Tom apart to serve as the ward clerk of the newly organized Bannock Ward of the Cache Stake, headquartered in Rexburg.

The Cache stake president knew well the young man's abilities. He had watched young Bassett function for four years as the agent in the train depot and in the tithing office in Mendon. He had likely seen examples of Tom's beautiful penmanship that would enhance the readability of the ward records. Most importantly, however, the Lord and President Preston saw things in Tom's

potential for future leadership in the kingdom, and despite his youth, the call had been extended.

For Tom this calling was a fortuitous training for his future. It would provide him a first-hand knowledge of the temporal, as well as the spiritual workings of the new community. Attending the meetings of the new bishopric, he would be privy to discussions concerning all the developments in the community—its personnel, its problems, and its strengths. Further, his role would be primarily that of an observer, rather than that of a director. Those he would be watching attentively in leadership positions were seasoned pioneers, with experience many years in advance of his own.

The bishop, Thomas E. Ricks,<sup>1</sup> was 55-year-old, Tom's senior by thirty-five years (more than twice Tom's age, and only one year younger than his father). The first counselor, J. Henry Flamm, was 48 (again more than twice Tom's age). The second counselor in the bishopric, Francis C. Gunnell, was a mere 30, but even so, still a decade older than Tom. Each of the members of the bishopric was married. Tom was still single.

In some ways, his youth and lack of experience in the business world worked to his disadvantage. Bishop Ricks often included his counselors as partners in his business ventures, but never Tom. Throughout the summer and fall of 1883 numerous new businesses opened with Ricks' name attached, including, among other ventures, a ferry across the north fork of the Snake River, a co-op, a grist mill, and other enterprises. One or more of his counselors was usually included as a partner.

During the spring and summer of 1883, hundreds of new settlers from Cache county and southern Idaho flooded into the valley with the intent of settling. The ward population jumped from 369 in May, to 617 by July, and to 815 by the end of the year.<sup>2</sup> While working on their houses, many lived in dugouts or tents pitched on the banks of the Teton River, which location became known as "Mosquito Flats," due to swarms of the troublesome insects infesting the area.

In the fall, many of the settlers left their unfinished homes and returned to Utah to wait out

---

<sup>1</sup>Bishop Ricks had a first-hand knowledge of Nauvoo and Council Bluffs in church history. He had explored southern Utah with Parley P. Pratt, looking for potential sites to settle. He had spent a year as a missionary to the Indians in Las Vegas. He had been involved in the rescue mission to the Martin handcart company. He had helped close the Fort Lemhi mission after the Indian attacks on their cattle. He had moved his family south when Johnston's army came through Salt Lake.

After the army incident he had moved to Logan, where he served on the high council and as the sheriff of Cache Valley. Twice he had been called to take wagons across the Plains to Florence, Nebraska, to pick up and transport LDS emigrants to Salt Lake City. All of this, plus a six-month proselyting mission to Ohio, Illinois, and Kentucky, preceded his venture into the railroad business. He had supervised the laying of rails northward to Montana to take advantage of the mineral strikes in that area. At this point he became involved in the Rexburg project.

<sup>2</sup>Crowder, 27.

the winter. Idaho's winters were legendary. "The weather in the Upper Snake River Valley," it was said, "consists of nine months of winter and three of late fall," and "The north wind here is bitterly cold—no matter from which direction it blows."<sup>3</sup>

That mass movement back to Cache County for the first winter proved to be wise. Survival in the new community was difficult. The snow fall was unusually heavy. The winds were strong and frigid, as they often are in that area of Idaho. Some of the livestock froze to death. Tom's father returned to Mendon to pick up Tom's mother and sister, Mae, with the intent to return in the spring. Tom stayed on in their new home.

### *Rexburg's First School Teacher*

Living alone during the depths of December, when it was too cold to work outside, Tom became restless, and opened a school of sorts (perhaps recalling the editorial on education quoted earlier from the *Juvenile Instructor*<sup>4</sup>). Classes were held in the Rexburg meeting house.<sup>5</sup> Although the school only lasted for a few weeks, this was the first known public education venture in the new community. Tom was the first recorded school teacher.<sup>6</sup>

The school was ungraded, and students attended sporadically to learn such basics as the "three R's." Sometimes parents attended as well, or used their children's books to improve their own education. Some of the immigrants attended just to become more familiar with the English language. Books and other school supplies were loaned to the school by families who had brought such with them when they left their old homes. Tom's pay came from the food storage of his students' families, but his greatest pay came in the satisfaction every teacher experiences—the social interaction with his students, young and old.

The following month, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January, before Tom's parents had returned to Rexburg, the Bannock *ward* became the Bannock *stake*, following instructions from President John Taylor. The former ward bishopric was installed as the new stake presidency. In putting together the new leadership, Henry Flamm was replaced as President Ricks' first counselor by William F. Rigby,<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup>Both quotes are attributed in folklore to the Indians who had previously lived in the area.

<sup>4</sup>See chapter 7.

<sup>5</sup>The meeting house had been finished in July of that year.

<sup>6</sup>Later he would become the chairman of the board of the Fremont Stake Academy, that in turn morphed into Ricks Academy.

<sup>7</sup>Originally from Manchester, England, Rigby had been involved in the establishment of over 44 communities in Idaho and Utah.

transferred from his church calling as the bishop of the Newton Utah ward. The new first counselor was already the partner of President Ricks in several local economic ventures. Rigby was 51 and, like Ricks, Tom's senior by three decades. Francis Gunnell was retained as the second counselor.

As part of the organization, Tom became not only the clerk of the new stake, but also the clerk of the stake tithing office, a position for which he had been previously groomed in Mendon.

### *Rexburg's First Postmaster*

The winter of 1883-84 was the first time that Tom had been away from all of his family for any extended period of time, and he sorely missed their company. Mail, when there was any, had to be gathered from Market Lake (now Roberts, Idaho), which was at the time the terminal of the rail line going north from Utah. Though Market Lake was only a little over twenty miles away, the journey was a difficult one, especially in inclement weather.

The need for a local U.S. post office became even more evident during the winter, although it had been felt from the very early days of the settlement. A more convenient and speedy means of communication with friends and relatives was desired by the entire community, but especially by church and business leaders. Without a post office of their own, Rexburg would continue to remain in a condition of semi-isolation.

Accordingly, late in December of 1883, someone<sup>8</sup> requested the necessary forms from the office of the U.S. Postmaster General. In early January of 1884 the forms were forwarded to Tom, who was not only the stake clerk, but also the local choice for postmaster. Tom returned them on 14 January, indicating the name and location of the new post-office-to-be. Eight days later, Tom was appointed the first postmaster in the evolving frontier settlement.<sup>9</sup> On 1 April 1884, about the time that those who had wintered in Mendon were beginning to return to Rexburg, the Rexburg post office was officially opened.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, for two years Tom occupied three responsible positions: stake clerk, tithing clerk, and postmaster.<sup>11</sup>

As previously noted, the responsibility of a tithing clerk was very wide-ranging, especially in a day when tithing was commonly paid in kind. It was Tom's responsibility not only to receive the tithing items, but also to move them out of the tithing office in a timely manner before they spoiled. A letter from the Presiding Bishop's Office in March of 1887 is illustrative of the problem.

---

<sup>8</sup>This was likely Tom, acting in his calling as the ward clerk.

<sup>9</sup>The following January, he was reappointed for a second year term.

<sup>10</sup>Crowder, 39-40.

<sup>11</sup>In Logan the tithing office and the post office were housed in the same building. It is quite likely that the same situation existed in Rexburg.

President Ricks had previously been advised to find a market for the tithing potatoes. Two months later, the following was received from the Presiding Bishops Office (PBO):

We were rather surprised to learn that you have not yet disposed of the potatoes you had on hand. Can there not be a market found for them at some point North or at Eagle Rock [Idaho Falls]? Better sell them for some price. Give them to the poor or feed them to the stock rather than let them lay there to spoil.<sup>12</sup>

### *The Evolving Community*

In early April of 1884, shortly after the opening of the post office, Andrew S. Anderson wrote to the editor of the *Salt Lake Herald*, reporting the progress of the new frontier community.

The snow has just gone off and the people are busy with their spring work, fencing fields, plowing, building, etc. The ice is out of the rivers and the ferries are running, thus making travel safe. Immigrants are already pouring in from Utah and Southern Idaho, and Dame Rumor predicts a great rush to these parts this season, but there is room enough for all, as the country is large and good and well adapted for the establishing of good homes.

Regarding the anticipated crops, he reports

... the climate is sufficiently mild for the successful cultivation of wheat, oats, barley, potatoes, most vegetables, and the hearty kinds of fruit, as it has been demonstrated. The water is easily conveyed upon the land, and fencing and building material are within easy reach.

A firm base for business had already been established in the community, including:

... a general merchandise store, a furniture shop and store, a land office, and a steam saw mill in running order, and a post office, all of which are great conveniences to the people.

Educational facilities were in place and functioning. "The day school is in good condition and much credit is due to the teacher, Mrs. Sarah A. Barnes, for the rapid progress of her scholars."<sup>13</sup>

### *Sarah and the Baker Family*

In October of 1884, Tom's younger sister Sarah married Simon Baker in the Logan Temple. She had known Simon from Mendon. Like the Muir family, whom his older sister Meg had married into, the Bakers came from a well-established Mendon family, whose roots went back through early western pioneers, Joseph Baker and his wife, Lucy Amelia Pack. The Baker family had lived in the north end of Mendon since 1861, two years after its initial settlement and six years before the arrival

---

<sup>12</sup>Fremont Stake Records on file at LDS Church Historian's Office, Box 1, File 3, correspondence dated May 31, 1887. (Hereafter abbreviated as FSR:1-3, c.d. 5-31-87.)

<sup>13</sup>Crowder, 43-44. By this date, Barnes had replaced Tom as the school teacher.



of the Bassetts. Their stone house was the first one built in Mendon.<sup>14</sup>

Both of Simon's parents had roots reaching back to the beginnings of the LDS church. His father Joseph had been born near Montrose, Iowa, across the Mississippi from Nauvoo, and as a young boy (less than eight-years of age) had crossed the plains in the Mormon exodus from Nauvoo, arriving in Salt Lake City in December of 1847, five months after the original pioneer company.

Joseph's wife, Lucy Amelia Pack, was born in Kirtland, Ohio, during the very early days of the church. While she was still in her infancy, her family had been a target of persecution in Missouri, and after the death of the Prophet Joseph and his brother Hyrum, they had moved west with the saints in 1848, traveling in a company led by Heber C. Kimball. Settling close to the Kimball family in Salt Lake City, the Packs and the Kimballs became familiar friends, and Lucy Amelia ended up as a plural wife to William Henry Kimball, Heber's son. One daughter was born to this union.

However, when friction developed between Lucy and her husband (and even more so with one of his other wives), Lucy went to Brigham Young for advice and President Young recommended a divorce. Following that divorce, on 10 July 1859, Lucy—now a single mother with one daughter—was married to Joseph Baker by Brigham Young in his office. Eventually ten children were born to this union—six sons and four daughters.<sup>15</sup> Heartbroken by the loss of the next-to-last son and the premature birth and death two hours later of her last-born son, Lucy Amelia died six days later on 16 April, 1874 at the age of 37.<sup>16</sup>

Two years after her passing, the Bassetts moved into Mendon, and eventually Simon Pack (the Baker's third son) began courting Tom Bassett's youngest sister. In April of 1884, Simon and his older brother Jesse moved to Idaho—first to Rexburg, and then to the smaller community of Teton, 10 miles northeast of Rexburg. Later that year, on 2 October, Simon and Sarah were married in the Logan Temple.<sup>17</sup> Where Sarah was residing during the months before the wedding is unknown.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup>Mackliet, Julie. *Getting to Know Our Grandparents*, (unpublished compilation), n.p. "Joseph Baker." Copy in possession of Phillip Baker, Teton, Idaho.

<sup>15</sup>The first son was killed by a snow plow on the Utah Northern Railroad in 1880, and the two youngest sons died as babies.

<sup>16</sup>Mackliet, "Lucy Amelia Pack Baker."

<sup>17</sup>The Logan Temple had been dedicated on 17 May 1884.

<sup>18</sup>Three options seem possible. 1) She could have come to Rexburg later (in June) with her parents and her older sister Mary; 2) she could have stayed in the now-empty Bassett home in Mendon; or 3) she could have stayed in Mendon with her sister Margaret Muir and her husband, until the wedding. The first seems most probable, since her husband-to-be was living in Teton.

Tom's marriage was to wait for two more years. He was the last of the family to enter into matrimony, except for Mae, who never did marry.

### *The Second Winter*

In the winter of 1884-85 (which was, incidentally, much milder than the preceding one), Phineus Tempest records in his diary:

... over ninety houses in the settlement. Our business interests are a steam saw and grist mill, one general store, blacksmith shop, butcher shop, post office, hardware and a door, sash, paints, oils, and wood-turning establishment.<sup>19</sup>

In contrast to the preceding winter, social life was plentiful. A Rexburg Dramatic Association had been formed, and it presented a play for the Christmas season: *Ten Nights in a Bar Room*, a popular melodrama of the time.<sup>20</sup> On Christmas, the Sunday School provided entertainment in the morning and the Primary presented a dance in the afternoon. Throughout the winter, several lectures were presented under the auspices of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association, and a public dance was held weekly (that probably involved Tom). In February, the Dramatic Society presented two plays: *Michael Erle or the Maniac Lover*, and *The Tooddles*. Every Tuesday the German immigrants met with Henry Flamm to socialize. Such was the social life in the new thriving community.

### *The Polygamy Controversy Comes to Rexburg*

The first two years in Rexburg were relatively tranquil as new occupants continued to flood into the valley and new land was brought under cultivation. Life went on much as usual. However, this calm facade was about to be disrupted. In 1884 the storm clouds that had been hovering over the Mormon settlements in the west since 1880 began to deluge and pour down with ferocity.

This was due primarily to a larger gentile population in Idaho than in Utah and to the activities of one man, Fred T. Dubois. Dubois arrived in Blackfoot, Idaho, as a recent Yale graduate in 1880 (two years before the initial settlement of Rexburg), with aspirations to rise in the national

---

<sup>19</sup>Crowder, 44.

<sup>20</sup>*Ten Nights in a Bar-Room and What I Saw There* is an 1854 novel written by T. S. Arthur. It is reputed to be the most popular American book of the Victorian era, following *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. It was later made into a play, a musical, and a film (4 times).

It was the first book to call for prohibition, and was a popular temperance melodrama. For that reason, if for no other, it would be popular among the Saints. It is the story of a loving father who succumbs to alcohol and spends most of his time at a bar. His daughter comes to the bar and begs him to return to his family. He initially ignores her, until she is hit in the head by a flying bottle. On her death bed, the daughter begs her father to abandon alcohol, to which he agrees. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten\\_Nights\\_in\\_a\\_Bar-Room\\_and\\_What\\_I\\_Saw\\_There](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ten_Nights_in_a_Bar-Room_and_What_I_Saw_There))

ranks of the Republican Party, which had previously declared open warfare again the practice of polygamy among the Mormons.

Two years later, Dubois was appointed U.S. Marshall in the Territory of Idaho by President Chester A. Arthur. Therefore Dubois was the marshal when the Bassetts and other saints from the Cache Stake moved into, and began to populate, southeastern Idaho. Wrapped in the mantle of his newly acquired office, Dubois did everything in his power to destroy Mormonism.

I did not have any feeling of animosity toward the Mormon people [he wrote]. I regarded them as being the same as other people but set in their blind obedience to their spiritual leaders and in their belief in and practice of polygamy. ...

My personal relations with them were at all times friendly and I have at all times during my life numbered many Mormons among my real good and true friends. My controversy was with the organization, and as I say, I was completely dominated by the thought that it was up to me to stamp out the iniquities of the system.<sup>21</sup>

In 1885, two years after the arrival of the Bassetts in Rexburg, the Idaho territorial legislature passed what became known as the “Test Oath Act.” This was primarily the brain-child of Dubois. In brief, this act disenfranchised anyone who belonged to any organization that encouraged, or even taught the practice of plural marriage. That included all Mormons.

The Mormons initially countered by forming a “defense committee” to draft an official protest against the Test Oath. Thomas E. Bassett served as secretary to that committee. On 5 May of 1885, representatives from every ward in the stake assembled to learn more about the activities of the committee and to endorse its conclusions. Five days after that meeting, federal marshals descended on the town and made an unsuccessful attempt to force an entry into a home where they thought to arrest President Ricks.

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>21</sup>Clements, Louis J. (ed.), *Fred T. Dubois's The Making of a State* (Rexburg, Idaho, 1971), 43.

Chapter Ten  
THOMAS E. AND LUCY ANN

Ostensibly all was well in Zion; Zion prospered in 1886 ... except for Tom, who was now twenty-three, and still single in a community that focused its attention primarily on families. Unquestionably Tom was among the most eligible, if not *the* most eligible, of the young bachelors in the valley. Fortunately for him, sometime between 1884 and 1885, Lucy Ann Lutz came into his life.

*Enter the Lutz Family*

The family of Thomas and Mary Lutz from Smithfield, Utah, also arrived in Rexburg during the initial year of its founding. They stayed long enough to stake out a claim for a homestead in the Egin bench area, and then, like so many others, returned home to Utah for the winter, intending to return the following year. However, while they were in Smithfield, tragedy struck. Lucy Ann Lutz's father took ill and died in May, leaving her mother Mary as a 45-year-old widow with nine unmarried children, ranging in age from 19 months to 20 years.<sup>1</sup> Three of them were in their teens, five of them were twelve and under. The oldest, Thomas (Albert), was one year younger than Tom Bassett. Lucy was just 17.

After mulling over their unanticipated situation, Mary Lutz decided to follow through with their previous plans and move to Rexburg. Consequently, the Lutz family tentatively made their journey northward, only to meet with more frustrations upon their arrival. Adding to their woes, when the Lutz family arrived they found that someone had jumped their claim in the Egin Bench area, leaving them without a place to settle.

Apparently this problem was wide-spread enough that it had become a matter of grave concern for the Bannock stake leadership, and undoubtedly it became a point of discussion in their meetings.<sup>2</sup> As the clerk of the stake, it is likely that the plight of the Lutz family (as well as many others) had come to Tom's attention. Further, it is likely that he became aware of Lucy Ann through

---

<sup>1</sup>Her oldest child, Emily, had married and departed the family five years prior to the family's moving to Rexburg. Another child had passed away previously after living only three-months.

<sup>2</sup>Crowder, 34. The saints in Rexburg had been counseled specifically against the practice in the previous January ward conference, "as that could cause discord among the people."

these discussions, and decided to help the family however he could.<sup>3</sup>

When the Lutz family arrived in the valley, there were three sons in the family. Albert, the oldest, was only 20. How helpful Albert was at the time of their arrival is a matter of conjecture, for the 1880 U.S. census, taken four years previously, has a note appended by his name stating, “disabled. fell from a horse.” We do not know what the disability was, or how long it lasted, but it must have been a matter of concern. In that census, Albert’s vocation is listed as “harness worker.” William Henry, the next oldest son, was only 14, and Adam came in youngest at 10.

The first priority of the Lutz family upon returning to the valley was to stake out another claim and to build a shelter before inclement weather set in. In their case, this shelter, such as it was, consisted of a rather large excavation in the ground, like a basement area in a typical house. The floor covering was straw and the roof was covered over with straw and mud. The construction of this make-shift home obviously involved a great deal of manual labor—which appears to have been beyond the resources available to the Lutz family<sup>4</sup> without outside help. Tom and others were likely assisting at the Lutz site for long hours.

We do not know how soon the friendship between Tom and Lucy began to blossom, but she had much she could have shared with him, including her ancestral legacy.

### *Lucy’s Pioneer Heritage*<sup>5</sup>

The history of Lucy’s paternal grandparents reads like a condensed version of LDS church history. It tells of the 1836 marriage of Albert Lutz from Pennsylvania to Susannah DuBois from New York state, and of their 1839 conversion to the church in Philadelphia, where Lucy’s grandfather Albert replaced Jedediah M. Grant<sup>6</sup> as the branch president. The Lutz story continues with that family’s move to Nauvoo in 1846, just two years after the martyrdom of the Prophet

---

<sup>3</sup>Tom’s son, Myrthen, was later informed by some of the earlier settlers in Rexburg that they did not know what would have become of the Lutz family, were it not for Tom’s assistance. (T. Myrthen Bassett. “History of Lucy Ann Lutz Bassett,” in Scott, Ann Bassett. *Our Blessed Heritage and Legacy*. [Hereafter cited as OBHAL].)

<sup>4</sup>Apparently the family suffered financially as well, even while they lived in Smithfield. Lucy’s son, Myrthen Bassett records, “We saw her feet twisted and out of shape, which she told us was caused by the condition of not having shoes to protect her feet when she was younger.” (Scott. *OBHAL*, “History of Lucy Ann Lutz Bassett”)

<sup>5</sup>See Scott, Ann Bassett. *OBHAL*.

<sup>6</sup>Jedediah was later a counselor to Brigham Young in the first presidency, and his son, Heber J. Grant, became the president of the church.

Joseph.<sup>7</sup> The loss of a daughter in Nauvoo to malaria alerted the parents to the need to move the rest of the family westward as quickly as possible.

Lucy might also have told of her grandparents' lives in Winter Quarters, where Albert served as a bishop of one of the wards, and of the death there of the family's fraternal twins and one other son. If she talked of her heritage, she likely related the stories of their crossing the plains in 1853 with the saints and settling in Salt Lake City. There the Lutzes had been caught up in the 1856 Mormon Reformation, which was driven largely by the influence of their former branch president from the mission field, Jedediah Grant, and she may even have known of the role of the Mormon Reformation in motivating Albert to enter into a plural marriage with Mary Matilda Howard in 1857.<sup>8</sup> In that same year Johnston's army came through Salt Lake City. Lucy might also have been familiar with the details of her grandfather Albert's 1859 mission call, and of their family's settling in Smithfield, in Cache county after his return.

Albert moved from Smithfield to other Utah locations, including Randolph and Garden City in Rich County.<sup>9</sup> But Lucy's father, Thomas Jefferson Lutz, remained in Springfield, and Lucy was born there.

At the time that Tom and Lucy met, both grandparents on her father's side were still alive. With sorrow, she undoubtedly related to Tom the story of the death of her own father the year before, and the subsequent hardships her mother had been forced to endure.

The history of Lucy's mother, Mary Melissa Merrill's<sup>10</sup> side of the family, is strikingly similar to that of the Lutz family.<sup>11</sup> Coming out of the New England States and New York, they also were converts to Mormonism who joined the church in its early days, moved to Nauvoo, and

---

<sup>7</sup>At that time the saints were finishing the temple, and preparing to move west.

<sup>8</sup>Mary Matilda Howard was born in Buckingham, England in October of 1839. She was 29 years younger than her husband, Albert. After their marriage in March of 1857, she apparently lived in the same household as Albert's first family. She and three of her sons are listed in that family in the 1870 US Census. Since she was so much younger than Thomas J., and the same age as William W. (sons by Albert's first marriage), she was likely passed off as Albert's daughter to the census takers.

<sup>9</sup>It was about that time that governmental persecution for plural marriage was heating up in Utah and Idaho. Albert may have moved to Garden City and Randolph because these villages were so insignificant that the federal officials might not have been motivated to look there.

<sup>10</sup>Three of the daughters in this family were named "Mary"—Mary Ann, Mary Freelove, and Mary Melissa. (Somewhat of a nightmare for future genealogists.)

<sup>11</sup>Scott. *OBHAL*, "Samuel Merrill." and "Phebe Odle Merrill."

eventually participated in the Mormon exodus from Nauvoo to Salt Lake City.<sup>12</sup> When Mary's maternal grandparents (Samuel and Phebe Odle Merrill) joined the church, many of the family joined as well. All together, counting the children in the combined families, they could almost amount to a small branch of the church all by themselves.

Mary Melissa's paternal grandparent, Levi Merrill, and her maternal grandfather, Samuel Merrill, were brothers. Hence, her father, Orrin Phelps Merrill, and her mother, Emily Phelps Merrill, were not only husband and wife, but also first cousins.

The Merrill family experience included one facet of church history that the Lutz family did not share, and that was their participation in the storied march of the Mormon Battalion. Samuel Merrill had participated in the War of 1812, but by the time the saints were moving west and the government called for volunteers that comprised the Mormon battalion, Samuel was 67 and too old to volunteer. However, of his descendants, one son, two sons-in-law, two grandsons, and two daughters volunteered for the march, arriving in Salt Lake about the same time as the pioneer group presided over by Brigham Young.

In reciprocal manner, Tom had much to share with Lucy concerning life and the church in Wales, and the experience of crossing the ocean, and traveling across the continent by train, and of the Bassett sojourn in Mendon. However, genealogy undoubtedly was far from the major topic of their discussions.

### *Tom's Courtship and Marriage*

1885 (one year after the Lutz family's arrival in Rexburg and a year before her marriage) was an important year for Lucy. In June of that year, Lucy's older sister, Mary Jane, married and left the family home. This left a major gap in Lucy's life, since Mary had been a close confidant, especially of late, in discussions of their newly-developing courtships.

The month following her sister's marriage, during the Independence Day celebration, Lucy and a friend, Rosa Hibbard, were riding and both were thrown from the horse. Rosa was shaken up, but Lucy sustained a very serious head wound and was unconscious for nearly fourteen hours.<sup>13</sup> This accident was obviously of grave concern to her mother. As previously noted, while living in Springfield, Lucy's older brother, Albert, had also been thrown from a horse and disabled. (Since Mary's husband was a harness maker, all of his children had likely spent a significant time around horses.)

---

<sup>12</sup>Mary Melissa was eight when the Merrills crossed the plains.

<sup>13</sup>Crowder, 46.

Later that year, death took another member of the Lutz family. In the early days of November, Lucy's grandmother, Phoebe Lutz, died at the home of Lucy's aunt in Randolph, Utah. (She was 69 at the time.)

Lucy's accident may also have been a wake-up call for Tom, leading him to realize how easily he might lose her. If he hadn't thought seriously about marriage before that time, the accident would certainly have moved him to more somber thoughts, as is evidenced by their marriage the following year. From the time of the accident, the relationship between Tom and Lucy became more intense. Less than a year after the event, Tom was ordained an Elder and the couple were sealed for time and eternity in the Logan Temple on Wednesday, 14 April 1886. Tom had been in the Rexburg area for four years at that time.

Originally the couple homesteaded on a farm near Sugar City<sup>14</sup> but eventually they obtained a three-story brick house that became one of the show places of Rexburg.<sup>15</sup> That home was located on the north-east corner of Second East and Second North, two blocks north of the home of President Ricks, and adjacent to the tithing office in Rexburg, where Tom continued to serve as the tithing clerk with Lucy aiding him.

Eventually Tom settled his parents and sister Mae just across the street from them, and Lucy's mother, two houses away. This way Tom and Lucy and their in-laws lived nearby each other in Rexburg and remained closely bonded.

Ten months after their marriage, on 22 February 1887, Lucy gave birth to their first child, Elsie May. Sadly the baby only lived one day, perhaps raising thoughts associated with Tom's brother Will and Will's wife, and the three children they lost before one eventually survived and grew to manhood. Were Tom and Lucy destined to undergo the same heartaches?

After cautiously anticipating the addition to their family for nine months, and then losing the child, the couple was devastated and sadly made their way to the newly-created Rexburg cemetery, and buried their infant first-born in the frozen ground. They marked the grave with a little white obelisk-shaped tombstone, embellished with a kneeling solitary lamb.

Much was to happen before a second child came into their lives, four years later.

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>14</sup>Sugar City is approximately 4 miles from Rexburg. Lucy later tells of walking the eggs from the homestead into town, and selling them for ten cents a dozen in order to buy groceries.

<sup>15</sup>See chapter 18.



Chapter Eleven  
PREFACE TO A MISSION<sup>1</sup>

*Unsettled Times*

In 1885 (the year of the formation of the defense committee in Rexburg), three years before Elder Bassett's call to Britain, President Thomas E. Ricks went into hiding<sup>2</sup> to avoid imprisonment, by accepting a mission call to England. President Rigby, his first counselor then served briefly as the presiding elder in the Bannock Stake until he was arrested in September and convicted in a mock trial in a saloon in Blackfoot. Later that month, while his sentencing was pending, Rigby also left for the mission field in England.<sup>3</sup>

President Ricks and President Rigby both returned from Britain in 1887 (one year before Elder Bassett was called to England). Consequently Tom was well aware of all of these happenings in Rexburg before leaving for the mission field himself. After Ricks' return, the stake president was successful in staying out of sight. Rigby, however, was again spotted in Blackfoot and arrested in July. He was sentenced to serve a six-month prison term. In 1889 (while Elder Bassett was on his mission in Britain), President Ricks was also arrested and sent to prison.<sup>4</sup>

Through activities involving his own extended family, Thomas E. was intimately acquainted with the plural marriage prosecutions during this purge. His brother-in-law, Bishop Hughes of Mendon, had been arrested and sent to prison from November 1887 to April of 1888.<sup>5</sup> Tom's brother Will, because of his role as Bishop of the Salt Lake 20<sup>th</sup> Ward (a very high-profile position) also became a major target for the federal marshals. In 1884, one year after his father and mother moved to Rexburg, Will and his wife, Sarah Ann, began having marital problems. As his father had

---

<sup>1</sup>All references, unless otherwise noted, are from the missionary journal of Elder Thomas E. Bassett, currently (2017) in the possession of the author.

<sup>2</sup>A setting commonly referred to as "the underground."

<sup>3</sup>During those years that Ricks and Rigby were in Britain, Bishop Robert L. Bybee of Menan was appointed "acting stake president" of the Bannock stake by the LDS church leadership (many of whom were on the underground themselves).

<sup>4</sup>Ricks had been arrested the year before (1888), shortly after Elder Bassett went to Britain, but was released at that time because of lack of evidence. However, in 1889 he was arrested a second time and imprisoned..

<sup>5</sup>Schimmelpfennig, 51. Hughes returned to Mendon (reputedly a broken man), about one month before Tom left for the mission field.

predicted before the couple left Wales and sailed for America, Will came to regret his decision to marry Sarah.

Sarah maintained that Will had taken a second wife that year while he was still married to her, and ordered him out of their home, announcing that she would not live under the same roof as a polygamist. Consequently, for several months Will slept in his office and took his meals at a nearby hotel. In 1886, he applied for a divorce from Sarah, who wanted him tried for polygamy. At this juncture the facts become blurred. Will maintained that he had not married his second wife, Catherine Smith, until he was divorced from Sarah in 1886. Sarah Ann maintained otherwise.<sup>6</sup>

Whatever the truth, William was arrested in the latter part of 1886 (the year Tom and Lucy were married) and subjected to a trial the following year. Accordingly, he left Salt Lake City in 1887, and moved his family to Trinidad, Colorado, where he would be less conspicuous.<sup>7</sup> All of this had happened in the Bassett family on the eve of Tom's leaving for the mission field.

### *A Call From the Prophet*

Saturday, 11 February 1888. Just twelve days shy of the first anniversary of the passing of the Bassett's daughter Elsie May, President Wilford Woodruff,<sup>8</sup> extended a mission call to Elder Thomas E. Bassett of Rexburg, Idaho.<sup>9</sup> The call was to serve in Great Britain, beginning in April or May, depending on the recipient's choice.

Days later, the letter arrived at its destination, and Tom and Lucy sat reading and rereading this letter from Box B,<sup>10</sup> trying to decide on a response. There was no question whether or not he would accept the call. It was, after all, from the Prophet of the Lord.

The only problem involved working out the details: How would they finance both the mission

---

<sup>6</sup>For a full account of William's problems and trials, see Bassett, Teresa, *William Edward Bassett* (on line in *Bassett Digital Genealogy Pages*), and Tullidge, Edward W. *Tullidge's Histories*, "Bishop William E. Bassett." II: 220-27.

<sup>7</sup>Little is known about his life and employment there—or why he moved specifically to Trinidad.

<sup>8</sup>President John Taylor passed away on 25 July 1887, in Kaysville, Utah, while hiding from federal marshals.

<sup>9</sup>At the time of the call, President Woodruff was acting in his calling as President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. He officially became President of the Church with counselors on 7 April 1889, while Elder Bassett was in the mission field.

<sup>10</sup>This was the popular reference to designate a letter coming from Church headquarters.

and Lucy's upkeep? ... What should they do about the tithing office? ... What should they do with the farm? ... Tom's father was 60 years old at the time, and his mother, Margaret, was beginning to lose her eyesight. How would they be cared for? What should Tom do regarding the departure date, 19<sup>th</sup> of April, or 12<sup>th</sup> of May?

The last question was easy to answer. In his acceptance letter Tom explained that he needed the extra time provided by the later date to "straighten up his affairs and put in a crop of grain before leaving." However, no sooner did he commence plowing than he was stricken with a violent attack of rheumatism (a malady that he was meeting for the first time, but one that was to trouble him in his later life). As a consequence of the affliction, he was not able to perform any manual labor until a few days prior to the appointed starting time for his mission. Because of the rheumatism he was relegated to crutches. On Tuesday, 21 February, Elder Bassett was ordained to the priesthood office of a Seventy in his bishop's home in Rexburg by John Morgan, one of the Seven Presidents of Seventy.<sup>11</sup>

Weeks passed rapidly, and at one o'clock in the afternoon on Monday, 7 May, Tom and Lucy climbed aboard their wagon, flicked the reins, and slowly drove away from their home. As they left, Tom took one last look at their farm. It would be two long years until he would see it again. His emotions were mixed. He was eager to get started in this new calling, but sad to be leaving home ... and Lucy.

### *Back to Utah*

This journey by wagon terminated at Market Lake, at which place Tom and Lucy switched to a train headed to Mendon. They arrived the next morning at 8:00 o'clock. As they pulled into the station, memories of Elder Bassett's time spent tending the depot must have been rekindled.

The couple were met at the depot by Elder Bassett's brother-in-law, Bishop Henry Hughes. Hughes had recently been released from the state prison two weeks before (April 26), after serving five months for "unlawful cohabitation." As was the experience of many other convicted polygamists, Hughes seemed to have suffered severe psychological trauma. Those who knew him best said that Hughes was never the same after his prison confinement."<sup>12</sup>

After having breakfast at the Bishop's home, the couple borrowed the bishop's horse and buggy, and rode out to see Tom's sister Becca and her children. Later, after a ride around Wellsville

---

<sup>11</sup>At that date there were only seven members of that body, commonly referred to as the Seven Presidents of the Seventies. These men presided over all those in the wards and stakes of the church who were called to the priesthood office of a seventy, whose major calling was missionary work.

<sup>12</sup> Cleta Robinson Bassett. "Rebecca Bassett - Henry Hughes" *Family Compilation*, p. 26.

to show Lucy the area associated with Tom's adolescent years, they drove back to Bishop Hughes' home, where they spent the night.

The next morning the couple caught an early train to Salt Lake City. There they were met by Lucy's uncle, Lorenzo Pettit, at whose home they stayed for a week—until the following Tuesday. Elder Bassett records that there they were treated royally by Lucy's side of the family:

He [Pettit] took us to his home where we stayed until the 15<sup>th</sup> inst. being treated with the greatest courtesy and respect, he and his wife presenting us with \$30.00 besides several presents to Lucy and a very handy pocket Bible to me and filled my lunch basket with Bread, Pickles, meat, cheese, butter, etc. etc. [sic] besides oranges, apples and other fruits preparatory for my journey and had the use of his buggy to go to & from the city whenever we pleased.

The day after arriving at the Pettit's, the couple drove into the city where Elder Bassett was set apart for his mission by Heber J. Grant,<sup>13</sup> and Seymour B. Young.<sup>14</sup> Still on crutches, Tom was promised in his blessing that he would not need them on his mission. At Robert Campbell's office that same day he received a seventies license.<sup>15</sup> After leaving that office, while crossing the street, Lucy was "run against by a horse and buggy and hurt ... severely for several hours." (Such were the perils of traffic at the time.) Tom records thankfully that she felt better the next morning.

The next few days Elder Bassett was busy, picking up his tickets and receiving last minute instructions for his journey. On the 15<sup>th</sup> he met with seven other elders who had been assigned to Europe, and boarded the train with them. He records his wrenching split with Lucy simply, and yet poignantly:

We left Salt Lake City by the 8 a.m. train and arrived at Ogden at 9:30 a. m. Here came the tug of war. Lucy taking the U[tah] and N[orthern] train for the North and me the U[nion P[acific] train for the East.

The train pulled out of the station at 10:10 a. m.

While Elder Bassett was making his way eastward in the company of other elders, visiting new and exciting stops along the way, Lucy was making her way northward alone, returning to their empty home in Rexburg. Not only was the residual pain from the accident involving the horse and buggy still with her, but the pain in her heart made the journey even more distressing. Two lonely years lie ahead for her. Two lonely years during which she would have to rely extensively on her

---

<sup>13</sup>Heber J. Grant at the time had been a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles for six years. He later became President of the Church.

<sup>14</sup>Elder Young was a member of the First Council of Seventy.

<sup>15</sup>This was a document intended to identify the holder as a missionary of the LDS Church. It was customary at the time to ordain missionaries to the priesthood office of a seventy.

Rexburg relatives for support. It had been determined earlier by the couple that she would take care of the tithing office during her husband's absence.

\* \* \* \* \*

Chapter Twelve  
MISSIONARY TO BRITAIN

*Back to England*

In his journal Elder Bassett recounts in detail the stops along the way to the East: Morgan, Utah ... Council Bluffs, Iowa ... Chicago, Illinois ... and Niagra Falls, New York. At Niagra the missionaries stopped long enough to go sight-seeing at the falls. Then it was back to Buffalo, New York, and on to New York City. There Elder Bassett records visiting Central Park and the Brooklyn Bridge.<sup>1</sup> Regarding Central Park he comments, “It was the grandest and most beautiful place of the kind my eyes ever beheld.” All of these stops were both engaging and exciting to this 26-year-old man fresh from his farm in Rexburg, USA.

On Tuesday the 22<sup>nd</sup>, at 2 o’clock in the afternoon, the little coterie of missionaries, together with eleven more elders from Utah who joined them in New York City, steamed out of New York harbor on the *S.S. Nevada* (the same ship on which Elder Bassett’s brother Will had emigrated to America). Tom would be the only member of the family to cross the Atlantic in both directions. As soon as they boarded the ship, Elder Bassett discarded his crutches, as he had been promised he would do in his blessing, and never needed them again until many years later.

He records passing the Statue of Liberty at 2:30 in the afternoon, and then putting out to the open sea. (The statue was a new addition to the harbor since he had been there.) Elder Bassett records very little concerning the ocean voyage, except that although the journey was a favorable one in the main, he was sick several of the days, and that he was overjoyed upon seeing the shores of Ireland after nine days on the water. As customary, near midnight the ship made a stop at Queenstown. There they docked for about an hour, took care of business, and then journeyed on to Liverpool, arriving at the docks on Friday, June 1.

*Assignment to London*

At Liverpool the elders were met by Elder George Teasdale, the then-current mission president.<sup>2</sup> Though the docks had changed somewhat in the last 13 years, they also must have brought back vivid memories of his earlier departure from there as a teenager. Elder Teasdale took the missionaries to the mission headquarters for a tour of the facilities and a short briefing. Then they stayed over the weekend

---

<sup>1</sup>Central Park was created in the mid-1800s, and therefore was relatively new. The Brooklyn Bridge had been open to the public for only five years at this time.

<sup>2</sup>Elder Teasdale was at that time also a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

at a bed and breakfast establishment. However, feeling that the B&B was too expensive, they moved into a hotel across the street from the mission home.

The next day, Saturday, Elder Bassett and Elder Noah Williams (whom he may have previously known, since both were from Cache Valley), visited the local museum.<sup>3</sup> Once again, Thomas E. records his excitement at the variety and strangeness of the things he saw there.<sup>4</sup> Reading between the lines of his descriptions of the places that he visited, one senses his intense interest and curiosity. In many ways his mission was proving to be a schooling for his future life, as well as a proselyting endeavor.

The following day he preached his first sermon in England before going on an eight-mile “stroll” in the park. (A major feat after just shedding his crutches days before.) Monday he left Liverpool and traveled to the London Conference, his first assignment in the mission field. After settling in at the Conference House at 11 Chichester Place on Harrow Road in Paddington, and meeting Pres. Henry Ballard (the local district president), he visited a public bath.

The first few days in London were spent, as they were with most missionaries of that time, in sight-seeing, visiting with some of the London saints, and studying. One evidence of his commitment to scholarship is his notation of buying a copy of *Josephus*<sup>5</sup> from President Ballard. Elder Bassett also went shopping and outfitted himself in a stylish wardrobe befitting a missionary’s calling: a new silk hat, gloves, celluloid collar, and a necktie. To complement the ensemble, he also purchased a new walking cane.<sup>6</sup>

### *William Jarman*

On Friday, after being in the mission field for only one week, Elder Bassett had his first encounter with William Jarman, Mormonism’s arch-enemy in Britain. Jarman was one of the most infamous opponents of Mormonism to appear in LDS church history.

Dressing in LDS temple clothes, Jarman would preach on street corners in England and Wales, brandishing a sword and using it to demonstrate how the Mormons in Utah supposedly cut off the heads of any who left the faith or tried to leave the territory. His followers were frequently engaged in disrupting LDS gatherings by breaking down the doors at meeting places and destroying the contents

---

<sup>3</sup>Likely the Liverpool Museum, opened originally in 1860.

<sup>4</sup>He records, “saw Egyptian Gods and Pharaohs, a clock 200 years old showing year, month, day of the week & time of day, also fossils of Human beings in solid rock, huge whale skeletons, birds & beasts (stuffed) of every variety and kind imaginable.”

<sup>5</sup>Josephus is a well known Jewish historian writing about the same time as Luke in the New Testament era.

<sup>6</sup>This ensemble he faithfully documented in a missionary photograph.

inside.

During 1886 and 1887, Elder B. H. Roberts (whose mission overlapped Elder Bassett's by four months) began debating Jarman from place to place.<sup>7</sup> Roberts eventually gained control of the various Jarman meetings by exposing the questionable credentials of the man who claimed to have lived in Utah, where he had supposedly witnessed "an overnight snowfall of thirteen feet and had been forced to live among the pine trees of the craggy Rocky Mountains where myriads of lions and tigers roamed the slopes."

Many times Roberts' life was threatened by Jarman's disciples, but he was able to escape the mobs with police protection when the enraged crowds tried to rush him, "to get me under their feet." The riotous confrontations continued off and on for some time with Roberts ever ready to challenge this antagonist. Finally, at one meeting, Roberts trumped Jarman by reading a telegram to the crowd, containing a message that disclosed that the anti-Mormon apostate had once been incarcerated in "an insane asylum."

Elder Bassett records in detail his own encounter with Jarman. On this early occasion he and his companion, Elder Seegmiller, were alone in the mission office. Jarman and a cohort knocked on the door, and were invited to come in and sit down. Bassett writes:

He presented us some of his bills announcing that he would hold a meeting on Wednesday Evening next to expose Mormonism. Headed Wm. Jarman the escaped Mormon High Priest from Salt Lake City, whose grave was dug in Utah three different times but was rescued by the late General Garfield.

We told him that this was an infamous lie and he knew it and that if he did not turn around and repent that the curses of Almighty God would rest upon him. He then commenced asking very absurd and unbecoming questions and abusing the Church and the people most ridiculous [sic]. We then told them we had no further use of their company or their falsehoods and ordered them outdoors.

As they were leaving Barnfield [Jarman's associate] says We have 300 Englishmen, not Americans, that would defend them in protecting their English Girls. Just as they were leaving the front door Jarman says Ah, wouldn't you like to take a razor and cut my throat from ear to ear. Thank God I have escaped from the Mormons; we told him he had escaped from nowhere but the lunatic asylum.

The following Wednesday, Elder Bassett and his companion attended the meeting that Jarman had been advertising, recording:

Spent [the day] in studying, went to Jarman's Lecture Hall in evening [He] had two of his representatives out on the door steps hollering as loud as they possibly could inviting people to come inside and hear Mr. Jarman the Ex-High Priest expose Mormonism calling the Mormons

---

<sup>7</sup>Details of Jarman's escapades involving Roberts are from the introduction to Brigham D. Madsen's *The Essential B. H. Roberts*.



all the blackguards, whoremongers and murderers he could mention and stating that in Utah the Mormons openly practice murder, seduction and adultery.

### *Proselytizing in London*

Since London was such an urban center, most of the active proselyting was done at street meetings. Two favorite spots for these extemporary meetings were Speaker's Corner at Hyde Park<sup>8</sup> and in front of the Bethnal Green Museum.<sup>9</sup> These meetings typically began with the singing of a hymn to attract a crowd. Then the elders would take turns addressing a gospel subject while the other elders in attendance would move in and around the assembled crowd, distributing tracts. Each of these tracts was a small booklet containing a treatise on some phase of the missionaries' message.

Often these street meetings were disrupted by hecklers (many of whom were drunk). One such is recorded by Elder Bassett:

... held meeting at night near Bethnal Green Museum. Elder Payne and I did the preaching. as soon as I bore my testimony that Joseph Smith was a Prophet of God a man stepped up to me and called me a liar shouting to the top of his voice in the presence of about 100 people I paid no attention to him but simply treated him with silent contempt.

On another occasion Elder Bassett records that no one stopped to listen to them sing, so the elders decided not to hold a meeting.

Sunday meetings with the local Saints were held as well. Many of these attended by Elder Bassett were held in eastern London, in the Phoenix Temperance Hall in Whitechapel. The church had an active branch in Whitechapel, and that is the section of London where much of the missionaries' London activities took place, including those of Elder Bassett.

Whitechapel was also the scene of the Jack-the-Ripper murders that occurred between August and November of 1888, the first year Bassett was in London and working in Whitechapel. It is interesting to note that there is no mention in his journal of these heinous atrocities that always made the headlines in the daily newspapers.

---

<sup>8</sup>In 1872, in the Royal Parks and Garden's Act, the people of England gained the right of free assemblage. Since that time this "spiritual home of British democratic tradition of soapbox oratory" has been a favorite gathering place for speakers and hecklers to assemble and confront each other—especially on Sundays. Mormon missionaries used the site well into the 1960's.

<sup>9</sup>During Elder Bassett's mission, the Bethnal Green Museum contained primarily collections of animal and food products from the Crystal Palace Great Exhibition of 1851 and the art collection of Sir Richard Wallace, comprised of 1600 works (now housed in the famed Wallace Collection in central London). The Bethnal Green Museum has since been converted into the National Museum of Childhood.

### *Drowning of Simon Baker*

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of August, Elder Bassett records receiving word of the accidental drowning of his brother-in-law, Simon Baker in Teton. Simon and Elder Bassett's younger sister, Sarah, had been married for less than four years when this tragedy struck. Sarah was 23 at the time, and one month pregnant with the couple's second child. She was at home while Simon was working on a dam on the Teton River, a mile away, in the company of several men from the town.

They were hauling rock and cutting small trees and willows to build a dam to back the water up enough to get it to run down a ditch they had plowed with their hand plows and shoveled out by hand. ... Because Simon was such a great swimmer, he was elected to swim across the river taking a tow line to pull trees across which would fall into a pattern against driven pegs. Rock would be added and willows to shut the water off.

Simon had made several crossings when the others heard him yell, "Help! Help me." They didn't pay much heed as Simon was a kidder and often pulled pranks to keep the dullness out of situations. He continued to call for help until the group finally decided he must have taken a cramp and he was not kidding, but it was too late. Simon drowned on July 9, 1888 and his body was swept away down the river. The men tried to retrieve his body but could not find it.<sup>10</sup>

Two days after getting the first letter, Elder Bassett records receiving a letter from Lucy, informing him that they had found the body. On August 5<sup>th</sup> he sent a letter of condolence to his sister Sarah. Other than noting the letters, there are no other comments or written reflections in the diary regarding the accident.

### *Sight-Seeing in London*

In 1956, Elder Adam S. Bennion, then a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, told a group of missionaries in Cardiff Wales that any missionary who returned home after his mission without bringing back to the saints in Zion a part of the culture of his mission field, failed an important part of his calling.<sup>11</sup> This was a concept readily understood by the British missionaries, especially those who had the opportunity to spend time in what was then the leading city in western civilization.

Elder Bassett was no exception. Scattered throughout his journal are references to visits made to Royal Albert Hall<sup>12</sup> ... the Albert Memorial<sup>13</sup> ... the Alhambra Theater ... the Bethnal Green Museum

---

<sup>10</sup>Mackliet. "Simon Pack Baker." n.p.

<sup>11</sup>The author was in attendance at the meeting.

<sup>12</sup>On the occasion of his visit there (Good Friday, April 19), Elder Bassett records that he attended a performance of Handel's *Messiah*. ... "236 Female and 180 Male Voices, 1 Large Organ, 27 Bass Fiddles, 60 Common Fiddles, 2 Bass Drums & 6 Brass Instruments about

... the Crystal Palace<sup>14</sup> ... the House of Commons and House of Lords<sup>15</sup> ... Primrose Hill<sup>16</sup> ... London Bridge<sup>17</sup> ... the Kensington Museum<sup>18</sup> ... Madame Tussaud's Waxworks<sup>19</sup> ... the Oxford Music

---

8,000 people in attendance.” (Actually the hall was built to house 5,000 maximum.) The building was 17 years old at the time. As always, Elder Bassett's recording of details is extraordinary.

<sup>13</sup>Completed thirteen years before the visit of Elder Bassett.

<sup>14</sup>Officially known as the Great Exhibition of 1851; as previously noted, it was the first World's Fair. After the closing of the Exhibition, the Palace itself was dissembled and moved to Sydenham Hill in south London, and there it was reassembled. It was there, in the area now known as Crystal Palace, that Elder Bassett would have visited it.

<sup>15</sup>It seems out of character that he mentions only the Queen's Throne from among the treasures contained in these two Houses of Parliament.

<sup>16</sup>Primrose hill is just north of Regent's Park and provides one of the most panoramic views of London.

<sup>17</sup>This would have been the bridge constructed in 1825, the one now at Lake Havasu, Arizona.

<sup>18</sup>This was most likely the Museum of Science, created in 1857 from the proceeds of the Crystal Palace Exhibit, and located just south of Kensington Gardens on Exhibition Road. Elder Bassett's interest was primarily in weaving and knitting machines, machines for assembling “wire rope,” a carding machine, and wooden sewing machines of 1830 ... in short, the kinds of things that would interest a farmer.

<sup>19</sup>Elder Bassett notes primarily statues of all the British royalty since William the Conqueror and the Presidents of the U.S. to his time. He also mentions visiting the Chamber of Horrors for an extra six pence. There he saw “innumerable images showing the barbarous modes of torture used by different people at different stages of the world's history.”

Hall<sup>20</sup> ... the Salvation Army Hall<sup>21</sup> ... the South Kensington Museum<sup>22</sup> ... St. Paul's Cathedral <sup>23</sup>... and Westminster Abbey.<sup>24</sup> On the outskirts of London he also mentions visits to Greenwich<sup>25</sup> ... Kew

---

<sup>20</sup>Established in 1850, the programs of the music hall were much like vaudeville—with musical numbers, character songs, male and female impersonators, magic acts, aerial acts, etc.

<sup>21</sup>Elder Bassett attended the opening of the hall and was unimpressed. He records that it “exceeded all the meetings that I ever attended for hollering, shouting Hallelujah etc. that I ever attended [sic] in fact it was the noisiest gathering I ever witnessed inside a house either on a concert or theater capacity included.” The Salvation Army was founded in 1865.

<sup>22</sup>This has since been absorbed into the Museum of Science. Dickens had earlier written “There are, however, few institutions more worthy of a visit. There, crowded together, are mechanical inventions of all kinds.” Bassett records seeing Stephenson’s Rocket, “that was about the first locomotive ever constructed & any number of different designs & models of ships, engines, and machinery of every description.”

<sup>23</sup>In St. Paul’s Cathedral, Elder Bassett was primarily interested in the library and the Whispering Gallery. In the latter, visitors sat against the wall and “listened to a man whispering at a distance of 170 ft. every word of which was distinctly heard, the sound following the walls in the huge structure among other things he whispered the cost of the building, £3,500,000 and that it was built in the 17th century and was 11 years in building.” Again one can see the extremely careful notes that the missionary took on most occasions of this nature.

<sup>24</sup>The only thing Elder Bassett records from his trip through the Abbey were the 900-year-old tombs.

<sup>25</sup>Upon arriving by way of the Thames, he visited the Institute & Picture Gallery and “the great Clock.” In 1884, only four years before Elder Bassett arrived in England, Greenwich, became the home of Greenwich Meridian Time, the location from which all time zones in the world are measured. The clock he refers to is most likely the official international timepiece referenced throughout the world.

Gardens<sup>26</sup> ... Woolwich Arsenal<sup>27</sup> ... and Cambridge.<sup>28</sup>

### *Transfer to Kent*

On or about 4 December 1888, Elder Bassett was transferred to the Kent District. While there, his method of proselyting changed radically. Once out of the city of London, street meetings became largely a thing of the past. From that point on, the bulk of his tracting was done while traveling from village to village, usually on foot. Sometimes while he was on the road he was picked up and given a ride by a passer-by. Of one such occasion he records:

I was invited by a Mr. Finn (a wealthy farmer) to ride with him which I cheerfully accepted and laid the Gospel down to him as best I could and gave him a short history of our people, their persecutions etc. to which he listened with much attention and showed by his expressions that his Sympathy was with our people he gave me his address and requested me to send him some tracts which I very willingly promised to do he finally stated he was more pleased to have met me that evening than he would have been the Prince of Wales. (19 December '88.)

It is at this juncture in his mission where his work without purse or script also becomes more evident in his journal. Typically he stayed overnight with a member, who usually provided at least a

---

<sup>26</sup>Of all the sites visited, this one caused Elder Bassett to wax the most eloquently: “The perfume from the flowers of every description name and nature that could be thought of that were there was indeed magnificent and more beautiful than tongue can express and the beautiful trees and lawns diversified with flowers of varied hue and the sweet songs of the birds and the sun was declining in the cool of the evening was really a foretaste of heaven and all the more enjoyed when for the past few days we had spent our time in the smoke and dust of busy and great old London”

<sup>27</sup>Woolwich Arsenal had been manufacturing ordinance since the Tudor era. It was located on the south bank of the river Thames at Woolwich, east of Greenwich. It became a renowned center of mechanical engineering and a noted research center for armament design. The now-famous Arsenal Football Club had its beginning there two years before Elder Bassett’s visit. The club was originally created to provide recreation for the employees of the arsenal.

This site seems to have captured his interest more intensely than most he visited. He records, “I beheld the greatest works I had ever previously seen.” He then records in detail “360 acres of ground ... 16,000 men employed ... 150 miles of railway ... 63,000 sets of harness stacked ready for use at any moment ... a hammer weighing 40 tons ... a 247,795 pound gun.” And then he concludes, “far surpasses any description that can be given without a visit there personally.”

<sup>28</sup>Elder Bassett reports visiting the colleges and the backgrounds, which he felt “were lovely beyond description.”

breakfast for him.<sup>29</sup> Frequently this is also where his laundry was done. When he was ill, he would often get succor from the members, such as the boiled onions administered to help rid him of a cold (December 29, '89). Three week later, he records receiving an onion poultice.

Sometimes he volunteered to help a member or an investigator with the family's harvesting, recalling life in Rexburg and reminding him of family and his farm at home. However, the day after was never as it was at harvest time in Rexburg:

Walked to Garveston and took tea with Sister Durrant ... was so stiff and sore from the effects of the Hay Field that I could not walk to Norwich<sup>30</sup> as anticipated so we took train to Norwich where we found the rest of the Brethren all O. K.  
(9 July '89).

He moved from one village to another, leaving tracts along the way to acquaint people with the teachings of the church, hence the term "tracting." Later, as it was customary, he returned and gathered the first tract and left another, holding meetings where possible with those interested, discussing the contents of the previous tract. Sometimes he had success:

... spent the evening with a family at Luton as per appointment and taught them the Gospel as best we could had a first rate time he acknowledged he had never heard anything so plain and in accordance with scripture before, and wanted to know what manner of men we were to cast aside the commentaries of learned men on the bible as bosh and still teach the scriptures so plain in contradiction to learned men's ideas and asked us if we were angels, etc. we were very well received and invited us to call again. (14 January 1889.)

Sometimes the going was less smooth, as recorded nine days later:

Breakfast at Cornfords walked to Doddington to change tracts and could only get 2 families to take a second one met with opposition at nearly every house some would slam the door in my face others mock at us thro the windows.

However, as Elder Bassett notes in a later interview, times were not as hard as they had been earlier in the same mission field, when missionary meetings were broken up and the elders pelted with rotten eggs. "Now the missionaries are treated mainly with indifference," he notes. "They do not oppose us, but neither on the other hand do they in any way recognize us."<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup>Elder Bassett's grandson, Thomas M. Bassett Jr., while tracting as a missionary in an apartment complex in the Toronto Canada mission during the late 1940's, met a woman who had known Elder Bassett (his grandfather) in England. She invited Thomas and his companion into her apartment, and when she discovered his name, replied that she had known an Elder Bassett in England, left the room and returned with a picture of Thomas E. in his missionary attire.

<sup>30</sup>A distance of approximately 10 miles.

<sup>31</sup>Appendix C. Undated article from the *Eastern Daily Press* of Norwich, England. The entire article is pasted into the back of Elder Bassett's missionary journal.

Throughout his mission he was keenly aware of any Bassetts he met. In each case he tried to establish a common ancestry, but was never successful in making a genealogical link. He found Bassetts in Luton and Marden, and one in Ramsgate, an A. Bassett, who, he said, greatly resembled his brother, Will, but he was not able to establish a family connection.

Letters were the lifeline to home, and he faithfully records all of them, and any money they contained—including five dollars donated by the Rexburg Primary and five from the Rexburg YMMIA. He also faithfully records sending letters to his friends and relatives, including his “cousins in Wales,” D. W. Miller and Cassie Matthews.<sup>32</sup>

Among the more distasteful aspects of missionary work to fall his lot involved church disciplinary trials leading to a reprimand or excommunication of one or more of the saints in the district, ... for example: Wm. H. Wellers for apostasy ... Matilda and Minnie Ferrell for unchristian-like conduct ... Walter Whitehead for drinking excessively ... Sister Rushmer for a “difficulty between her and Brother Jarman,” and for her refusal to attend a disciplinary council.

But he also was no stranger to the lighter side of missionary life, as recorded on the occasion of a party on Boxing Day (the day after Christmas), in 1888:

returned to Hy Osborne’s and spent the evening in playing games, doing tricks etc. dancing etc. drank lots of home made wine lots of Apples, oranges, nuts etc. On retiring found our bed lined under the sheet with thorns but [put?] there by Sister Carrie Dixon who with some of the rest of the folks listened just outside the door at the fun but we picked them out, and rested all O.K. although they felt pretty sharp at first.

### *District President in Norwich*

On 8 June, 1889, Elder Bassett received a letter from President Teasdale, appointing him to preside over the Norwich District, one of the thirteen districts in the British mission at that time. He and four other elders then had the responsibility of directing a membership of 102 saints in an area embracing Norwich, Suffolk, and parts of Lincolnshire and Cambridge. Thomas E. presided over the Norwich District from June of 1889 until his release in May of 1890.

The calling of a district president in the mission field was analogous to being a stake president in a stake. Hence this calling was another important training opportunity for Thomas E.’s future, a harbinger of his calling to serve as the stake president in Rexburg thirteen years later. Little did either of the participants involved in his calling dream that as events would fall out later, Elder Teasdale, his former mission president, acting in his apostolic role, would be the one who set Elder Bassett apart as stake president of the Fremont Stake.

---

<sup>32</sup>We currently have no way of knowing who these “cousins” were, unless they were from the line of his mother’s cousin Catherine Edward David.

On Sunday, the day after his arrival in Norwich, he attended a meeting of the Salvation Army, and heard General Booth, the founder of the movement, speak.

During his time in Norwich his journal records more open-air meetings like he had participated in while in London ... the market place in Norwich and the post office front being the missionaries' favorite sites. Some of these meetings were attended by over 200 people. One he held in the village of Shipdham on Sunday, 30 June is worthy of note:

I distributed tracts around to every house I could find for a mile and a half around and told all I saw that I would hold an open air meeting at 6 P.M. The result was that at 6 o'clock about 25 persons had congregated on the spot designated and at that hour the Church Bell Rope broke just as it started to Ring to call people to Church which resulted in no church services being held Only about 5 went to Chapel and I had at least 100 who sat around me on the grass on the road side and I Talked to them for an hour and a quarter, with the best of attention.

It was near this time that Elder Bassett notes those who opposed him raising the issues of Fannie Stenhouse's book, *Expose of Polygamy: A Lady's Life among the Mormons*, and the account of the Mountain Meadow massacre. Both cast adverse aspersions on the church in Utah.

On 12 July he was interviewed by a reporter from the *Eastern Daily Press* (see Appendix C). The interview is one of the fairest non-Mormon articles that could possibly come out of England at that time. Especially interesting is Elder Bassett's answers to questions about emigration, about plural marriage, and about the use of the Book of Mormon by the missionaries. Of the latter he responds:

[Interviewer] How about the Book of Mormon; do you preach from it?

[Elder Bassett] No; we simply preach from the Bible. The Book of Mormon contains a sacred history of the ancient inhabitants of America and the fulness of the everlasting Gospel as taught by our Saviour to the inhabitants of that land after His resurrection. It is to some extent doctrinal, but mainly a historical book.

Shortly after the first interview a negative response was noted in a rival paper, *Daylight*. (see Appendix D).

One of the duties of the missionaries in their tracting endeavors was to solicit subscriptions for the *LDS Millennial Star*, the mission's periodical in Britain. Elder Bassett seems pleased to record the fact that he was successful in placing the magazine into the Norwich library.

Unfortunately, Elder Bassett's journal skips from 25<sup>th</sup> July to 3<sup>rd</sup> August, possibly because of the added responsibilities of his calling demanding more of his time. The journal ends abruptly in mid-sentence with an entry on Wednesday, Aug 14<sup>th</sup>. (It appears that subsequent pages have been removed from the binding and lost.)

Fortunately we can piece together some of his later activities from entries in the *Millennial Star*. We know from his farewell speech to the Norfolk Conference on 30 March 1890, that he returned to Wales at the end of his mission. Sadly we do not know what he did there, whom he visited, where he went, etc. In all probability he returned to his boyhood haunts in the Cardiff area—possibly to the old



home in Canton, and the graves of his siblings in Leckwith. He had just less than a month between that conference and departing from Liverpool on 20<sup>th</sup> April.

### *Home Again*

Once again Tom Bassett stood on the docks in Liverpool and went through the same process that he had gone through fourteen years earlier, only this time the ship was the *S.S. Wisconsin*. The saints on board were still engaged in singing, but they were fewer in number—52 out of the 602 passengers on board. The hours for prayer on the ship were the same. As it had been before, the organization of the Saints was completed by the time the ship reached Queenstown. However, this time Elder Bassett was a participant rather than an observer. He was selected as the secretary for the presidency on board.

The details of the crossing are recorded in a rather terse entry in the report to President Teasdale.

We sailed from Queenstown per *S.S. Wisconsin*, at about noon on Sunday the 20<sup>th</sup> ult., encountering very rough sea and head winds until the following Wednesday, when an agreeable change for the better was enjoyed for a few hours; but on Thursday morning the wind again changed and blew fiercely, causing the ship to roll and the waves to splash over the deck, and another siege of sea-sickness ensued similar to the first days of our voyage.

Head winds and rough sea were our lot afterwards until last Tuesday, since then the sea was smooth, and the winds favorable, the weather warm and pleasant, and all on board highly enjoyed so favorable a change.

At about 6:30 on Friday, the 25<sup>th</sup> ult. we passed four large icebergs, one of which was about one and a half miles in length.

This time the journey took 12 days. After disembarking at customs in New York, and having their luggage examined, the Saints were taken by ferry to Castle Gardens. The last time Elder Bassett had seen this site, the Gardens were just a burned-out assemblage of pillars. There they “passed the commissioners,” exchanged their English money for U.S. currency, and boarded a steamer for Norfolk, Virginia.

At Norfolk they secured tickets for all of the members of the company according to their various destinations. Rather than going the northern route the Bassetts had followed after their first crossing years earlier, this time the emigrants went via Memphis, Chattanooga Tennessee, and Kansas City Missouri. Then, for Elder Bassett. it was on to Salt Lake City, and finally to Idaho.

At long last he was back to Rexburg ... and to Lucy.

\* \* \* \* \*

Chapter Thirteen  
A CHANGING NATION

*The 1890's*

When Elder Bassett arrived home from his mission on 8 May 1890, he discovered the feeling commonly experienced by missionaries who have been away for two years, especially if they have served in a foreign mission. As Thomas Wolfe opined, one really can't go home again ... and find it as he left it. Elder Bassett himself could never be the same again. He had seen too much of what was out in the world. His vision of culture and life in general had expanded too much. He could never be content to return to the simple life of farming. Some time after his return he sought a new vocation in the real estate and insurance businesses.

Further, not only had Elder Bassett changed, but his adopted nation was also in the process of radical departures from its past. His arrival home coincided with the early beginnings of one of the major turning points in American cultural history. The last decade of the nineteenth century, which was later termed the *Gay Nineties*, or the *Mauve Decade* or the *Gilded Age* by historians, marked the turning point between the demise of the Victorian era and the emergence of modernism in America. Elder Bassett was destined to live in both.

*The Closing of the American Frontier*

The westward expansion of the population had been proceeding apace since the homestead act of 1862. Consequently, the American frontier was rapidly disappearing. Just as Elder Bassett's first introduction to America in 1876 had been marked by news of a major Native American battle,<sup>1</sup> so also was his re-entry in 1890; this time by the Wounded Knee Massacre in South Dakota.

On December 29, short months after his return, 365 troops of the U.S. 7th Cavalry surrounded an encampment of Lakota Sioux near Wounded Knee Creek in South Dakota, (over a thousand miles away from Rexburg), with orders to escort the Sioux to the railroad for transport to Omaha, Nebraska. However, when the army attempted to disarm the Native Americans, a brief skirmish broke out. The army employed their recently developed automatic weaponry.

Approximately 146 Lakota Sioux men, women, and children, as well as some of the U.S. troops, were killed in the altercation that ensued<sup>2</sup> The cavalry quickly suppressed the resistant, and the surviving Sioux fled, but the soldiers pursued and killed many of them, all of whom were unarmed. Around 150 Lakota are believed to have fled the chaos, with an unknown number later

---

<sup>1</sup>Custer's Last Stand.

<sup>2</sup>Many of the soldiers who died apparently were the victims of friendly fire.

dying from hypothermia in the cold of winter. This event marked the end of the Indian wars in North America, symbolically closing the days of the American frontier.

### *The Emergence of the New Rich*

New inventions were on the rise as America's industrial revolution became more and more evident during the latter part of the century. The 1890's witnessed the discovery or development of several new inventions as electricity was harnessed and steel developed. Thomas Edison and others were employing electricity to power sewing machines, phonographs, light bulbs, and early motion pictures (among other major inventions). Several of these new innovations made their first appearance at the 1893 Columbian Exposition (aka the Chicago World's Fair, aka The White City), the first major world's fair to be held in America, built to celebrate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of Columbus in America.

Automobiles began appearing on both sides of the Atlantic, and early experiments in flight were making the news, in the wake of the Wright brothers and the flight of their airplane at Kitty Hawk at the turn of the century. Even the little community of Rexburg was caught up in this new surge of inventions. Automobiles were soon seen on its streets, and the husband of Tom's daughter, Gwladys (Ralph Comstock) was the proud owner of one of the earliest of them. (There is also the possibility that Tom himself was the owner of a Studebaker auto as early as 1901.<sup>3</sup>)

In addition, a new economic class of society was emerging. By the end of the century, the newspapers were reporting the outlandish and often lurid activities of the so-called "nouveau riche" (new rich),<sup>4</sup> who accumulated multi-million dollar fortunes, largely from the railroad, steel, and oil industries, and unbridled speculation on the stock market.<sup>5</sup> These individuals became the new larger-than-life American superheroes, and all of society was captivated by the most recent escapades of this group as reported in the nation's media.

This in turn gave rise to a new style of sensationalist mass media commonly referred to as

---

<sup>3</sup>There is an invoice in Tom's name from the Studebaker Brother Manufacturing Company in Salt Lake City, dated 28 February 1901, in the papers of Thomas E. Bassett in the LDS Church History Library in Salt Lake City.

<sup>4</sup>As opposed to the "old rich," such as the Astors, who earlier had made their fortunes in the fur business.

<sup>5</sup>Most notable members of this group were the Mellons, the Carnegies, the Rockefellers, the Goulds, the Morgans, et al.

“Yellow Journalism.”<sup>6</sup> A war for circulation numbers between the two major proponents, Joseph Pulitzer’s *New York World* and William Randolph Hearst’s *New York Journal* resulted. Newspapers were never the same after the advent of this style of reporting.

Flamboyantly engaged in conspicuous consumption<sup>7</sup> designed to show off their riches, the new rich constructed larger and larger ostentatious mansions in Rhode Island, New York, North Carolina, and California, in which they held elaborate balls and outlandish parties that surpassed anything Americans had witnessed before. Their major goal (to outspend each other) gave rise to the title, “the gilded age.”<sup>8</sup>

The social divide between the rich and poor was never more evident, since there was another side to the America economy (other than that of the New Rich) during that same decade. The 1890s were also characterized by a severe economic depression set off by the “Panic of 1893.” Violent work strikes in the industrial workforce were highlighted in the news. For three years after the panic, the nation was stuck in a deep economic depression, marked by low incomes, low profits, high unemployment, and violent strikes. Novels and exposés focusing on the financial inequities of the era were eagerly consumed at all social levels.

### *Nation v. Church in Idaho*

In addition to all of this, when Elder Bassett returned to Idaho in May of 1890, the air was abuzz with talk of the rising conflict between the LDS church and the national government, centering in the Mormon practice of plural marriage. Two months and two days after Tom’s return, Idaho became a state. However, this came at great cost to the Mormon people and their theology, especially to their doctrine of plural marriage.

The practice of polygamy in the LDS church dates back to the days of Joseph Smith, who took an additional wife (Fanny Alger ) as early as 1835, following a reported revelation received when the Mormon prophet inquired of the Lord how such patriarchs as Abraham, Jacob, Moses,

---

<sup>6</sup>Aka “Yellow Kid Journalism,” so named in part because the two major papers at the time both carried a cartoon called “The Yellow Kid.” Frank Mott, in his history *American Journalism*, identifies five major features of the genre: 1) scare headlines in large print, 2) lavish use of pictures, 3) faked interviews and misleading headlines, 4) full color Sunday supplements, including comic strips, 5) dramatic sympathy with the underdog fighting against the system.

<sup>7</sup>The buying of expensive goods and services that typified membership in the economic upper class.

<sup>8</sup>The term was coined by Mark Twain in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to connote a society that was glittering on the surface, but corrupt underneath.

et al. were justified in taking plural wives.<sup>9</sup> From that time forward, plural marriage was clandestinely practiced by leaders of the church, typically as a result of a directive from Joseph.

Knowledge of the practice was made public in 1852, a decade before the birth of Elder Bassett. Elder Orson Pratt of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles first announced the revelation publically in a special LDS conference held for that purpose in August of that year. At that time the saints had been in Utah for five years, and were firmly ensconced in their mountain retreat.

Three years later, Pratt's brother Parley, the Chaplain of the Utah legislature (and also a member of the Twelve), delivered a speech to the Utah legislature explaining and defending the church's stand on the doctrine. This speech, entitled *Marriage and Morals in Utah*, was published as a pamphlet and widely circulated by the church throughout the English-speaking world.

Opposition to the practice was relatively slow in developing, but, beginning in 1862, a decade after the public announcement (and the year Tom was born), controversy involving the doctrine began to mount. From that year forward, legislation was introduced in the U.S. Congress approximately every decade, aimed at outlawing and further proscribing the practice.<sup>10</sup> Each new bill was designed to introduce more stringent penalties for those involved in either polygamy or what came to be known as "unlawful cohabitation."

Prosecution of plural marriage was at least as intense, or perhaps even more so, in Idaho as it was in Utah. As previously noted,<sup>11</sup> the infamous Idaho test-oath legislation made conditions for the Mormons in Idaho even more disquieting. The major way those in Idaho countered the test oath in practice from 1889 forward typically involved a member of the church having his name temporarily stricken from the records of the church. Then, as a non-member, he was eligible to vote. After the elections, the individual would reapply for baptism, and carry on as before. This tact became popular while Elder Bassett was in the mission field.

As a consequence of his mission, Tom was absent while his brother Will's convictions were appealed through the various courts, all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. There the case was thrown out in 1890 (after the return of Tom) on the grounds that Will's wife had been the major witness against him, and it was not lawful for a wife to testify against her husband.

While Elder Bassett was in the mission field, the state of Idaho drafted a constitution prior to its admission to statehood in 1890. The infamous test oath was written into the Idaho Constitution

---

<sup>9</sup>Unfortunately the revelation either was not written down, or was lost or destroyed. It is not currently available.

<sup>10</sup>Morrell Anti-Bigamy Act (1862); Poland Act (1874); Edmunds Act (1882); and the Edmunds-Tucker Act (1887).

<sup>11</sup>Chapter 9.

as Article Six, Section Three. It read in part:

No person is permitted to vote, serve as a juror, or hold any civil office ... who is a bigamist, or polygamist or is living in what is known as patriarchal, plural, or celestial marriage.

Furthermore, it went on to disenfranchise even those who

teach, advise, counsel, aid, or encourage any person to enter into the same, as well as those who are members of, contribute to the support of, aid, or encourage any order that teaches this doctrine.”<sup>12</sup>

It also blocked the practice of temporarily removing names from church records by stipulating that it applied to anyone who had been a member of the church since 1 January 1888. As noted, in 1890 the constitutionality of the Test Oath was challenged in the courts all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which upheld it.<sup>13</sup> After the Supreme Court supported the constitutionality of the Test Oath in Idaho, Utah’s anti-Mormon opposition threatened similar legislation in that state.

Therefore, when Elder Bassett returned from his mission, initially he was unable to vote, or to take part in politics. The major fight against plural marriage was well underway.

### *The Woodruff Manifesto*

In October 1890, five months after the return of Elder Bassett from Britain, he, like other members of the church, was shocked by President Wilford Woodruff’s announcement of a secession of plural marriage.<sup>14</sup> On September 24<sup>th</sup> of that year, President Woodruff met with the members of the Twelve (at least those who were not in hiding at the time), and presented to them what has come to be known as the Woodruff manifesto, mandating the end of plural marriage in the church. A long discussion ensued, and eventually ended with the tentative consensus of the majority of those assembled. Two weeks later the manifesto was presented at the general conference and unanimously sustained—sustained, but certainly not accepted enthusiastically.

Plural marriage was thereby ordered stopped (at least in theory) and the threat of excommunication from the church became the supposed lot of all who entered into polygamy after that date. The saints were stunned by this complete reversal from the church’s previous stance—from being considered a qualification for exaltation in the afterlife, to grounds for excommunication—all in one presidential mandate.

Speaking to the saints in Brigham City one year after this manifesto, President Woodruff

---

<sup>12</sup>B. H. M. *Revised Codes of Idaho*, Vol. I. 101.

<sup>13</sup>This legislation remained on the books largely as a blue law until 1981, at which time it was revisited and declared unconstitutional.

<sup>14</sup>LDS *Doctrine and Covenants*. Official Declaration—1.

explained that the Lord had revealed to him that many saints were disappointed by the decision. Further, he made known that the Lord had told him to ask the saints a question and promised that they would receive an answer by the power of the Holy Ghost.

The question is this. Which was the wisest course for the Latter-day Saints to pursue, to continue to attempt to practice plural marriage with the laws of the nation against it ... at the cost of confiscation and loss of all the temples and the stopping of all the ordinances therein both for the living & for the dead and the imprisonment of the First Presidency and Twelve and the leaders of heads of family ... and the confiscation of the personal property of the people (all of which of themselves would stop the practice)?

... or ... to cease the practice and submit to the law and through doing so have the prophets, apostles, and fathers at home so they can instruct the people and attend to the duties of the Church, also leave the temples in the hands of the Saints so they can attend to the ordinances of the gospel both for the living & the dead?<sup>15</sup>

To which he might have added, Idaho had disenfranchised all members of the church who embraced the doctrine of plural marriage, and Utah was threatening to do so as well.

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>15</sup>Wilford Woodruff *Journal*, October 25, 1891. Doctrine and Covenants, "Official Declaration-1; Excerpts from Three Addresses by President Wilford Woodruff Regarding the Manifesto." 292-93.

Chapter Fourteen  
POST-MISSION FAMILY AND POLITICS

*Returning to the Family*

It was against this changing backdrop that Elder Tom Bassett returned from his mission. His extended family was basically as he had left it. His sister Mae was still single and living with their parents across the road from his house in Rexburg. She had become increasingly more important to his mother Margaret, who was in the early stages of blindness, a condition that was to plague their mother during the last twenty years of her life.

The Muirs were living in Sugar Salem, near to the Bakers, who were living in Teton. The Muirs had moved to Idaho in 1886, two years prior to Tom's leaving for his mission. There, in Sugar Salem, their 3<sup>rd</sup> son, William Edward Muir had been born six months before Elder Bassett returned.

As a result of her husband Simon's accidental drowning accident, Elder Bassett's sister Sarah Baker, with her two children, Ward and Luella, had been living as a single mother for most of Tom's time in the mission field. However, when Elder Bassett returned, an up-coming marriage, projected for later that year, was in the planning. Simon's younger brother, John Rupert Baker,<sup>1</sup> had also moved up from Utah to seek his fortune, and had been living with his brother and sister-in-law in Teton at the time of Simon's drowning. According to family lore, Sarah became concerned about how outsiders would view the living conditions after her first husband's death, and eventually decided that she and John should marry.<sup>2</sup> The wedding took place two days before Christmas of 1890, seven months after Tom's return.

Becca was still in Mendon, still a plural wife to Henry Hughes, but living happily some distance from Hughes at *Clayton*, the cottage she shared with her sister-wife, Sarah Ann. One decade later, Hughes was released from his calling as bishop of the Mendon Ward. He was then ordained a patriarch, "a position considered by Hughes to be fit only for ineffectual, burned out old men." Gone, with his bishop's calling, was his power base.

That same year (1900), Becca was going through deep depression, and wanted to go to Rexburg to visit her family. One of her brothers (probably Tom) was sent by her father to help facilitate the trip, but Hughes in his paranoia refused to allow her to go, claiming it was all a plot to

---

<sup>1</sup>John was two years younger than Simon, and a year younger than Sarah.

<sup>2</sup>Baker, Raymond S. "Ward Basett [sic] Baker." in Mackliet, *Getting to Know Our Grandparents*. Hereafter GTKOG



steal her away from him. As a consequence, Becca's mother, Margaret went to visit her in Mendon, accompanied by Tom. Will wrote under date of 2 October of that year:

Tom be sure & so not let Mother come away from there to start for Mendon without you accompany her right to Beccys house at Mendon & see her landed there safe at Beccys house. Do not run any chances because you know how weak she is & how dependant she is upon others.<sup>3</sup>

Hughes passed away four years later, after a long, excruciating bout with diabetes.<sup>4</sup>

When Elder Bassett returned home, his brother Will was living with Catherine, his second wife and their children in Salt Lake City, awaiting the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court regarding a possible prison sentence for plural marriage. Later that year, also in December, Will was exonerated by the high court.<sup>5</sup>

### *Elder Bassett and Lucy Reunited*

Tom and Lucy were now in a position to expand their own family. Their first child born after Elder Bassett's return was a girl whom they named Lucy Maud (Maud), born a little over a year after his return, on 20 July 1891. Recalling the earlier death of their first child, Elsie May, as well as the demise of William's and Sarah's first three little ones shortly after the time of their births, the last months of that pregnancy must have had some tense moments, but this time all went well.

Margaret Gladys (Gladys) followed three years later, on 22 August 1894. Mary Merilla (Mary) was born five years after Gladys, on 12 October 1899. Finally, a son and namesake, Thomas Myrthen (Myrthen), was born on 25 January 1903. Shortly after that, another daughter, Hazel Irene (Hazel) was born on 16 August 1904.

### *New Responsibilities in the Church*

Meanwhile, as all this was unfolding, the recently returned missionary was getting more deeply enmeshed in the workings of both church and state. As soon as Elder Bassett returned from the mission field, President Ricks began reestablishing their earlier relationship. Nine days after Elder Bassett's return, Elder Andrew Jenson, the church historian, in company with Elder Marriner

---

<sup>3</sup>Thomas E. Bassett papers in LDS Church History Library, Salt Lake City.

<sup>4</sup>Schimmelpfennig relates in detail the sad conditions surrounding this death, 53.

<sup>5</sup>For a full discussion of the entire matter, see *Tullidge's Histories*, 220-27.

W. Merrill from the Quorum of the Twelve, and Bishop George L. Farrell<sup>6</sup> came to tour and assess the Upper Snake River Valley communities. President Ricks served as their guide, and invited the recently returned missionary to accompany them.

President Ricks also began looking for a calling that would bring his former stake clerk back into a responsible position in the stake organization. Since the stake was fully manned at the time of the return of Elder Bassett, Ricks called the returned missionary as an alternate stake high councilor at the very next quarterly conference of the Bannock stake after his return.<sup>7</sup> In addition to his high council calling, Thomas E. also served for a time as Sunday School Superintendent and as president of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association in the Rexburg 1<sup>st</sup> Ward under bishop Thomas E. Ricks Jr.<sup>8</sup>

In 1893, the long awaited Salt Lake Temple was dedicated, and many of the saints in Rexburg made the pilgrimage to Salt Lake to participate. It was for this dedication that the national famous Mormon Tabernacle Choir became a public-relations arm of the Church. That year, after the dedication, the choir was sent east to Chicago to participate in a choir contest at the world's fair in Chicago at the Columbian Exposition.<sup>9</sup> On the way to and from the fair they gave concerts in major cities along the way, thus introducing the choir to the nation.

Two years later, on 10 June 1895, the Bannock Stake was divided into two stakes: Bannock and the new Bingham Stake. At the age of thirty-three, Elder Bassett was chosen by President Ricks as his 2<sup>nd</sup> counselor in the reorganized Bannock stake presidency, replacing Francis G. Gunnell, who had moved from the area.

### *Political Happenings in Rexburg*

Thomas E.'s first recorded venture into politics came in April of 1895, two months before he became a part of the new stake presidency. This was in conjunction with the election of village trustees. He and his bishop, Thomas E. Ricks Jr. were elected as the only two Democrats on an eight-person board.

That year was full of significant events in Rexburg, and Thomas E was personally involved

---

<sup>6</sup>Tom knew Bishop Farrell from his voyage on the *Idaho*, and from his early days in Mendon. Tom's wife, Lucy had known him as her bishop for a time in Smithfield.

<sup>7</sup>Elder Bassett was set apart and ordained a high priest 18 August 1890 by Elder Abraham H. Cannon of the Twelve.

<sup>8</sup>*Fremont Journal*, 31 January 1902.

<sup>9</sup>At the fair, they took second place in the contest.

in all of them.<sup>10</sup> The ground for the Rexburg cemetery, where the Bassett family's daughter, Elsie May, had been buried, was purchased and the cemetery officially established. The first sidewalks were also laid out that year under the direction of the trustees. The village was officially becoming a significant township.

However, nature, it seems, had a personal vendetta against Rexburg that year. The preceding winter had been extremely severe, with the temperature dropping to thirty-eight degrees below zero as the icy winds rampaged across the valley. A plague of measles put many in the town under quarantine, and a major cyclone passed through the town on 23 May. What was not tied down was picked up and deposited elsewhere.

“It was a sight to see the paper, straw, boards, fences and outhouses fly through the air,” Phineus Tempest reports. “At H. Lyman's place it picked up a well built outhouse, raising it ten feet in the air, carrying it forty feet and dashing it to pieces on top of the woodpile.”<sup>11</sup>

Also that year, the citizens of Rexburg watched as U.S. soldiers passed through town on their way to guard against Indian attacks rumored to be occurring in Jackson Hole in nearby Wyoming. The first group, two hundred members of the Eighth Cavalry, Colored, created a major stir, being the first black cavalry many in the village had ever seen. When these troops camped on Moody Creek, several of the citizens of Rexburg went there out of curiosity to see them.

Days after the calvary passed through, five companies of infantry marched through the town on the same errand. This time the soldiers were entertained by a brass band from Rexburg, playing martial music (which the soldiers reported put new life into them).

Actually there was no Indian threat. A group of Shoshone and Bannock Indians from Fort Hall and Wind River reservations had left the reservation (with permission from the Indian agent) to hunt elk in Jackson Hole. While hunting, several Indians were arrested on the charge of violating Wyoming game laws. Not being able to pay the fines imposed nor being willing to serve the threatened jail sentence, several of the Indians attempted to escape from incarceration. Four of them were fatally wounded.

President Ricks had been visiting some of the branches of the church in the area of Jackson during that time, and had witnessed the entire episode, and when he returned to Rexburg was puzzled, if not angered, by the local newspapers' coverage of the entire affair.<sup>12</sup> Their reports had simply not been true. Justice, in his opinion, had not been served in Jackson. Later when the Indian Agent at Fort Hall asked for an investigation of the killing of innocent Indians, and requested that

---

<sup>10</sup>Crowder, 67-74.

<sup>11</sup>Crowder 67-68.

<sup>12</sup>Crowder 69-74.

the guilty parties involved in the shooting of the Indians be prosecuted, his request was ignored.

### *Utah Politics*

1896 was a red-letter year for nearby Utah. On 4 January of that year, it finally achieved statehood. The Utah celebration was monumental. Since most of the Rexburg saints were transplanted Utahns, they were also emotionally invested in these happenings. Many of them returned to visit Utah to join in the celebration of statehood.

The territory of Utah had been petitioning Congress for nearly half-a-century for the right to become a state. As long as it remained a territory, its government would be administered largely by federal appointees, rather than by locally-elected officials, thus giving a gentile population control of the state.

From the time of its official announcement in 1852, plural marriage ostensibly had blocked Utah's bid for statehood. However, that encumbrance had been removed six years previously by the manifesto of 1890. At that point the *real* reason for the blockage became evident. As long as the Mormons could vote as a bloc, as they had previously done (through the People's party), the church leadership would theoretically control the state. Neither the Republican nor the Democratic national parties wanted that, and so they continued to block Utah's application for statehood, even after the Woodruff manifesto.

It seemed that the only way to break the gridlock was to disband the People's party, and divide the Mormon votes somewhat equally between the two major national parties. The disbanding of the People's party occurred in 1891. However, it was feared that most of the Mormon citizenry would simply switch their allegiance to the Democratic party. Therefore, according to Mormon folklore, in an effort to keep the number in each party somewhat on a par, an equal number of Mormons in the wards and stakes were "called" to become Republicans.

The Church actively participated in dividing its members along national party lines. Many members of the Church were called to be Republicans. This was done without openly disclosing such a policy. An official statement regarding these "calls" has yet to be found. However, there seems to be abundant evidence that this was actually done.<sup>13</sup>

Eventually this led to major schisms and infighting in the church, even among the hierarchy of the church, with John Henry Smith and Joseph F. Smith of the Quorum of Twelve Apostles, and George Q. Cannon of the First Presidency of the church championing the Republican cause, and B. H. Roberts of the Seventies and Moses Thatcher of the Twelve advocating the Democratic. So contentious did the argumentation become that President Woodruff was reported to have ordered an

---

<sup>13</sup>Godfrey, Kenneth W. "Prospects in Politics: Democracy or Theocracy: A Study of Church and State 1890-1900." A graduate term paper for History of Religion 543, Brigham Young University, August 1965. 41.

immediate stop to the in-fighting among the leadership. Anyone who did not comply, they were told, would forfeit his right to attend the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple in 1893.<sup>14</sup>

Peace resulted ... until after the dedication. Soon the divergent parties were openly contending again. B. H. Roberts of the Seventies stopped attending quorum meetings, but was eventually persuaded to recant his belligerence at a general conference of the church. At this same conference a political manifesto was revealed by the First Presidency of the church, indicating that because of the demands on the time of church leaders in responsible positions, they should first seek the counsel and approval of the presiding authorities before seeking political office. Moses Thatcher refused, feeling that this was an infringement on his personal liberties, and was eventually dropped from the Quorum of the Twelve over his contention that the church leadership had no right to interfere in his political life.

Prior to the election of 1894, at which time Utah was teetering on the cusp of statehood, the First Presidency sent the following instructions to leaders of the church throughout Idaho:

We have received information from Idaho, leading us to believe that grave fears exist among prominent men, belonging to all political parties, concerning the manner in which the Mormon people will be governed in voting next month.

There seems to be reasonable grounds for them to believe that our people will vote for Mormons wherever one is placed upon a ticket, as an opponent to a non-Mormon, no matter what his politics may be. This should be carefully guarded against. ... If we have any hope of getting rid of the test-oath, which now forms a part of your State Constitution, it can only be done by the Mormon people demonstrating to the people of Idaho that they will be true to their political principles and vote their party ticket at the coming election, instead of picking out Mormons and voting for them.<sup>15</sup>

However, as late as the trial of John W. Taylor before the Quorum of the Twelve, Taylor was to testify:

There is ten times the feeling over the breaking of the compact made with the government regarding Church influence in politics than there is over the polygamous marriages. I mingle among all classes of people which is not the case with you brethren [the Twelve] and therefore believe my impressions are correct. As a illustration, Sister Susa Y. Gates came down to Provo where I am living and called the sisters together and told them that the Brethren wanted them to vote the Republican ticket. ... My own opinion is that the difficulties this people are experiencing is through using Church influence in politics.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup>Interview with Kenneth Godfrey, August, 1965.

<sup>15</sup>FSR:1, 10, c.d. 10-16-94.

<sup>16</sup>Briney, Drew. *Apostles on Trial*. 104-05.

### *Thomas E. Elected to the State Senate*

Earlier, in the 1896 election (the first in which Rexburg could send delegates to the state legislature), two well-known LDS church leaders were pitted against each other in one of the senatorial races. Thomas E. Bassett, 2nd Counselor in the stake presidency, ran on the Democratic ticket. His opponent, the Republican candidate, was Elder Ben E. Rich.<sup>17</sup>

Bassett was victorious, winning by 137 votes (827 to 690).<sup>18</sup> His platform was summed up on 2" x 5" calling cards. In the center of the cards was written "Thos. E. Bassett, Candidate for State Senator." Around the four edges of the card were the five major points of his platform: "Man is Mortal ... Principle is Eternal"; "Reduce Taxation"; "Encourage Education"; "Our Country's Curse is Class Legislation"; and "We Demand Reform"—five succinct points, but they say much about Thomas E.'s political philosophy.

### *Service in Boise*

Soon the Bassetts were off to Boise, where they lived while the fourth Idaho legislature was in session (1897-98).<sup>19</sup> This time the 34-year-old Thomas took 29-year-old Lucy with him. It is not known whether they also took their two daughters, 5-year-old Maud and 2-year-old Gwladys, or not, but it is likely that the two daughters were left in Rexburg with their grandparents during the session.

In the legislature, Thomas chaired the Irrigation and Water Rights Committee.<sup>20</sup> He also served as a member of the following committees: 1) public lands, 2) education, and 3) highways,

---

<sup>17</sup> Rich was a prominent individual in LDS church history, much as his father, Charles C. Rich had been in the Cache valley. In politics, he was a leading Republican figure, and an associate of Theodore Roosevelt. Like Bassett, Rich was a former British missionary. In Rexburg, he edited the *Silver Hammer* newspaper and wrote *Mr. Durant of Salt Lake City: That Mormon*. This latter piece later became a favorite Mormon tract (used by Mormon missionaries for better than half of the 1900's). In 1898, a year after being defeated by Bassett, Rich was made President of the Southern States Mission. Until his death in 1913, Rich was called to served as a mission president in two or three different missions, indicating his popularity with the church leadership.

<sup>18</sup>*The Silver Hammer*, 13 November 1896.

<sup>19</sup>The Idaho legislature met only every other year (on the odd year) until 1970 when it began holding sessions in even years as well.

<sup>20</sup>Later (in 1904), while a stake president in Rexburg, Thomas E. served as the vice-president of the Teton Island Irrigation Co. ("Thomas E. Bassett," in A. W. Bowen and Co., *Progressive Men of Bannock, Bear Lake, Bingham, Fremont, and Oneida Counties, Idaho*. 33-34.)

bridges and ferries. He was well-suited for these assignments, since he had been involved in all of these activities since coming to Rexburg. thirteen years earlier.<sup>21</sup>

While Thomas E. was serving in the senate, Fred Dubois, the radical nemesis of LDS plural marriage was running for re-election as a senator on the Republican ticket. The following article of interest appeared in the *Broad Ax*, a Salt Lake City paper edited at that time by Julius F. Taylor, an African-American journalist with Democratic leanings.

In last Sunday's *Herald* appeared a dispatch from Pres. Woodruff to Hon. Thomas E. Bassett of Idaho. It was in response to a telegraph from Senator Teller of Colorado, stating that Mormon leaders of that state were opposing the reelection of Senator Dubois "under real or affected authority of the church."

President Woodruff's reply was as follows: "For the information of yourself and fellow legislators of our faith, we desire it distinctly understood, that we as a church, are not opposing Senator Dubois' re-election and that church influence must not be used for or against the Senator."<sup>22</sup>

During the time that Bassett was in the legislature, Boise had an extensive Chinese population,<sup>23</sup> and what Lucy remembered most about their experience in Boise were the tong wars.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup>The other elected Senator from Rexburg that session was William F. Rigby, the 1<sup>st</sup> Counselor in the Stake Presidency. Rigby was placed on the Railroad Committee, which set him in a favorable position later to lobby railroad interests for the construction of a railroad to Rexburg.

<sup>22</sup>Jan. 23, 1897, page 1. Taylor, who was an ardent admirer of President Woodruff, then goes on in the article to praise the president for his efforts to keep the forces of church and state separated in Utah.

<sup>23</sup>The Chinese had come to Boise upon hearing of the discovery of gold and silver in the Boise Basin in 1862. By that time the California gold rush of 1849 had fairly well run its course. The Chinese bought up mines in the Boise Basin that were supposedly played out, and with hard work were able to make some of those ventures profitable. However, the bulk of the Chinese in Boise eventually went into such businesses as laundries and restaurants. <https://boiseplanning.wordpress.com/2014/04/03/the-forgotten-and-discarded-chinese-idahos-version/>.

<sup>24</sup>Tongs (translated as "halls" or "meeting places") were gathering places for Chinese emigrants, providing protection, employment information, and community support in general. Boise had two major tongs: the Hip Sing and the Hop Sing organizations. Often they were in competition, and occasionally, as described by Lucy Bassett, open warfare broke out between the two when a perceived wrong was detected.

Ultimately Tongs became known as the dark side of Chinese culture, especially in San Francisco and New York, where they took on mafia-like identities, centering in drug trafficking and prostitution. Apparently Boise tongs, however, were relatively free of such activities.

Later she would tell her children how frightening it was at night when the rival tongs would gather on the streets and engage in hand-to-hand combat.<sup>25</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>25</sup>Scott, Ann Bassett, *OBHAL*, "History of Lucy Ann Lutz Bassett." by Thomas Myrthen Bassett.



Chapter Fifteen  
TURN OF THE CENTURY

*Newspaper Editor*

12 January 1898. Having recently returned from his stint in the Idaho Senate, President Bassett grew restless again, and decided to try his hand in yet another venture by launching and editing a newspaper, the *Fremont County Journal*.<sup>1</sup> In part, this appears to have been a political move to replace the Republican-leaning *Silver Hammer*, that had ceased publication two years prior, (in 1896), when its editor, Ben E. Rich, was defeated for the senate seat by Thomas E. Bassett, and was subsequently called into the mission field. President Bassett remained as editor of the *Journal* for two years, until April of 1900.

*The Spanish-American War*

This two-year span was an interesting time to be involved with newspaper work, since it was published during several momentous happenings in the nation, keeping the new editor intimately involved with the details of each.

One of the most important events, so far as the nation was concerned, was the Spanish-American War. In April of 1898, three months after Bassett launched the *Fremont Journal*, war erupted between America and Spain. The event that initiated the conflict, so far as the U.S. was involved, was a mysterious explosion in Havana Harbor that sunk the U.S. battleship, *The Maine*, killing 260 officers and crew.

Though the incident has been traced to an internal accident on the ship, the Democrats in congress immediately laid blame at the feet of the Spanish government, and demanded retaliatory action on the part of the U.S. government. From that event forward the flames of war were driven by the jingoistic rhetoric of the inflammatory newsprint of the yellow journalism in the east.

Soon the nation was drawn into a full-blown war, focused originally in Cuba and culminating later in the Philippines. This early part of the conflict lasted four months (until August). It was in this part of the war that Teddy Roosevelt's "Rough Riders,"<sup>2</sup> became part of American lore

---

<sup>1</sup>"The *Deseret News* this evening acknowledges the receipt of the first number of the *Fremont County Journal*, published at Rexburg, Idaho, Thomas E. Bassett, editor and manager. It is designed to be the successor of the *Silver Hammer*, and be in the interest of all the Church organizations in Bannock Stake." Jenson, Andrew. *Journal History* Jan 12, 1898.

<sup>2</sup>The name bestowed on the 1st United States Volunteer Cavalry, one of three such regiments raised in 1898 for the Spanish-American War

by their heralded charge up San Juan Heights in Cuba.

President McKinley called for 125,000 volunteers for the war effort. Idaho's quota was 800. Ten of the young men of Rexburg volunteered for the war effort, and the *Fremont Journal* covered their every move from the time of their enlistment until their return. Initially they hoped to join with Roosevelt's calvary, but were too late for the Cuban aspect of the war.

By the time they got involved, the war effort had moved to the Philippines, where war broke out involving the treaty that ended the earlier war in Cuba. Commodore George Dewey had sailed into Manila Bay in 1898 and blown the outdated Spanish fleet there out of the water. The treaty with Spain ceded the Philippines to the U.S., and the native Filipinos then turned their focus to fighting the Americans whom they considered as interlopers. The troops from Rexburg, now eight in number<sup>3</sup> and part of the First Idaho Infantry, were shipped to the Philippines.

After a long and frustrating delay, during which the soldiers from Rexburg were moved around in the Philippines, they were finally called upon to fight in the battle of Santa Ana in the Province of Cagayan, where they distinguished themselves in battle and were giving the nickname the "Idaho Savages." However, following that they served largely on guard duty until they were mustered out of service and returned home in September of 1900. All of their movements were chronicled in detail in President Bassett's newspaper.

### *The Death of President Woodruff*

Five months after the onset of the Spanish-American War, news was received in Rexburg regarding the death of President Wilford Woodruff. The venerable prophet who had served the church so strenuously and so long (both in America and in England ) since the beginning of the church had been declining in his health for some time, and had traveled to the Pacific coast for health reasons. There, on 2 September 1898, he passed away in San Francisco, and his body was taken back to Utah on a special railroad car.

This was the third prophet to pass away since the Bassetts had moved to America. Though Thomas E. had been called into the mission field earlier by President Woodruff, he seems not to have known the president on a personal basis. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the Prophet had spent so much time in hiding during the problems centering in plural marriage. Once more, Bassett's newspaper ventures kept him close to all of the proceedings.

### *A New and Better Epoch: The Railroad Comes to Rexburg*

A third and last major event covered by President Bassett in the *Journal* involved bringing the railroad into Rexburg. On 6 August 1898, one month before the death of President Woodruff,

---

<sup>3</sup>Two of the original volunteers had been rejected for medical reasons.

the Bannock Stake was divided again. At that point Rexburg became part of the newly organized Fremont Stake. The old Bannock stake presidency became the new Fremont stake presidency at that point.

Within eight months of this change, the decision was made to move forward in uniting the town with the outer world prior to the turn of the century by bringing the railroad all the way into Rexburg. This project was spearheaded primarily by President Rigby, but all three members of the Presidency had past ties to the railroad business (including President Bassett, whose contact with railroading went back to his work in the depot in Mendon).

In late May of 1899, an *ad hoc* committee was formed to be called “The People’s Railroad Committee,” (PRC). Each ward in the valley<sup>4</sup> had one representative on that board, and the whole was presided over by Presidents Ricks, Rigby, and Bassett, with Ricks serving as chairman. The purpose of the committee was to raise the finances needed to purchase right-of-way for the new line. By 22 November 1899, grade had been dug and rails laid to the point in Rexburg that had been chosen for a depot.

In an article dated 26 January of the following year, the *Deseret News* in Salt Lake City carried a feature article touting the benefits of life in Rexburg.

The people love their town, and its coming greatness, and who can blame them, for the extent and greatness of the Snake River Country, which is in its infancy, no man at this time can foretell.

In this same spirit, President Rigby talked the officials of the Oregon Short Line into printing a colorful, illustrated brochure describing the benefits of the area, and encouraging people to come to settle in Rexburg and its surrounding area. The brochure was printed, and over 20,000 of them were distributed. The railroad officials then asked the First Presidency of the church, through President Rigby, for a letter of introduction to be used with stake and ward officials throughout the church, “with a view of getting their influence and support in the hope of getting two thousand or twenty-five hundred people to move into that country.”<sup>5</sup>

President Lorenzo Snow replied that Elder Abraham O. Woodruff was at the same time colonizing people in the Bighorn country of Wyoming, and did not want the settlement in the Snake River Valley to occur at the expense of his project. Joseph F. Smith further informed them that he did not want such a campaign to result in the saints in southern Utah becoming discouraged with the lack of water in that county and moving to Idaho, thus weakening the southern settlements. It was therefore decided that it would be best for the First Presidency not to give a letter to the railroad as had been requested, but that those directing the affairs of the railroad be allowed to work on their

---

<sup>4</sup>Rexburg First, Rexburg, Lyman, Burton, Island, Salem, and Teton.

<sup>5</sup>Crowder, 108-09.

own resources with the permission of the Presidency.

Accordingly, the work of the PRC went forward, and by 22 November 1899 the rails reached the point designated for the new town depot. A reporter for the *Fremont Count Journal* commented, “The day will stand out as the most important one in our history. It marks the close of one epoch and the beginning of a new and better one.”<sup>6</sup>

### *Financial Concerns*

In April of 1900, for unknown reasons, President Bassett laid aside his editorial leadership of the paper and moved on to new projects. His resignation may have had something to do with financial difficulties he was experiencing at the time.

Under date of 21 September of that year, his brother Will wrote:

I have thought a great deal about you since coming home & the condition you are in with regard to finances. ... Something must be done to place you in a position so that you can get along comfortably. If you have to devote your time & everything in the direction you have been doing, you must be reasonable [sic] compensated for your labors or otherwise you cannot & and must not suffer yourself to continue, because it will only be a matter of time until collapse will overtake.<sup>7</sup>

Apparently Elder Bassett was sorely in need of financial help from the church in return for all the church work in which he was involved. According to Will’s letter, Tom’s situation had already been brought to the attention of William Preston, the Presiding Bishop of the church (and Will’s close associate). Further, John Henry Smith of the Council of Twelve Apostles was coming to Rexburg to attend the next stake conference. Will instructed Tom to lay out his case before Elder Smith on that occasion:

Tell them [the Church leadership] that your highest ambition is to honorably discharge all duties resting upon you, but in order to do this, ... you must be fully sustained in a financial way. ... do not have any half way about it, because it has already gone along too far now. Part if not all you are owing ought to be made good to you, so as to relieve you of the burdens, and make your obligations good to your creditors and then you should receive enough to keep you comfortably at least.

Apparently all turned out well for President Bassett. In another letter from Will, dated 2 October 1900, the following is noted:

Yours received and am pleased to hear the good news. I saw John Henry Sunday & had a talk with him here in Provo. He told me then that matters would be arranged

---

<sup>6</sup>Crowder, 85.

<sup>7</sup>Letter the in the Thomas E. Bassett file in the Church History Library, Salt Lake City. MS 6292 (100000464757), Reel 3.

satisfactorily for you. Well I sincerely hope so because it is a very important matter. You must be sustained in a financial way.

### *Second Anointings*

On 12 October 1900 (ten days after Margaret's visit to Mendon to help Becca?), Thomas E. and Lucy, received their second anointings in the Logan Temple.<sup>8</sup> Thomas E. was 38 years old at the time, and Lucy was 33 (which was somewhat unusual, in that this ordinance was usually reserved for older men and their spouses).<sup>9</sup> Typically, recipients were over fifty.<sup>10</sup>

The ordinance of the second anointing in the church is traceable to the days of Joseph Smith, and appears off and on from then until about 1928, when, according to a 1949 statement made by George F. Richard, president of the Council of the Twelve,

[a] brother who had received his Second Blessings, while speaking in a priesthood meeting in one of the Idaho stakes told the brethren that they all should have their Second Blessings. Of course that was a serious infraction of the charge which he received when he had his Second Anointings; but I have never learned of any serious consequences to follow, except the action on the part of the Authorities, discontinuing the administration of these blessings in the Church.<sup>11</sup>

After this time, the number of such ordinances declined precipitately.<sup>12</sup> However, for a brief time during the 1940s, Elder George F. Richards, who was at the time both president of the Quorum of the Twelve, and the president of the Salt Lake temple, took it upon himself to lead a one-man crusade to have the ordinance reinvigorated in terms of numbers, but met with only limited success.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup>The ordinance is sometimes referred to as "second endowments," or "second blessings." For information on the second anointings, see David John Buerger's, "The Fulness of the Priesthood: The Second Anointing in Latter-day Saint Theology and Practice." *Dialogue: a Journal of Mormon Thought* XVI, (Spring) 1983; 10-44. Thomas E.'s father and mother received the same ordinance on the previous evening. (The senior Bassett was ordained a high priest in Rexburg on 7 January 1893 by Henry Flamm. He was originally endowed in the Logan Temple on 8 October 1886.)

<sup>9</sup>President Woodruff considered it "an ordinance of the eternal world which belonged particularly to old men." From Abraham H. Cannon's journal, 7 Oct. 1889.

<sup>10</sup>Buerger, 33.

<sup>11</sup>Buerger, 40.

<sup>12</sup>Buerger, 40-41.

<sup>13</sup>Buerger, 41. Buerger describes the entire effort in detail.

At that time even some of the general authorities had not yet received the ordinance.

Like plural marriage, this ordinance, seems more a phenomenon of the earlier days of the church, reaching its peak (in terms of numbers administered), during the tenure of President Lorenzo Snow,<sup>14</sup> who was the president of the church when Thomas E. and Lucy received their second anointings. According to President Snow, “Persons who are recommended for second anointings should be those who have made an exceptional record, that they are persons who will never apostatize.”<sup>15</sup>

President Joseph F. Smith echoed this when he wrote in 1901 to Elder Anthony W. Ivins (one of those most active among the brethren in performing post-1890 manifesto marriages), “No man receives a fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood till he has received his second anointings. Men recommended for this sacred ordinance should be men of God whose faith and integrity are unquestioned.”<sup>16</sup>

At that time, the persons receiving their second anointings would normally be nominated by their stake president in a proposal to the president of the church, who signed off on all such recommends.<sup>17</sup> With the church president’s approval, the ordinance itself was typically administered in the temples by a general authority or the temple president. In the case of Thomas and Lucy, it was administered by Elder Thomas Morgan (the then-current Logan temple president), with Samuel Roskelley acting as recorder.

Since it is a temple ordinance, there is little written on the subject. Those who received this ordinance were instructed never to speak of the specifics outside of the temple. As a result, what is speculated concerning the ordinance is entirely a matter of conjecture. According to Thomas E.’s son, Myrthen, whenever he asked his father about the second anointing, he was told simply, “You can’t understand.”<sup>18</sup>

Nine qualifications were suggested:

- (1) Unquestionable and unshaken integrity to the work of the Lord.
- (2) “Valiant in the defense of the truth,” “active in all good works,” have born “the heat

---

<sup>14</sup>Buerger, 40.

<sup>15</sup>From the journal of Anthony W. Ivins, as cited in Buerger, 33.

<sup>16</sup>Buerger 41.

<sup>17</sup>Later, the privilege of nominating passed solely into the hands of the Council of Twelve. President Heber J. Grant, president of the church, in writing to Levi S. Udall, dated 6 April 1927, writes, “It is not customary now for presidents of stakes, as you know, to recommend people for higher blessings” (Buerger, 39).

<sup>18</sup>Scott, Ann Bassett, *OBHAL* “Life Sketch of Thomas Edwards Bassett” n.p.

and burden of the day, and endured faithfully to the end.”

- (3) Obedience to commandments such as tithing, law of chastity, honesty, etc.
- (4) ... a member did not need to be “old” to receive the ordinance ...
- (5) Candidates had to have “gathered with the body of the Church.” Faithful “non-gatherers” would be “dealt with by the authority on the other side of the veil.”
- (6) Candidates could not be guilty of any major sins—e.g., a man who committed adultery after receiving his endowment would not be recommended, even after full repentance.
- (7) Candidates did not have to be Church officers, but it was expected that officers such as apostles, stake presidents, high councilmen, bishops, and patriarchs would be worthy to receive the ordinance.
- (8) Candidates for posthumous second anointing had to have received their endowment during their lifetime ...
- (9) Usually candidates must have been married and sealed in the temple. Living bachelors ordinarily were not allowed to have deceased women anointed to them; single living women were more frequently anointed to deceased men.<sup>19</sup>

Elder George Q. Cannon taught that promises are given in a future tense in the first endowment, e.g. that they *might become*, and that the blessings promised in the first endowment are sealed in the second.<sup>20</sup>

Some have suggested that it was an affirmation of that person’s having his/her calling and election made sure<sup>21</sup>—that which the Prophet Joseph called the “more sure word of prophecy.”<sup>22</sup> If this is true, the ramifications of this ordinance loom large.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie has written:

To have one’s calling and election made sure is to be sealed up unto eternal life; it is to have the unconditional guarantee of exaltation in the highest heaven of the celestial world; it is to receive the assurance of godhood; it is, in effect, to have the day of judgment advanced, so that an inheritance of all the glory and honor of the Father’s kingdom is assured prior to the day when the faithful actually enter into the divine presence to sit with Christ in his throne, even as he is set down with his Father in his throne. (Rev. 3:21.)<sup>23</sup>

President Joseph Fielding Smith further notes: When one has been thus sealed up unto eternal life, “he is sealed up against all manner of sin except blasphemy against the Holy Ghost and the shedding

---

<sup>19</sup>Buerger. 33-34.

<sup>20</sup>School of the Prophets Minute Book, entry of 2 August 1883, as quoted in Buerger, 30.

<sup>21</sup>2 Peter 1:10.

<sup>22</sup>D&C 131:5.

<sup>23</sup>*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Bookcraft, 1973. 3:330-31

of innocent blood.<sup>24</sup>

In short, Thomas E.'s inclusion in this venerable company tells us something about the reputation that he held among the church hierarchy, and perhaps something yet to be uncovered regarding his later entrance into plural marriage. That the ordinance was often on his mind as he later became a new stake president is evident from the number of references to correspondence between President Bassett and the church leadership.<sup>25</sup>

### *A Season in the Temple*

The year 1900 was a red-letter year for the Bassetts. Not only did it signal the turn of the new century, but it was also the eve of the golden anniversary of the marriage of President Bassett's parents, Thomas and Margaret (which anniversary occurred in January of 1901). It was also a spiritual highlight in the lives of the family. For three days in the fall of 1900, from Wednesday, 10 October through Friday, 12 October, they largely sequestered themselves in the Logan Temple, participating in ordinances for the living and the dead.<sup>26</sup>

According to Thomas E. Bassett's *Family Record*, those endowed on the 10<sup>th</sup> were Richard Bassett (his great-grandfather), Isaac Roberts, Sarah Rimborn, Thomas Williams, Elizabeth David, and Hanna Morgan. Twenty-two more of their ancestors were baptized by proxy.

On the 11<sup>th</sup>, Richard Bassett was sealed to Mary Millward, and William Millward was sealed to Margaret Llewellyn by proxy. All of these individuals received their endowments earlier the same day. The highlight of the occasion, however, was the bestowal of the second anointings on Thomas E. and Lucy, and on Thomas E.'s parents, Thomas and Margaret.

On the 12<sup>th</sup>, Sarah Philips (from their early days in Wales) and Margaret Rimborn were baptized by proxy, and Mary John and Richard Llewellyn were endowed by proxy. And, on that day, Thomas E.'s father, Thomas Bassett, was sealed to Sarah Philips.

### *Sarah Philips*

Sarah Phillips is one of the mysteries of the Bassett saga. 1) Why would Thomas enter into plural marriage by proxy at this time in his life (ten years after the Woodruff Manifesto)—especially when he had opposed it so strongly in Wales, and 2) Who was Sarah Philips, and why would Thomas have her sealed to him forty-two years after her death?

---

<sup>24</sup>*Doctrines of Salvation*, Bookcraft, 1956. 2:46.

<sup>25</sup>See Buerger, footnotes 87 and 91.

<sup>26</sup>On the 10<sup>th</sup>, all of the children of Thomas and Margaret (including Jane and Frederick George) were sealed to them for time and all eternity, with the exception of Margaret and Sarah, who were unable to attend, remaining in Idaho.



According to Thomas E.'s family record book, this is all that is currently known about Sarah. She was born in Canton, the same small town in South Wales, and the same month as Thomas (June of 1827). What implications would these facts have had for schooling, church, and other social events? She died on 17 March 1858, at the age of 31. Thomas, by this time, had been a member of the church for four years. We do not know if she ever married.

So, why would she suddenly reappear in the life of Thomas Bassett? Was this simply the case of a former friend of Margaret and/or Thomas that they wished to honor? What type of relationship had existed among the three in Wales? Was Thomas's and Margaret's daughter Sarah (born seven years after the death of Sarah Phillips) named in her honor? Unfortunately, we will probably never know the answers to these questions.

Equally intriguing is the timing of the sealing (one day after Thomas and Margaret received their second anointings), that raises the question, "Was plural marriage somehow tied in with the second anointing?" After all, those of Thomas's generation had been taught that plural marriage was a prerequisite for entrance into the highest degree of the celestial kingdom.

However, if this was the reason for Thomas being sealed to Sarah Philips, why did Thomas' son, Thomas E. (who also received his second anointing one day later) wait eight more years before entering into plural marriage himself?

\* \* \* \* \*

Chapter Sixteen  
A CALL TO PRESIDE

*A Year of Deaths*

1901 was like a cleansing year in which many of the old guard moved on, as if to make way for a new generation of younger leaders. Queen Victoria of England died that year, ending her 64-year reign; President William McKinley who had presided over the nation through the troubled time of the Spanish-American War was assassinated; and the much beloved President Lorenzo Snow, the last of the first-generation church presidents, also passed away.

In April of 1901, President William F. Rigby died, and President Bassett was moved to 1<sup>st</sup> Counselor to President Ricks. Ricks, in turn, passed away in September of that same year, one month before President Lorenzo Snow.<sup>1</sup> On 25 January 1902, Thomas E. Bassett was called and set apart as the president of the Fremont stake of Zion.

*President Bassett*

Saturday, 25 January 1902. In the midst of a cold Idaho winter, the January stake conference of the Fremont stake was held in Rexburg. Standing before the congregation (many of them still bundled up against the cold weather outside), thirty-nine-year-old Thomas E. Bassett was sustained as the new stake president. He had just been chosen as the replacement for his mentor and long-time friend, Thomas E. Ricks, who had passed away a little over three months previously. Ricks had served as president of the Bannock/Fremont stake for the past seventeen years, since the beginning of Rexburg itself.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, Rexburg had known no other stake president in its short existence.

In the interim between Ricks' death and Bassett's replacing him, the new stake president had presided over the stake by virtue of his calling as the 1<sup>st</sup> counselor in the previous stake presidency. His new calling had awaited the January stake conference, as well as Joseph F. Smith's ascendancy to the presidency of the church following the death of President Lorenzo Snow.

Seated in the congregation, in addition to thirty-five-year-old Lucy (his wife of sixteen years) was President Bassett's father and mother, Thomas and Margaret Bassett, now both aged 75. President Bassett's sisters (Mary, Margaret, and Sarah) also were likely in attendance with their families. In all probability, many of the Lutz family (Lucy's relatives) were there as well.

---

<sup>1</sup>President Lorenzo Snow passed away in Salt Lake City on 10 October 1901.

<sup>2</sup>The Bannock stake was created in 1884. In 1898 the name of the Bannock stake was changed to the Fremont stake.

The *Fremont Journal* (which, up until two years before, had been under President Bassett's editorial direction), records in its coverage of the conference<sup>3</sup>:

Never has there been such interest manifested in a stake conference held in the Fremont Stake than that evidenced on Saturday and Sunday last. Of course it was generally understood that the Stake Presidency would be re-organized by the visiting brethren from Salt Lake City; and this with the further fact that the question of organizing Fremont, Bingham and Teton into one academic district, would be brought before the conference, had the effect of bringing out many people who might otherwise not have attended. Apostles John Henry Smith and George Teasdale were present. ... People were present from all parts of the Stake, so that it was truly a representative gathering.

The election of Brother Thomas E. Bassett for President of the Stake, was the choice of the priesthood by a large majority, notwithstanding the fact that there were twenty-one names of prominent brethren voted for. President Bassett at once selected Brother Jas. W. Webster as his first counselor, and these two brethren, after a few minutes consultation, selected Brother C. H. Woodmansee as second counselor in the Stake Presidency. The brethren were then unanimously sustained by the hearty vote of the large body of the priesthood present.

The report is informative, since it suggests the manner of choosing a new Stake President at that time. Rather than a general authority putting forward the name of a successor, and calling for a sustaining vote, as is done currently, it appears that the choosing was done in a more democratic manner, with a number of names nominated and a general vote of the priesthood taken. Also it suggests that only those holding the priesthood were involved in the sustaining vote, much as in a solemn assembly of the priesthood today.

Later in the day, President Bassett was set apart in his new calling by his former mission president, Elder George Teasdale of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles. This was likely a moment of pride for Elder Teasdale as well, to witness one of his former missionaries chosen for this responsible position. But likely it was even more so for President Bassett's Welsh immigrant parents who probably never dreamed this of the little son born across the ocean so many years before.

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>3</sup>31 January 1902.

Chapter Seventeen  
THE BIRTH OF AN ACADEMY

*Ricks Academy/College*

As noted in the *Journal* article, the agenda for the conference was two-fold. The selection of a new stake president was only one of the items under consideration. The second was a decision regarding the proposal of consolidating the Fremont, Bingham, and Teton stakes into one academic district.

Earlier, in 1888, when threatened with the prospect of a gentile-controlled school system,<sup>1</sup> the saints in Rexburg had established a private, church-supported stake academy for the education of their children. At that time it was customary to establish such academies in every stake of Zion. However, by 1902, it was evident that this practice was no longer financially tenable; hence the combining of the academies.<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, during the hours after the conference on Saturday and Sunday, the leaders of the three stakes sequestered themselves with the visiting authorities and worked out plans for one academy to accommodate the three stakes, presided over by a board consisting of the three stake presidents and their counselors. The new stake president, President Bassett, was chosen as the chairman of the board for the tri-stake academy.

He was an ideal choice for chairman, having been well prepared for the assignment. As previously noted, he was the first school teacher in Rexburg (having started his own school eighteen years before, during the first winter of the town's existence). Later, when he ran for the Idaho senate, "encouraging education" was one of the five major planks in his political platform, and when elected to the state senate, education was one of the committees upon which he served. In addition, Elder Bassett was something of a scholar himself.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>This was part of the governmental attack on Mormonism that was rampant that year.

<sup>2</sup>Since the public school system was financed by taxes, the LDS population was actually paying double for the education of their children.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with his daughter, Gwladys. She also reported on the occasion of this interview that the printed orations of Robert Ingersoll were a favorite of her father's. This is interesting since Ingersoll was known as an avowed agnostic, and a Republican by political persuasion. Ingersoll was, however, a passionate advocate of family life, as were the Mormons. Also among the papers of President Bassett in the LDS Church History Library are certificates of membership in the University of the Traveling Library, indicating his commitment to reading.

Three of the Bassett daughters were later to graduate from the newly organized academy: Maud (in 1908), Gwladys (in 1911 or 1912), and Mary (in 1917).<sup>4</sup> President Bassett's son, Myrthen, also attended Ricks for a few months, but was forced to drop out of school before graduating to help care for his father during a time of Thomas E.'s later bout with rheumatism.

The original name chosen for the academy was "Smith Academy"—named in honor of the Prophet Joseph Smith and President Joseph F. Smith, the recently-sustained president of the church. However, on 5 March 1902, the board received a letter from the first presidency suggesting that the name be changed to "Ricks Academy," to honor the memory of Thomas E. Ricks, who had done so much in colonizing the area.<sup>5</sup>

### *A Principal for the Academy*

The new academy was fortunate in having a very capable principal/president already in the wings to take over the newly-formed academy: Ezra (Christensen) Dalby.<sup>6</sup> Dalby, a native of Ephraim Utah, graduated initially from Sanpete Stake Academy (now Snow College) in 1889, and from the University of Utah two years later. The following year he began his teaching career as the principal in Manti, Utah. There he met and married his wife, who encouraged him to accept a call to serve a mission.<sup>7</sup>

Upon his return, he became the principal in Redmond, Utah, for a year, and then in Moroni, Utah, for another year. In August of 1901, at the invitation of the Fremont stake school board, he moved to Rexburg and became the principal of the Fremont Stake Academy. Earlier, after inspecting the area and the school in June of that year, he wrote in his diary: "I am quite favorably impressed with Idaho and think that I will make my home there. It has a great future before it."<sup>8</sup>

After arriving on August 10 he immediately established a working relationship/friendship

---

<sup>4</sup>*Rexburg Standard*, 21 July 1964. At the time this article was written, Maud recalls having been active in musical circles at the academy. Unfortunately, when the sisters were interviewed for this article, Gladys, who was a business major earlier at Ricks, was uncertain of the year she graduated. Mary reports serving as the vice president of the student body and being active in music as well.

<sup>5</sup>*Crowder*, 113-14.

<sup>6</sup>Dalby was christened Ezra Christensen at birth, but officially changed his name to Dalby in 1907 to distinguish himself from the multitude of Christensens in the Rexburg area.

<sup>7</sup>Dalby served in the area of St. Louis, Missouri from 1896-1898.

<sup>8</sup>There are copies of Dalby's diary at BYU-I (in Rexburg, Idaho), the LDS Church History Library (in Salt Lake City), and at BYU (Provo, Utah).

with President Bassett, who for the next few weeks took Dalby on a whirlwind tour of the various wards and branches in the stake, with the two of them speaking together every week at sacrament meetings (Bassett in his role as the chairman of the board,<sup>9</sup> and Dalby as the principal<sup>10</sup>) regarding the need for the saints to enroll their children in the newly-organized academy.

Dalby proved to be a very progressive principal and president of the Ricks Academy. During his thirteen-year administration (1901-1914) the academy nearly doubled in size. It added two years of high school, and became a teacher preparatory unit and commercial school. Active in the church, and in the civic realm as well,<sup>11</sup> Dalby proved to be a valuable addition to Rexburg during its years of growth.

The economic impact of the academy was apparent by 1907, leading Dalby to comment half-way through his term as president:

no greater event ever happened in our town, than the establishment of the Ricks Academy, November 12, 1888. Nothing that will happen in the future can surpass it in importance. It is the event of all events in our history, and a hundred years from now it will be recognized as such.”<sup>12</sup>

True to Dalby’s prophecy, by 2007 (a century after this statement ), it was readily evident that the academy/ college/ university<sup>13</sup> had remained the major attraction to Rexburg.

### *The Academy Building*

One of the first projects pursued by the new school board was the completion of a building to anchor the campus of the new academy. Initially intended as a tabernacle/academy combination, it was designed to be

a large stone structure of fine design, and monumental in appearance, ... three stories high,

---

<sup>9</sup>Thomas E. at that time was serving as the 1<sup>st</sup> Counselor in the Bannock stake presidency. President Ricks passed away one month after Dalby began his Rexburg teaching career. The change of the stake’s name, Bassett’s call to the presidency, and the formation of the tri-stake school board occurred five months later.

<sup>10</sup>This friendship and school connection later morphed into a business partnership that lasted several years. Dalby was seven years younger than Bassett and outlived him by eight.

<sup>11</sup>While a teacher in Redmond, Utah, Dalby had served as a captain in the Utah State Militia. In Rexburg he served as a city councilman and as acting mayor for a term, in addition to editing the *Current-Journal*. He also later (after leaving Rexburg) authored the book *Lands and Leaders of Israel*.

<sup>12</sup>Crowder, 137.

<sup>13</sup>It was officially recognized as Brigham Young University–Idaho on 10 August 2001.

and very commodious on the inside. There were two offices and six classrooms on the first floor. On the second floor there [were] two rooms for the principal's offices, a library, and four classrooms. The third floor had a large auditorium and four classrooms. This gave four office rooms, a library, an auditorium, and fourteen class and laboratory rooms."<sup>14</sup>

The new academy building was completed a little over one year later, in time for the opening of the 1903-04 year, but was not totally free of debt until 1906. Gathering the pledges made by the stake members was not an easy task.<sup>15</sup> Sometimes they paid in commodities, as indicated by the following letter from the Twin Groves bishopric:

Please except [sic] as our apportionment on the Ricks Academy [word unclear] have one good calf worth \$12.00 and the sisters have let us have a quilt worth \$3.00 and the order for \$52.90. If you have any way of sending for the calf it is at my place.<sup>16</sup> [s/ J. J. Willard, Thomas Richards, and Joseph Freer.]

Making good on promissary notes was often difficult, since the drive to finance the academy building coincided with a stepped-up campaign for the payment of tithing by members of the church—a drive initiated less than five years earlier by President Lorenzo Snow. Rexburg's role in that tithing revival is revealed in part in a letter received from the Presiding Bishop's Office, dated 1 November 1901, while Elder Bassett was presiding over the stake in his role as the First Counselor, following the death of President Ricks.

Some time ago a small pocket book, containing the names of non-tithe payers of your Stake, was compiled for use of the Apostles and visiting brethren at your regular Stake Conference.

President Joseph F. Smith has instructed this office to forward the book, containing the names of the non-tithe payers of your Stake to you, with the request that a labor be taken up with each non-tithe payer recorded therein and an effort made to convert them to paying tithing.<sup>17</sup>

However, as President Bassett reported in general conference nearly two years later, in April of 1903, the drive to build the academy building had also spurred the paying of tithes.

As far as the tithes of our people are concerned, we feel that we have no complaints

---

<sup>14</sup>*Crowder*, 115.

<sup>15</sup>In order to help finance the new building, President Bassett mortgaged his own home (which was one of the showplaces of Rexburg), and donated the money from the loan to help pay for the construction. Later, during the financial depression of the mid-1920's, he was unable to raise the money to pay on the mortgage, and consequently lost his home to the bank.

<sup>16</sup>FSR:2, 13, c.d. 29 December, no year.

<sup>17</sup>FSR:2, 9, c.d. 1 Nov. 1901.

whatever to offer. In connection with what we have done towards the erection of the academy, our tithes have increased nearly \$4,000 during the year 1902.

That President Bassett considered the construction of the Academy Building as one of the most important accomplishments of his presidency is revealed in his talk at the morning session of general conference in April of 1904.

I am proud to say we have erected a very fine school building acknowledged by the Governor and other representative men of the State, as perhaps the finest school building in the state. It has been built by the Latter-day Saints, and that in small contributions. This stands today as a monument to the credit of our people, and it should stand forever as an evidence that we are an education-loving people. The claim made by some who are not of us, that “Mormonism” thrives best where ignorance prevails to the greatest extent, is untrue. Our people have shown by their efforts that they love education, and they believe in the motto. “Intelligence is the glory of God.” We are using every endeavor to bring up the young and rising generation in a way that will be pleasing to our heavenly Father, and that will make them good citizens of whatever land they live in.

In this same address, he reports on the condition of Ricks College, one of the major assignments that accompanied his call to the stake presidency.

What was the Bannock ward of the Cache stake of Zion is now known as the Ricks Academy district. I am pleased to say that this institution of learning [Ricks] was organized fifteen years ago on the 12<sup>th</sup> November next.

From that time unto the present, although it has had many difficulties to encounter, it has lived and increased its usefulness among our young people. This year we have an attendance in that institution of 265. ... In this institution there have been 40 young men called from these different stakes to take the missionary course. ...

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of November next—the fifteenth birthday of this institution—we expect to have completed a \$50,000 structure as a home for it. This year Fremont stake has contributed upwards of \$12,000 for the erection of this building and by doing a similar work during the coming season we hope to have it ready for occupancy on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November.

Eight years after President Bassett’s administration (1918), the name was officially changed to Ricks *College*, on the occasion of George S. Romney’s appointment as the new principal.<sup>18</sup> Also

---

<sup>18</sup>The new principal came from an outstanding family that had lived for a time in Mexico. Romney’s son, Marian G. Romney, who played as the captain of Rick’s football team, later became a member of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and served as a counselor in the First Presidency of the church, under Presidents Harold B. Lee and Spencer W. Kimball. Contrariwise, Principal Romney’s daughter, Lurlene, was later baptized into the Roman Catholic church and became a Carmelite nun.

His nephew, George W. Romney, served as governor of Michigan, president of American Motors, U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, and made an unsuccessful bid for



by that time, college courses had been added to the original curriculum.

### *Religion Courses*

It is difficult to assess the full importance of the Ricks Academy to the upper Snake River Valley in regard to preparing missionaries, but one can catch a glimpse of its importance to that cause in letters such as the following. The letter was addressed to the Fremont stake presidency, and comes from a father called to the mission field, dated Parker, Idaho, 4 December 1902, just three weeks before Elder Bassett was sustained as Stake P resident.

Dear Brother: Yours of the 3 at hand and will Say I have no excuse to make for not going on the mission you have mentioned except that I intended sending my son to school either at Rexburg or Logan after Hollidays [sic] and if I leave he will have to remaine [sic] at home as there is onley [sic] the two of us and we cannot both be away at once. He is very stedy [sic] and studious but has not taken much iterest [sic] in Religion. He is now very anxious to go [to the academy] and I think it would be the making of him. He is along in his twenties and has not had the chance of attending a high school until this winter and am afraid if he dose [sic] not go this winter he will not care to [go] another and I think that perhaps I can make a much better missionary of him than I will make myself as I feel incompent [sic] to undertake such a mission, but will abide by your dision [sic].<sup>19</sup>

By that time a missionary course was being offered at the academy as a type of missionary training center to prepare young men for missionary service. Each ward was expected to supply one candidate for each session, to prepare for a mission in the spring. In 1904 the fee for the course was reduced from \$10 to \$5, indicating the financial strains of the times.<sup>20</sup> Statistics associated with the missionary class, however, were not encouraging. In 1902, of the twenty-three called to take the class, twelve “responded” and eleven “failed” to show up for the course.<sup>21</sup>

In the 1903 April general conference of the church, President Bassett reluctantly reported: We have not met with the success in our religion class work that I would like to see; but we hope to bring that institution to the front as soon as we possibly can. With this exception, all the auxiliary organizations and the quorums of that stake are in excellent condition.

---

the Republican party’s nomination for U.S. President in 1968. George W. Romney’s son, Mitt, became governor of Massachusetts, and also later ran unsuccessfully as the Republican candidate for the Presidency of the United States in 2012.

<sup>19</sup>FSR:2,9. c.d., December 4, 1902. Signed D. E. Miller, Parker, Idaho.

<sup>20</sup>FSR: 3,6. c.d. June 20, 1904.

<sup>21</sup>FSR: 3,5. n.d.

Apparently the young men of Rexburg were no different from youth elsewhere in the nation, in that the value of a good education was far from the minds of a great number of them. Anyone familiar with Meredith Wilson's Broadway musical *The Music Man* will recognize from one Rexburg newspaper article of the time problems that sounds remarkably like those associated with the pool table in the town of River City, Iowa, as described by Prof. Howard Hill. However, the concern in Rexburg in 1905 appears to have been the local bowling alley, rather than a pool hall.

Nothing good or elevating is ever discussed [in the bowling alley] ... slang,<sup>22</sup> vulgarity, and tobacco smoke pollutes the atmosphere, and a young man living in such an environment will often contract moral diseases that can never be cured. It is only one step from these places to the saloon, and we are not sure that one is not just as bad as the other. In many cases, at least, the saloon is just as respectable. ... Young men of great ability and promise have entered the door to ruin in these alleys, and others should take warning. No one can afford to frequent or support a place that may blight all his prospects and happiness in life.<sup>23</sup>

### *Housing*

Housing for students coming from many different locations to Rexburg was an immediate concern. In an attempt to house the increasing number of students, one of the first structures built under the direction of the new board (in addition to the academy building) was a dormitory. Construction of the building was quickly completed on the northeast corner of the academy property, and President Bassett dedicated it in the December at the end of his first year as chairman of the board. Applications soon came in from many would-be administrators of the dorm. One such application serves as an example of the many received, and suggests an early version of an honor code for the academy.

Dear Brethren: Please allow me to respectfully petition your honorable body for the

---

<sup>22</sup>The slang referred to is undoubtedly a reference to the youth-speak that was developed throughout America at the turn of the century—using words such as “swell,” “so’s your old man,” “the cat’s pajamas,” (the best of something), “bees knees,” ( a highly admired person or thing) “plank your pile” (invest), making tracks,” (going elsewhere), etc. Such a practice was universally frowned upon by the adults.

Though the practice, and many of the phrases, came to fruition in the jazz age of the 1920s, the genesis of the practice goes back much earlier, as is demonstrated in Grace Livingston Furniss’s 1891 farcical melodrama, *A Box of Monkeys*. One of the subplots of the play involves a proper English girl being tutored in American slang by an American girl.

This play was presented at Ricks in 1905, with Gwladys Bassett (President Bassett’s daughter) playing one of the six leading roles. (Crowley, photo between 196-97.)

<sup>23</sup>Crowley, 119-20. The article is from the Rexburg *Current-Journal*, and was written by Ezra Dalby, who was not only the editor of the *Journal*, but also the principal of the academy.

very high and responsible position of taking charge of the academy boarding house. I realize that it requires experience, and a high degree of intelligence to do justice to that very honorable position, but I feel confident that I can prove to your full satisfaction that myself and family are fully competent for the position. My Family (two sisters) can not be surpassed in cooking, econmy [sic] and clenliness [sic]. They are both competent nurses, and teachers in the Sunday School. The older sister has proven her ability in presiding over the primary schools and they have had considerable experience in taking charge of boarding houses; they live in love and union so that we have peace and love at home in very deed.

I have had considerable experience in teaching a theological class in Sunday Schools and have spent an active life in the Priesthood at home and abroad, so that I feel competent to answer any questions that the young may desire to ask pertaining to our religion. ...

Profanity, vulgarity, drunkenness, boisterous and obscene conduct in any manner will not be permitted. We will be kind and chairtable [sic] to the students but shall be strict and have every student or boarder sign a written obligation to observe the appointed rules of the house, and for all to do their best in helping to brong [sic] to justice those who willfully break the rules, so that the guilty will find it very hard to escape justice and expulsion from the house.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to the dormitory, students acquired board and room in the homes of local residents (including that of President Bassett). By 1906, major friction had arisen between the home owners renting out to students, and the local hotel owners. The latter felt that homes where regular boarders were living had an unfair advantage, in that the hotel owners had to pay for a license to board people, and the home owners did not. The hotel owners claimed that this situation was eating into their profits.

After listening to both sides of the conflict, the city council decided initially that the private home owners should pay the same fee for a license as the hotels. The home owners countered by arguing that they were lodging academy students who could not afford to pay hotel rates. It was decided to exempt from the fee those home owners boarding students.

That same year (1906), the future of the academy dormitory that had previously been built emerged as a major issue when it became evident that it was not proving to be self-sustaining, and the academy administrators decided to sell it. Some in the community wanted it turned into a community hospital. The executive committee (which President Bassett chaired), initially rejected the bid for the hospital, and decided to rent out the dorm on a sealed bid basis to serve as a hotel, with the stipulation that the hotel not charge more than \$3.50 per week for room and board. Most perspective bidders backed away, recognizing it would not be a paying proposition.

The executive committee then countered with the suggestion that the number of students

---

<sup>24</sup>FSR:2, 9, c.d. November 10, 1902, signed George O. Noble.

living in the proposed hotel be limited to fifteen, and that the successful bidder be allowed to operate the hotel on this basis for one year. "Too brief a time" was the common complaint of prospective bidders, and consequently no bids were forthcoming. The dorm remained a dorm.

Two years later a local doctor was successful in purchasing the property for a hospital. However, because business was so slow, the hospital was abandoned for the better part of a year. Then it was reopened and operated for a short time.<sup>25</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>25</sup>Crowley, 125-27. It was not until 1951 that Rexburg had a self-sustaining, fully-functional hospital (Madison Memorial Hospital).

Chapter Eighteen  
THE DREAM HOME<sup>1</sup>

*A Micro-Universe*

Perhaps nothing reflects a man's values more than the people and the things with which he surrounds himself. Although it has been said that a man's home is his castle, and that he is the lord of the manor, his home is far more than either of those. It is a microcosm, a miniature world all its own that he creates as a base of operations and a reflection of his values.

In the case of President Bassett, his gardens were an illustration of his resolve to stay close to the soil and a reminder of his earlier life on the farm, while at the same time enabling him to draw upon the many conveniences of urban life. His home, like his missionary experiences, was an illustration of his many-faceted interests and his willingness to embrace modernity. His concern for family was shown in his situating his parents across the road and Lucy's family just a few houses away. His concern for the needs of the new fledgling academy was demonstrated in his risking his ownership of this life-long dream house through a mortgage, in order to supply needed funds to help build a structure to anchor the academy, and in his renting out living accommodations in his home to students and faculty.

*A Rexburg Showplace*

If one were to ride east on the main street of Rexburg and then turn north on second east, he could certainly have been impressed by the three-story Bassett mansion rising up dramatically on the northeast corner of third north. Though not as grand as the homes of the nouveau riche in the eastern U.S., it reflects many of their same features, and might even be considered a lesser version of their opulence.

Sometime around the turn of the century,<sup>2</sup> the president, who was at the time in the real estate and insurance businesses, created his dream home near the center of Rexburg. Thanks to the patronage of President Ricks, President Bassett had acquired a position of prominence in Rexburg society, and the home was a fitting domicile to match the honor. It was a major showpiece in the town. Most of all, it was a source of family pride, feeling, as the entire family did, that it reflected

---

<sup>1</sup>All of the material regarding the Bassett home is from correspondence with T. Myrthen Bassett (President Bassett's son, who grew up in the house), and Scott, Ann Bassett. *OBHAL* "Autobiography of TMB." 8.

<sup>2</sup>Myrthen thought that the purchase dated back to around 1890, but was unsure.

their prominent standing in the community.

One of the first homes in Rexburg built of brick from the kilns of the town, it faced west, some distance back from the dirt road so as to be as free as possible from the dust that constantly was churned up by passing vehicles. The house was set off by a picket fence, sand-blasted in a light grey color. This same fence also fronted the tithing office and the adjacent tithing lot used to take care of the animals, hay, and other goods that were contributed as tithing in kind by the members of the stake. Therefore it was readily accessible to the president and Lucy, who still conducted the bulk of the tithing affairs for the stake.

During the last year of President Bassett's administration, a new tithing office was constructed to replace the older dark-red, low-roofed frame building that originally stood on the site. The new edifice housed much more than the old one did. More like a modern church office building, it contained accommodations for conducting the ecclesiastic affairs of the stake: a bishop's office,<sup>3</sup> a stake president's office, a high council room, and a room for prayer circles on the second floor. Narrow slats of wood about six feet long and about four inches wide made up the sidewalks that were splayed out along the fence.

The grounds surrounding the front of the home were always well-groomed, with meticulously well-kept lawns, shrubbery, and beautiful flower beds. On the south of the home was a massive vegetable garden (providing a way to keep his hands in the soil, as it were), and on the north a large raspberry patch and fruit trees. In significant ways President Bassett was a perfect example of an urban gentleman farmer.

### *The Home as Dorm*

In some ways the house was as much a dormitory as it was a family residence. Rooms were rented out on a regular basis to students and faculty from the academy, with housekeeping apartments for those who were married and had small families. The rent also provided for laundry and meals. All these services were available for the fee of \$1.50 per week. Lucy and her daughters were kept busy doing the bulk of the cooking, laundry, and cleaning jobs, with assistance from hired help selected from the Japanese-American community in nearby Sugar City.<sup>4</sup>

Upon opening the front door, one entered the main room of the home. This was a large red-draped parlor (ala the mauve decade), carpeted in red plush carpet, featuring a picturesque fireplace with an elegant mantelpiece of highly polished wood, crowned by a large mirror. Here in the

---

<sup>3</sup>The bishop's office was used by the bishop of the First Ward, whose rock chapel was near by.

<sup>4</sup>See Chapter 19: p. 7-8.

comfortable parlor President Bassett spent most of his social and study time when he was at home.<sup>5</sup>

Continuing through the parlor, one was confronted by large folding doors that opened into an extended dining room that was also carpeted and furnished to blend with the parlor. At mealtime this is where the president and his family gathered to dine. All the meals were served family-style on a single large table. On the occasion of birthdays and family holidays or visits from church dignitaries, the doors separating the parlor and the dining area remained open and a banquet was served in the larger combined space.

Lucy and the girls served the food from a kitchen located on the north side of the dining room. This kitchen was furnished with an extra roomy pantry provided with shelves and flour bins in which to store food.<sup>6</sup> Also in the pantry several large, low milk pans rested, where the milk was stored after every milking, in order that the cream could rise and be skimmed off before placing both the milk and the cream in the ice-cooled refrigerator.<sup>7</sup> During the workday one would often find Lucy and her daughters busy churning the cream into butter, cheese, cottage cheese, etc. when they were not engaged in other duties around the house. Two bedrooms and a bathroom occupied the rest of the space on the first floor.

In the basement, in addition to the food storage areas, was a room for the furnace and a large coal bin. It was Myrthen's responsibility (as soon as he was old enough) to keep the furnace stoked with coal and to carry the coal in a coal bucket from the bin to the various fireplaces throughout the house. His was also the task of laying out the kindling throughout the house to light the fires in the stoves the next day.

The second floor was accessed by ascending a winding stairway, complete with more carpet and stained banisters that were kept appropriately polished. This floor contained six bedrooms and another bathroom.<sup>8</sup> The walls of all the rooms on this floor literally bloomed with the garish colors and patterns of turn-of-the-century wallpaper. Spaces on the walls were filled with enlarged pictures of ancestors in gold-colored, engraved frames. Opulence, indeed.

The stairway continued on to the third floor that housed a large metal tank that held the water to be used in the home. All the water for the house was pumped from the ground by means of a

---

<sup>5</sup>The serenity and location of this room also made it ideal to rent out for viewings prior to funerals, and it frequently served this purpose.

<sup>6</sup>Additional storage rooms in the basement provided space for bottled vegetables and fruits.

<sup>7</sup>This procedure was followed until the advent of cream separators.

<sup>8</sup> The Bassetts apparently were among the first in town to have indoor plumbing in their bathrooms, although Myrthen humorously recalls a "beautiful two-seater" brick outhouse to the rear of the home, of which he reports, "we didn't use [it] but very little."

windmill in the rear of the home. The lighting in the rooms throughout the house was provided by gas lights supplied from a series of gas storage tanks.

Visiting general authorities of the church were always provided room and board at the Bassett home when they visited for stake conferences. On one such occasion, President Joseph F. Smith and his entourage were taken on a ten-day tour of Yellowstone Park with President Bassett as their guide, providing more than ample time to afford the two presidents opportunity to become better acquainted.

### *Behind the House*

Immediately to the rear of the home on the east end of the lot were a windmill and a small frame structure that provided utilities in which to heat the water and do the washing of the clothes. Still farther behind these structures was a large corral surrounded with a four-foot-high board fence that was white-washed every spring—a far cry from the make-shift hawthorn fence that President Bassett and his father had constructed when they first moved to Mendon.

Within this corral was a spacious barn that housed the horses and cows, with a hay loft that provided space for the hay that was fed to the animals. As a regular part of his chores, Myrthen also helped with the livestock outside.

Adjacent to the barn outside were several buggies and sleighs. President Bassett believed in traveling in style.<sup>9</sup> On one side of the barn was space for the single and double buggies, together with a surrey topped with a fringe and painted black—the color of all the buggies. Space was also provided adjacent to the barn to accommodate the cutter and the green horse-drawn sleigh used in the winter. During the winter, two of the horses were hitched to the sleigh daily in order to provide free transportation to and from the academy to students and faculty renting in the home. Typically these were driven by the president himself, providing him with a good opportunity to keep abreast of the day-to-day happenings at the academy.

Entering the barn, one would immediately be struck by the pungent smell and sound of the animals inside. Hung side by side on the walls of the barn inside were the buggy whips, the lap robes, and the dusters of the time, all ready for use at a moment's notice.

Outside, on the south end of the lawn, was a large chicken coop and space for turkeys, geese, etc., complete with accompanying smells and sounds. The pigs also had their own separate pens.<sup>10</sup> Water for the animals was ingeniously pumped into large adjoining troughs by the windmill. All the

---

<sup>9</sup>It is likely that he also later owned one of the early Studebaker cars in the town. (See Chapter 24, fn. 15.)

<sup>10</sup>Although Myrthen remembers butchering the chickens, the pigs were typically slaughtered by a local butcher and then cured by the family.



smaller animals provided high entertainment for visitors, especially children. In some ways visiting the Bassett home was like visiting a local petting zoo.

Situated outside of the corral fence, on the southwest corner, was an ice house, where ice, harvested from the Teton river during the winter, was stored in sawdust for use during the heat of the summer.<sup>11</sup> The ice for the Bassett home was purchased from local ice venders. This was the source of the coolant used in the refrigerators before the advent of electric fridges.

At the extreme rear of the lot was a picturesque bee-house that was used to contain the bees from which the honey produced by President Bassett's twenty to thirty swarms of bees that fed on the blossoms of the nearby raspberries, pear, plum, and apple trees was extracted. Bee-keeping has its own fascination and was the president's favorite hobby, yet another example of his far-reaching curiosity, Myrthen records:

As a boy I well remember the bees swarming. [This is created when a hive decides to divide, and the bees, guarding the queen bee, fly away from the original hive]... a swarm would leave a hive and fly around in the air and then perhaps would light on the limb of a tree like a cluster of grapes, and we would have to get a hive and drop them into it, being sure to always catch the queen. Sometimes they would fly high and far away. I remember father or someone going a block or so to catch them and I remember beating on a big tin pan to get them to light.<sup>12</sup>

Only rarely would any of the family get stung. However, such was the lot of the president's sister Mary, who consequently swelled considerably and became deathly ill. At the Bassett home, honey was always available for sweetening or for a late-night snack of warm, freshly baked bread topped with home-made butter and honey.

Obviously much effort went into the upkeep and operation of this extensive enterprise. In order to provide the necessary help to maintain it all, together with the attendant upkeep of the shrubs, the lawns, the gardens, flowers, and livestock outside the home, President Bassett hired Japanese-American laborers from the sugar factory personnel and their families in nearby Sugar City, adding one more colorful visual dimension to the exterior of the home. As noted, such were also employed as a major help for Lucy and the girls inside the house—especially with the washing

---

<sup>11</sup>The Teton River typically froze during cold weather (as did other pools of water where the river overran its banks to lower places to form slews or ponds). Some of these ponds were quite deep, and they and the canal that flowed out of the river would form very thick ice—so thick sometimes that one could drive a team of horses with a bob sleigh over it. To harvest this ice, the dealers who sold ice would use large ice saws with coarse teeth to saw out big square blocks of ice three or four feet thick, depending on how cold it had been and how thick the ice had become.

<sup>12</sup>Banging on pans (called tanging) to cause swarming bees to land is still a time-honored practice used by beekeepers throughout the world.

and ironing.

### *The End of the Dream*

Like their former home in Canton, Wales, so many years before, this home was filled with pleasant memories. With all of the boarders coming and going at different times, and all of the family teens and little ones constantly cavorting around the premises, it was a buzz of activity and happy confusion during the days of Elder Bassett's presidency.

Everything seemed ideal. His folks and his sister May were located just across the road (readily available to the children), and Lucy's folks were similarly situated nearby. President Bassett's plural wife, Fannie Hunter<sup>13</sup> and her family was also housed near at hand. The tithing office was, as it were, just next door, as was his personal office.

Unfortunately, things changed dramatically in 1925, one year before his death. Much earlier, during the early days of his stake presidency, while he was still the chairman of the school board, President Bassett mortgaged this elegant home for \$1,500 in order to help finance the construction of the new Academy Building at the Ricks academy.<sup>14</sup>

During the early days of the Great Depression in the mid-1920s, banks all across the nation were forced to close, and money was tight; loans were being called in. At that time Thomas was unable to make his payment on the mortgage and the mortgage company foreclosed on the loan and took over ownership of the house. The Bassett's dream home was gone and everyone therein was forced to move. Where the Bassett parents took up residency for the final year of his life is unrecorded .

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>13</sup>See Chapter 23. Hers was the house in which he died.

<sup>14</sup> Scott. *OBHAL*, "Life History of TEB,"7. (See Chapter 17.)

## THE TALE OF TWO SETTLEMENTS

### *The Growth of the Stake*

Sunday, 5 April 1903. President Bassett was standing at the pulpit in the Salt Lake Tabernacle, dwarfed by the massive pipes of the tabernacle organ serving as a backdrop, nervously looking out over the assembled congregation at the morning session of the General Conference of the church. Thousands of the saints sat before him fidgeting on the hard, uncomfortable wooden benches located among the faux marble pillars supporting the balcony. The main body of the general authorities, along with the Tabernacle Choir, were seated on the podium behind him, ready to listen attentively.

Bassett had served as the Stake President of the Fremont Stake for a little over one year at the time, and had been asked to deliver a report of the condition of his stake to the assembled saints. This was his maiden speech in that setting. He had never addressed an audience nearly that large.<sup>1</sup>

He began:

Our Stake is located about 200 miles north of this city [Salt Lake City]. It is in the extreme northeast corner of what is usually termed Southeastern Idaho. It also extends across the Continental divide into the southern borders of Montana. ... In the state of Idaho there are eighteen wards located in the Fremont stake. The area of our stake is approximately 70 miles square, embracing in the neighborhood of 5,000 square miles. We have a population of about 6,000 Latter-day Saints. ...

Twenty years ago it was a sagebrush plain; today we have upwards of 50 wards in that part of the country [southeastern Idaho], we have a branch railroad, we have the electric lines, we have telephone communication, and everything is prosperous with us, financially and temporally. ...

It seems but yesterday that we settled on that then-sagebrush plain, and located our tents on the banks of the South Teton river. ... All that extent of country which now comprises the Fremont stake, the Bingham stake, the Teton stake, and a part of the Pocatello stake was then known as the Bannock ward of the Cache stake of Zion. The number of

---

<sup>1</sup>On four different occasions President Bassett was invited to speak at sessions of General Conference: twice in the tabernacle (5 April 1903 and 6 April 1904); once in an overflow session in the assembly hall (4 April 1909); and once in an afternoon outdoor overflow session held east of the old bureau of information, when the assembly hall overflow was filled (8 April 1906). He was also invited to offer the invocation at the afternoon session of the 5 April 1908 conference.

Latter-day Saints in that locality at that time did not exceed perhaps 200 souls. Today in these various stakes our people number approximately 20,000.

Near the end of his report, President Bassett concluded with an invitation for more of the saints to come and join in the development of the stake for economic reasons.<sup>2</sup>

We are scattered over a very large tract of country, and I only regret that there are not more of our young people who are looking for homes, that they may come and help us carry our burdens. We have had bridges to build, schoolhouses to build, churches to build, roads to maintain, and everything that is necessary in the development of a new country.

Our people have taken up large farms; they are too large, and in too many cases they have been under the necessity of mortgaging them, and I am sorry to say that more than 50% of the farms in our stake today are mortgaged. Our people are carrying too heavy a load, and we would very dearly like to see a host of our young people come into that country and buy out one-half or two-thirds of the farms we own, and help us to lift our mortgages and maintain those things that are necessary in the colonization of a country.

We invite you there; but we do not want to go contrary to the counsel of the First Presidency [who were seated behind him on the stand] in asking our young people to scatter out too far. However, we will always welcome you to come and share our burdens, because we want to observe the counsel of the First Presidency and get out of debt as soon as we can. We do not want, though, to sell our farms to strangers, but we would like to sell to our own people.

### *Priesthood Reorganization*

Since the genesis of the church in 1830, organizational matters have always been of major concern. New offices within the priesthood structure<sup>3</sup> and new auxiliary bodies<sup>4</sup> were added to the structure of the church to meet needs created by the attendant growth. Constant movement of the main body of the church (caused primarily by persecution, gathering to Zion, etc.) complicated matters, with the result that by the turn of the twentieth century, a degree of organizational chaos was evident among the saints.

Especially was this true among the priesthood quorums and the auxiliaries of the church. Each ward determined to large extent its own curriculum and meeting schedule. Each major church auxiliary had its own periodical, and to a degree, the left hand didn't know what the right hand was

---

<sup>2</sup>Such an invitation was common for frontier communities at that time wishing to bring additional cash influx and population into their midst.

<sup>3</sup>Bishops, First Presidency, Apostles, Seventies, etc.

<sup>4</sup>Relief Society, Primary, Sunday School, MIA, etc.

doing. Often, in matters such as scheduling and fund-raising, they were even in conflict with each other.

Two years after the time that the Fremont stake was organized, President Joseph F. Smith sensed a need for a major overhauling of the priesthood organization of the church. At this time the Aaronic Priesthood was being extended on a more regular basis to the young men of the church. Earlier, when President Bassett had been called in Mendon to be the office of a teacher, the Aaronic Priesthood was primarily the bailiwick of older men.

This transition in age was creating problems of its own, problems such as the following, reported a little over two years after the forming of the Bassett stake presidency:

We are deeply impressed with the fact that our Quorums of the Aaronic Priesthood in this stake are not doing the work that we feel is essentially necessary to be done by them, and we give as perhaps the main reason that they are comprised mainly of boys from the ages of ten to twenty-one. Up to the administration ... of President Woodruff these quorums were presided over by three brethren chosen from the Melchizedek Priesthood who were of more mature years.

It is true there has been appointed acting priests and teachers in the various wards, from brethren of the Melchizedek priesthood, but they have had no presidency other than the bishopric.<sup>5</sup>

How to straighten out this matter was only one of the major concerns the new presidency had to address.

### *Eighteen Wards*

As President Bassett reported, eighteen wards (and not just those in Rexburg) fell under his ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Some were spin-offs from the major settlement in Rexburg, and were more like suburbs of that community. His own extended family was a good example of this: the Muirs settled in what became Salem (often associated with Sugar City, hence the designation “Sugar-Salem”), and the Bakers settled in what became the village of Teton. However, much of their activity centered in Rexburg, the stake center. Usually their relationship to Rexburg was extremely cordial.

Other wards (like St. Anthony and Ashton) had grown up largely independent of the stake center, and their relationship was a little more rocky. This chapter is the story of both types of relationships.

### *St. Anthony*

By far, the most challenging of relationships was the one between Rexburg and St. Anthony.

---

<sup>5</sup>FSR3-13, c.d. 9 February 1904.

These two were constantly at loggerheads over the power inherent in the location of the county seat. All of the stake presidency lived in the Rexburg environs, and that is also where the stake headquarters and Ricks academy were located. The county seat, on the other hand, was located in St. Anthony, fourteen miles to the north.

When Fremont County was created in March of 1893 (three years after Elder Bassett's return from his mission), the question had arisen as to where to locate the county seat. Rexburg was the senior community, having been established in 1884, while St. Anthony was founded in 1890 (by non-members of the LDS church). Both communities lobbied strenuously for the prize of the county seat. Finally it was agreed that St. Anthony should temporarily house the county seat, but that Rexburg should supply the first county officials. This situation was to be in effect for a five-year period and then a vote would be held to determine the final location of the county seat. On the occasion of the vote, a two-thirds majority would be required to establish the permanent location of the seat.

The saints in Rexburg were confident that the honor would be theirs, and were very miffed when St. Anthony was chosen. Two years later another election was called, but again the people of the county voted to keep the seat in St. Anthony. For years, Rexburg attempted to wrest the county seat from its then-current major nemesis. Election after election, whenever the issue of the county seat location appeared on the local ballot, St. Anthony won out.

At times the competition between the two became heated, and during such times President Bassett and his counselors found themselves in a very uncomfortable situation, attempting to maintain their neutrality. A prime example of this in-fighting between communities erupted every fall when it came time for the county fair, which eventually became highly politicized.

In September of 1907 (five years into the Bassett administration), Rexburg held what they called a Fairival.<sup>6</sup> It was timed to coincide with the Fremont county fair, which was always held at the county seat. When the Fairival was initially announced to be held in Rexburg, the St. Anthony papers immediately responded with cries of poor sportsmanship, and foul play. The county fair personnel in St. Anthony maintained that the event had been put on "during fair week to keep Rexburg people from attending the county fair. This is as we expected [one of the local papers noted]. Rexburg cannot get in and be nice owing to the fact that she got her feelings hurt in the last election."

The *Idaho Falls Register* joined in the controversy, calling the timing a "pin-headed proposition." Rexburg responded by claiming that they had no intent to disrupt the annual county fair.<sup>7</sup> The fair was primarily a day-time proposition, they pointed out, while the Fairival was

---

<sup>6</sup>All references to the fairival are from Crowder, 139-40.

<sup>7</sup>However, even the name itself suggests otherwise.

principally an evening event.

Few Rexburg residents supported the county fair that year, choosing to exhibit their produce and crafts at the Fairival. President Bassett was caught in the middle of a dilemma, since, as president of the stake that encompassed both towns, he had to appear neutral in the controversy, if he were to avoid criticism and bad feelings. With his personal extensive gardens he was always a major contributor to the fair. Unfortunately, we do not know where he exhibited on that occasion.

Eventually the conflict between the two towns was settled by putting them in different counties. In 1913, Rexburg got its wish to become a county seat with the creation of Madison county (divided off from Fremont County). Earlier (in 1909) St. Anthony had become a stake center itself, with the creation of Yellowstone Stake (divided from Fremont Stake), one year before the release of President Bassett.

### *Sugar City*

Establishing a solid economic base is always a difficulty in any new settlement. Especially was this true during the unsettled economic conditions in the U.S. during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the new nation struggled to establish itself.

Upon arriving in the Great Basin in 1847, one of the major goals that the early leaders of the LDS church pursued was that of achieving economic self-sufficiency—and especially a healthy export trade where possible. This led to the production of such goods as silk, cotton, wine, and tobacco in southern Utah. In the north, the Fremont sugar industry was one such effort.

President Bassett's counselors were changed in a reorganization of the Fremont stake presidency in 1905. Chosen as the new 1<sup>st</sup> counselor was Mark Austin, then bishop of the Sugar City Ward.<sup>8</sup> During the latter part of the Bassett administration, Elder Austin was the major point-man for the stake's venture into the sugar business. Later, he became involved in the sugar industry throughout the entire western United States and Canada. Accordingly, President Bassett was only tangentially involved in the development of the industry, but his role as stake president involved him in most of the major decisions.

Early in the history of the colony, the saints north of Rexburg had discovered that sugar beets grew well in the volcanic soil and cool nights. The research and development phase of the industry, which took place primarily in Utah under the guidance of Mormon church agricultural supervisors, was completed for Sugar City in 1897, during the administration of Thomas E. Ricks. Between 1898 and 1920, aided by unique irrigation practices and the securing of sufficient labor throughout the

---

<sup>8</sup>Mark Austin also later replaced Elder Bassett in 1910 as the president of the stake.

region, the industry experienced sizeable expansion.<sup>9</sup>

Initially the major problem in the establishment of the industry involved processing the beets. Correspondence from the Ogden Sugar Company to the original Fremont stake presidency in March, 1902 (less than a month after their installation) indicates that the OSC's experience with the Idaho beets the preceding year was nearly disastrous for the company, costing them \$20 a ton by the time the beets got to Ogden. Further, the company gave the Fremont stake leadership to understand that they (the OSC) wanted no more to do with the Idaho experiment until a factory could profitably be established in the area.

In August of 1903, Mark Austin purchased a large plot of land approximately five miles northeast of Rexburg. The southern part of the land was to serve as the location for a town, and the northern half for a sugar factory. By the fall of 1903, thirty-five thousand tons of beets had been produced, and in October of that year a contract had been drawn up to build a \$750,000 factory. The following December, President Joseph F. Smith laid the cornerstone for a new factory in Sugar City, and by 1904 a sugar factory had been constructed.

That same year, the Fremont County Sugar Company was formed in Salt Lake with several general authorities involved on the board of directors, with President Smith, as the president of the enterprise. Soon Sugar City, as it became known, arose as a company town for the Fremont County Sugar Company, which in turn became part of the Utah-Idaho (U&I) Sugar Company.

A small community was created to support the factory; construction workers and early factory families were housed in tents, leading to the nickname "Rag Town." By late 1904, the village consisted of 35 houses, two stores, a hotel, an opera house, several boarding houses, two lumber yards, a meat market, and a schoolhouse.<sup>10</sup> By 1905 (true to form) the stake presidency was receiving letters from indignant saints claiming that the church was in a high state of apostasy because the factory was left running on Sundays .

In 1906 the church paid farmers three-quarters of a million dollars for beets. Three chemists from Germany were sent from Salt Lake City by church headquarters to teach the saints in Sugar City how to make sugar.

Earlier (in 1904), a contract was drawn up to build an auxiliary plant in nearby Parker. There a slicer rendered the beets into juice, and pumped it by pipe six miles to the sugar refinery plant in Sugar City. However, over time, freezing weather kept rendering the pipes useless, and in 1913 the pipeline from Parker was closed.

---

<sup>9</sup>Sugar City Idaho. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sugar\\_City,\\_Idaho](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sugar_City,_Idaho)

<sup>10</sup>*Sugar City Sugar Beet Factory*, Daughters of the Pioneers Plaque #525, Sugar City Camp, 1999, Sugar City Idaho. ( <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/ref/collection/BYUIOralHist/id/388>)



In the early years, the factory had a labor shortage, leading to a community of Nikkei<sup>11</sup> settling in Sugar City to work. Working in labor gangs, thousands of these Japanese laborers dominated the workforce used for the handwork done in the regional sugar beet fields during the twentieth century's opening decade. Their "handwork" in the sugar-beet fields consisted of "the bunching and thinning, the arduous hoeing, and the back-breaking work of topping and loading."<sup>12</sup>

It was from this immigrant pool that President Bassett hired laborers to help care for the gardens and livestock at his home in Rexburg.

### *National Issues with Japan*

However, in the beginning of the century, frictions arose between the U.S. and Japan, national problems that were destined to have a direct impact on the Rexburg area, primarily because of the Japanese community that had settled in and around Sugar City. The future of these Japanese immigrants was summarily threatened by the deteriorating relationship between Japan and the United States (as were all Japanese immigrants throughout the U.S.).<sup>13</sup>

In 1894 a treaty with Japan had assured free immigration from Japan to the U.S. However, by 1906, about the time that the sugar factory was beginning to turn a profit, concern arose in California regarding the large number of Japanese immigrants to that state.<sup>14</sup> As a result, the California Board of Education had gone so far as to formulate plans for children of Japanese descent to be required to attend separate, racially-segregated schools.

By June of 1907, the U.S. War College was formulating plans for war with Japan, fearing that Japan was in a position to gain control of the western Pacific (leading to the loss of the America's Pacific garrisons). That same year, an Immigration Act was signed by Congress authorizing Roosevelt to restrict the entry of Japanese laborers.

However, all of this was cut short by an informal "gentleman's agreement" that year. This agreement stipulated that Japan would not issue any more passports for any citizens wishing to immigrate to the continental U.S. for the purpose of employment, thus effectively stemming the flow

---

<sup>11</sup>Japanese immigrants and their descendants

<sup>12</sup><http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/journal/2009/10/30/enduring-communities/>

<sup>13</sup>Japan had recently defeated Russia in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904 and was beginning to flex its political muscles, determined to emerge as a major world power.

<sup>14</sup>Estimated to constitute 1% of the population of the state.

of Japanese emigration to the States.<sup>15</sup> In exchange, much to the relief of the Japanese in Fremont County and those who had been employing them, the U.S. agreed to allow the presence of all Japanese immigrants who were already in the country, and to allow the immigration of wives, children, and parents, as well as to avoid legal discrimination against the Japanese children in the California schools.

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>15</sup>However, immigration to the Territory of Hawaii was not curtailed, and it was an easy step to move to the U.S. from Hawaii, thus circumventing the restrictions on immigration.

## TWO BIRTHS, FOUR DEATHS IN THE PRESIDENCY YEARS

### *Two More Children*

During the time that Elder Bassett was the stake president (1902-10), major changes were occurring in his family. Two more children were added to Thomas' and Lucy's family, but the happiness they brought was counterbalanced by the sorrow of losing both of his parents and two brothers-in-law.

On the first anniversary of Elder Bassett's call to be the stake president, the family welcomed Thomas Myrthen (Myrthen) into the world, the family's only son. Unusual local circumstances surrounded the birth. Rexburg was undergoing a major winter thaw, accompanied by flooding, enabling travel by rowboat on some of the streets of the town. In addition, an epidemic of scarlet fever<sup>1</sup> was also abroad in the land, and at the time of the birth Lucy was among its victims. Consequently, Myrthen's sisters had been farmed out to Lucy's mother, who lived next door, and initially were only allowed to view the newborn through the windows of the Bassett home from outside.

A little more than a year later (in August of 1904), another daughter, Hazel Irene (Hazel), joined the family of Thomas and Lucy—their fourth living daughter and the last of the children born to them. Myrthen later wrote:

She was small in stature, but she was a bundle of talent. She could sing, dance, read, act, or do anything she had a mind to do. ... I was her protector and felt a deep responsibility in helping her.<sup>2</sup>

### *The Passing of His Parents*

In May of 1903 (sixteen months after Elder Bassett became the stake president), President Bassett's father died at the age of 76. This left his mother, Margaret, not only blind, but also widowed. Fortunately, Margaret's daughter Mary was still living with her, and could help to soften the blow. In addition, President Bassett and his family, who lived just across the street from his parents, were there to visit on a daily basis.

---

<sup>1</sup>Myrthen records two conflicting versions of the condition of his mother at the time of his birth. In one account of the disease, he asserts that "scarlet fever" was the concern ("History of Lucy Ann Lutz Bassett," *OBHAL*, 13). In another he speaks of "smallpox" ("Autobiography of Thomas Myrthen Bassett," *OBHAL*, 2).

<sup>2</sup>*OBHAL*, "Myrthen Bassett Autobiography," 2.

The older couple had been married for over half a century (52 years), and had been through much together since their marriage in the little Welsh Baptist chapel in Cardiff. They had lived a full life together, and Margaret had much to look back on: their early days of marriage ... her husband's employment on the docks ... the loss of her parents ... their little ones buried in the Leckwith cemetery ... their conversions to Mormonism ... the emigration of their children, and their own oft-stormy crossing of the ocean and the crowded railroad journey across the nation ... the difficulty of their adjustment to their new life style in Mendon ... the marriages of their children ... the births of their grandchildren ... all in addition to their pioneering days in Rexburg.

The death of his father was especially difficult for President Bassett. He and his father had been inseparable since Thomas E.'s birth, except for the two years when he had been in Britain on his mission and the year he served in the Idaho legislature.

One year later, in 1904, Henry Hughes, Becca's husband passed away from complications associated with diabetes.<sup>3</sup> He had lived for four years after being released from his long tenure as Bishop in Mendon. We do not know how many of the Rexburg Bassetts attended the funeral.

In 1908, death struck twice more—once in late fall and once in early winter. His mother, Margaret, passed away in November, 1908, at the age of 82, and all the memories of the past were revived again. Her death was especially difficult for President Bassett's children because of their geographic proximity and the frequency of their visits. Her granddaughter Gwladys later wrote:

It used to be my pleasure to sit at the side of my grandmother Bassett who was blind, and who sat in the corner in the kitchen, mostly in her rocking chair—hour after hour reading to her and sometimes singing for her. I loved her dearly and I think the feeling was mutual as she was so very kind to me. I can see her now as I sit here remembering, with her little black lace cap, black dress and white apron. In the pocket of this apron she always had peppermints and lemon candy, and often she would reward me with a piece of each.

She would sometimes tell me stories of the Old Country while Auntie Mae would be working around in the kitchen and often Auntie Mae would join in. How I wish now that I had written down all the many stories they used to tell, but youth somehow does not seem to appreciate the real[ly] important things until it is too late. I am sure there would be many interesting things to tell about now with my adult mind.<sup>4</sup>

As a way of dealing with his grief, President Bassett composed the following musical number

---

<sup>3</sup>See Schimmelpfennig, 53 for the details.

<sup>4</sup>Letter from Gwladys Bassett Comstock to her cousin, Walter Bassett Muir, a copy of which is in the possession of the author.

for the funeral. It was sung at the funeral by William E.'s son, William S.<sup>5</sup>, and was accompanied by President Bassett's daughter Gwladys:

Come as a bride to the altar;  
    Thou who are burdened with years;  
Come to the home of the blissful,  
    Far from mortality's tears.  
Eight-two years have you labored,  
    Lovingly, tender and true,  
Blessing and comforting others,  
    Now here, will greet and bless you.  
Loved ones on earth, true, will miss you  
    Anxiously ask you enjoy  
Eyesight, with health and life's pleasures  
    None, earth nor time can destroy.  
Come from a world dark and gloomy  
    Come to our mansions so bright,  
Feast on the splendors of heaven,  
    Bask in its joys and delight.<sup>6</sup>

### *The Death of a Second Brother-in-Law*

Less than one month later, tragedy struck again, in the death of President Bassett's brother-in-law, Walter Muir, who passed away shortly after the December stake conference. Muir had been in ill health for much of that year. In November of the preceding year, he had returned to Scotland to check out some genealogical connections, and to settle up on some family property matters. Neither goal proved successful, and he came back quite discouraged. The estate, since it had been 43 years since the family left for America, had passed on to others; the genealogical materials gained had been minimal.

During the following summer, ill health kept him from actively helping on the farm. In December the family went to stake conference in Rexburg. After the last session, they all went to the home of Mae (his sister-in-law) to visit. Walter left the group temporarily to run to the freight depot to see if a parcel from Sears had arrived. Then he ran back again and arrived just as the family was preparing to return to Salem. At that point, he climbed into the sleigh and rode home with them. The weather was freezing and he was overheated from running. By the time they arrived home Walter

---

<sup>5</sup>William S. Bassett had studied voice in New York City, and was singing professionally at the time.

<sup>6</sup>OBHAL, "Margaret Edwards Bassett," 6.

was badly chilled, and retired to his bed. As a result of the incident he contracted a severe cold, and three days later died of pneumonia.

The following Monday his body was taken by sleigh to the Sugar City cemetery for burial. He was buried in 45 degrees-below-zero weather with three feet of snow on the ground. The feet of some of the men who helped with the services suffered from frostbitten. The family used heated flat irons, rocks, and bricks, coupled with straw, and heavy quilts in the sleigh boxes to keep Margaret and the children warm, so intense was the cold that winter.<sup>7</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>7</sup>Golding, Carma Muir.

Chapter Twenty-One  
POST-MANIFESTO PLURAL MARRIAGE

*Plural Marriage At the Turn of the Century*

During President Bassett's presidency the issue of plural marriage among the Mormons came to the attention of the nation once more, largely as a consequence of senate hearings following the election of Elder Reed Smoot to the United States Senate in 1903. Smoot was a member of the LDS Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, and though he was never involved in plural marriage himself, he was a prominent figure in a church that had fostered the practice within recent memory.

Earlier (in 1898), Elder B. H. Roberts of the Council of Seventy had been elected to the U.S. House of Representatives as a delegate from Utah. Unlike Smoot, Roberts had been a practicing polygamist with three wives (one of whom he had married after the manifesto). When this was revealed, a petition signed by seven million individuals was sent to congress demanding that he not be seated in the House. Congress acquiesced and he was barred by his peers. Enemies of the LDS church in Utah and elsewhere trusted that Elder Smoot would receive the same treatment.

The period following the 1890 manifesto until at least 1911 was a time of transition and attendant confusion regarding plural marriage in the LDS faith. During those two short decades, plural marriage as a practice ran the entire gamut from being a central tenet of the faith (a practice that was thought to determine in large part one's ultimate status in the future kingdom of heaven), to being considered a transgression punishable by excommunication from the church.

*A Simplified History*

Those who were born after those years of transition typically have a difficult time understanding the conflicting pressures on the church membership during that era. The narrative by which later latter-day saints were typically catechized generally followed the following scenario:

In the late 1880s, the church was in perilous circumstances. Legislation passed by the congress of the United States—and by the state of Idaho—had not only taken away the right of cohabitation with their spouses from those engaged in polygamy (fining and imprisoning the husbands), but had also confiscated many of the finances of the church, rendering the payment of tithes and offerings by church members largely an exercise in futility.

Further, the U.S. government threatened to take possession of the LDS temples—thus driving a dagger into the heart of the faith by putting an end to vital ordinances among the saints—ordinances performed only in the temples. Idaho had gone even further and disenfranchised all members of the LDS church who embraced the doctrine of plural marriage, and congress was threatening to follow that model in Utah.

According to this version of history, during these dark hours, the Lord instructed Wilford Woodruff, then president of the church, to issue a document bringing an immediate end to all plural marriages (and what had been called “unlawful cohabitation” with plural wives) from that time forward. This document, known as the “Woodruff manifesto,” was then ratified by the saints assembled in the October conference of 1890, and thereafter became the accepted law of the church. Plural marriage after that time became grounds for excommunication.

This version of the story was the one designed for public consumption, and has since become the standard LDS version of what happened. It seems impossibly simplistic, however, given the centrality of those relationships to the lives of everyone that they touched. That seems especially true in light of the way those relationships had been understood as God’s will for his church.

Not surprisingly, further research has determined that the facts surrounding that change were much more complicated than the foregoing narrative indicates.

### *A Heart Wrenching Transition*

After researching personal diaries, letters, journals, minutes of quorum meetings, etc. of the times, LDS scholars have uncovered a very different and much more complex scenario.<sup>1</sup> They reveal a divided quorum of apostles, and a much more chaotic, bumpy transition from polygamy to monogamy in the church during the aforementioned decades.

A doctrine and practice so central and crucial to Mormon belief in the church’s early years could not be casually set aside without dramatic repercussions among the faithful. As Jorgensen and Hardy have pointed out, for decades this doctrine had determined the way latter-day saints thought about God, the fulness of priesthood powers, and ultimately about family.<sup>2</sup>

For example, President Brigham Young initially taught that although monogamist latter-day saints could be exalted, “The only men who become Gods, even the Sons of God, are those who enter into polygamy.”<sup>3</sup> In the 1860s and 70s, a number of church leaders voiced their opinion that

---

<sup>1</sup>See, for example, D. Michael Quinn’s “LDS Church Authority and New Plural Marriage, 1890-1904.” *Dialogue, A Journal of Mormon Thought*, Spring 1985 (later reprinted by Pioneer Press, SLC, 2001); Richard S. Van Wagoner’s *Mormon Polygamy, a History*. Signature Books, SLC, 1986; Victor W. Jorgensen and B. Carmon Hardy. “The Taylor-Cowley Affair and the Watershed of Mormon History.” *Utah Historical Quarterly*, vol. 48 (Winter 1980), and Drew Briney’s *Apostles on Trial*, Hindsight Publications, 2012.

Though there are dozens of other studies dealing with the history of polygamy, I have relied primarily on the findings of the afore-mentioned scholars.

<sup>2</sup>Jorgensen and Hardy, 34.

<sup>3</sup>*JD* 16:268-69.



a monogamist who was true to the sealing covenants of the temples with his single wife could be exalted if he *believed* in the principle of the plurality of wives—adding the caveat that the monogamist’s exaltation would not be as “great,” or “full,” or “numerous,” or high” as that of the exalted polygamist.<sup>4</sup>

An editorial in the *Salt Lake Daily Telegraph* had opined that ending polygamy would “amount to forfeiting all that [the LDS] have toiled for, bled for, prayed for, or hoped for . . .”<sup>5</sup>

So seriously did President John Taylor consider this doctrine that in a special priesthood meeting at April conference of 1884, “he asked for all monogamists serving in ward bishoprics or stake presidencies either to make preparations to marry a plural wife or to offer their resignations from church office, and he even called out the names of monogamous stake presidents.”<sup>6</sup> President Taylor went on to state:

To comply with the request of our enemies, would be to give up all hope of ever entering into the glory of God, the Father, and Jesus Christ, the Son. . . . So intimately interwoven is this precious doctrine with the exaltation of men and women in the great hereafter that it cannot be given up without giving up at the same time all hope of immortal glory.<sup>7</sup>

This represents an entirely different and wholly incompatible world view from the one indicated in instructions given by the First Presidency in a letter dated October of 1910, twenty-five years later, instructing all stake presidents and counselors:<sup>8</sup>

We . . . desire you to make it known to all the Saints in your stake that . . . he who advises, counsels or entices any person to contract a plural marriage renders himself liable to excommunication, as well as those who solemnize such marriage, or those who enter into such unlawful relations.<sup>9</sup>

The path from the one end of this spectrum to the other runs through two manifestos—one by President Wilford Woodruff (1890) and one by President Joseph F. Smith (1904)—and through hearings held by the U.S. Senate Committee on Elections and Privileges over a three-year period (1904-07), concerning the seating of Elder Reed Smoot in the U.S. Senate—to which office he had

---

<sup>4</sup>For a list of such statements, see Quinn, 24, fn. 65.

<sup>5</sup>Jorgensen and Hardy, 34. *Telegraph* article reprinted as "The Government and Polygamy," in *Millennial Star*, October 28, 1865.

<sup>6</sup>Quinn, 27.

<sup>7</sup>Van Wagoner, 145.

<sup>8</sup>This was the year Thomas E. Bassett was released from his calling as Stake President.

<sup>9</sup>Clark, James R., *Messages of the First Presidency*, vol. IV, 1970, 218.

been duly elected by the citizens of Utah.

### *The Woodruff Manifesto and Its Immediate Aftermath*

The 1890 manifesto appears to have confused and divided the Quorum of Twelve Apostles—largely because of a revelation received by President Woodruff less than one year earlier:

Let not my servants who are called to the Presidency of my church, deny my word or my law, which concerns the salvation of the children of men. ... *Place not your selves in jeopardy to your enemies by promise* ... Let my servants, who officiate as your counselors before the Courts, make their pleadings as they are moved by the Holy Spirit, *without any further pledges from the Priesthood*, and they shall be justified.<sup>10</sup>

In December of 1889, President Woodruff presented the above revelation to the Quorum of Twelve, which directive appeared to dictate against offering any such public statement as the 1890 manifesto. Apparently, the Quorum had initially enthusiastically endorsed the 1889 revelation when it was read to them.

Apostle John Henry Smith wrote, “How happy I am,” Apostle Franklin D. Richards said the reading of the revelation gave “great joy” to the Twelve, and Abraham H. Cannon wrote, “My heart was filled with joy and peace during the entire reading. It sets all doubts at rest concerning the course to pursue.”<sup>11</sup>

To add further hope and anticipation (as well as confusion) that the 1890 manifesto was not the final word of the Lord on the issue, the apostles were informed by President Woodruff in April of 1891—after the manifesto had been presented to, and ratified (reluctantly) by the church membership—“The principle of plural marriage will yet be restored to this Church, but how or when I cannot say.”<sup>12</sup>

What followed the 1890 manifesto is extremely confusing, as one attempts to sort through conflicting reports of what was actually happening in the church—especially in Mexico and Canada, but also in the United States. Personal diaries of the leaders of the church often seem at variance with the public utterances.

However, it appears rather evident from private journals, minutes of meetings, etc. that President Woodruff, as the leader of the church, was anxious to distance himself from the problems of both new plural marriages and even from cohabitation with wives married before the 1890 manifesto.

It also appears that in an attempt to isolate himself from the problems (although he was rather

---

<sup>10</sup>24 November 1889, as quoted in Quinn, 38. Italics added.

<sup>11</sup>Quinn, 38.

<sup>12</sup>Quinn, 61.

adamant that husbands not break their temple covenants by deserting their plural wives) he seems to have relegated authority to approve any new plural marriages to the control of his counselors, George Q. Cannon and Joseph F. Smith. Both of the counselors, in turn, authorized others of the apostles, mission presidents, etc., to perform a controlled number of post-1890 manifesto marriages.<sup>13</sup>

Elder Marriner W. Merrill of the apostolate is quoted to have said,

I am aware of the feeling growing among the people that plural families are unpopular. They are growing less. They will never die out. This principle will never be taken from the earth. ... there are some who think the Church is going back upon the principle[.] I tell them this is not so.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, others in the quorum, particularly Francis M. Lyman (the president of the quorum), perhaps unaware of these clandestine activities of their brethren, maintained a hard line opposing the two problems inherent in the manifesto (new plural marriages and cohabitation with wives married before the 1890 document).

The U. S. government demanded a cessation of both cohabitation and new marriages as a sign of good faith before the return of confiscated church properties and the granting of statehood for Utah. After these concessions were made, President Lorenzo Snow, President Woodruff's successor, seemed determined to follow explicitly the conditions laid out in the manifesto, and apparently was unaware at times of the continuing activities of Presidents Cannon and Smith.<sup>15</sup>

### *Senate Hearings and a Second Manifesto*

In 1901 Joseph F. Smith became the President of the church, and he appears to have been more lenient in regard to both new marriages and cohabiting pre-manifesto couples than President

---

<sup>13</sup>Van Wagoner (164) names Matthias F. Cowley, John W. Taylor, Brigham Young Jr., George Teasdale, and Abraham O. Woodruff as well as Anthony W. Ivins, being among those involved in sealing plural marriages in Mexico, Canada, and the United States after the Woodruff pronouncement. Apparently some of them took additional wives themselves after the manifesto. The inclusion of Teasdale in this list may have special ramifications later for President Bassett, since he was Bassett's former mission president, and the one who set him apart as Stake President. An expanded list of those involved in post-manifesto marriages is in Van Wagoner, 256-57.

<sup>14</sup>From the journal of Anthon H. Lund, 9 January 1900, as quoted in Van Wagoner, 257. Elder Merrill died in 1906, before the end of the Smoot hearings.

<sup>15</sup>See Quinn, 68-69 for a discussion of President Snow's attitude toward the problem.

Snow had been, but continued to deny publically what seems to have been happening privately.<sup>16</sup>

When Reed Smoot was elected to the U. S. Congress by the Utah legislature in 1903, a national uproar<sup>17</sup> led to the formation of a senate investigation, looking into allegations that the church was still covertly sanctioning new plural marriages and continuing to encourage cohabitation of pre-1890 manifesto marriages. These hearings lasted from January of 1904 to February of 1907, well within the administration of President Bassett in the Fremont Stake. During these hearings regarding the condition of plural marriage in Utah, President Smith himself admitted to eleven post-manifesto children born to his own plural wives, while maintaining that the church completely accepted the conditions of the manifesto. He maintained that though he himself was not following the directives of the manifesto, the church membership was being encouraged to do so.

Earlier, sometime around 1895, Elder Bassett's brother Will had moved with his family from Salt Lake City to Provo to partner with Elder Smoot in the Utah Woolen Mills. When Smoot was elected to the senate in 1903, Will took over the management of the enterprise. By that time, he had worked with Elder Smoot for nearly eight years, and the two knew each other well. Therefore the hearings held a special interest for the Bassett family. The hearings also probably brought back unpleasant memories for Will,<sup>18</sup> reminding him of his own prior troubles with the laws involving plural marriage.

Responding to the hearings, in October of 1904, President Smith (in an apparent attempt to placate the nation and to instruct the membership of the church further) issued a second manifesto, primarily affirming the stance President Woodruff had taken earlier in the 1890 version. Francis M. Lyman of the Quorum of the Twelve was also chosen near that time to act in the role of a watchdog for the Presidency, to assure that strict obedience to the letter and spirit of the 1904 manifesto was followed.<sup>19</sup>

One outcome of the senate hearings was that it became evident that some church authorities were still sanctioning the sealing of wives to husbands in plural marriage relationships, and that polygamy was still alive and well among some latter-day saints. The 1904 manifesto was not sufficient to quell such concerns, and the hearings continued off and on for three more years, as the senate investigating committee sought to question more witnesses who had first-hand knowledge of

---

<sup>16</sup>Van Wagoner, 169.

<sup>17</sup>Set off initially by a petition from the Salt Lake Ministerial Association against seating him.

<sup>18</sup>Kathryn Pardoe interview, July 10, 1951 in Cleta Robinson Bassett, "William Edward Bassett and Sarah Ann Williams Bassett. n.p.

<sup>19</sup>Van Wagoner 183.

the inner workings of the business at hand before the committee. Some of the LDS general authorities subpoenaed to testify before the hearings refused to appear, claiming it an affront to their privacy.

Two such members of the Council of the Twelve Apostles, John W. Taylor (the son and namesake of the former president of the church) and Matthias Cowley (a nephew of President Woodruff), had been the most active of the Twelve in their involvement in fostering polygamy both inside and outside the borders of the U.S. As a result they became special targets of the committee conducting the hearings. Both refused to appear in Washington, and in order for the church to save face with the nation, both apostles resigned from the Quorum in 1905, reputedly with the tacit understanding of the church leadership that they would be reinstated after the furor caused by the hearings had subsided.<sup>20</sup> At least that was the story passed down through the family of John W. Taylor.

Janet Taylor, Elder Taylor's third wife, claims that President Smith, at the time of their resignations, told the two apostles, "You brethren are called upon to make this sacrifice, but you will lose nothing from it. When things quiet down you will be reinstated."<sup>21</sup>

Cowley is reported by Raymond Taylor, a son of Elder Taylor, to have said:

When we were in council relative to our trouble, brother [Charles W.] Penrose remarked, "These brethren (Cowley and Father) are not on trail [sic] nor have they committed any offense [sic], but if they are willing to offer the sacrifice and stand the embarrassment, we will admit them back after the situation clears," or words to that effect.<sup>22</sup>

At least some in the Quorum were reputed to have viewed the two brethren as sacrificial lambs, offered up to save the public image of the church. However, whether that is true or not, as time passed and a new generation of younger men,<sup>23</sup> not familiar with the inner workings of the Council before the time of their appointment, were called to the apostolate. It soon became evident that reinstatement of Cowley and Taylor would be seen as an insult to the intelligence of the nation, and the two were never restored to the Council. Further, the situation of the two being outside of the Quorum, brought additional estrangement from their brethren who remained.

However, these acts of resignation did not stop the clandestine activities involving plural

---

<sup>20</sup>Van Wagoner, 178-79, 260-61.

<sup>21</sup>"Interviews with Nettie M. Taylor," January 15, 1936, p. 4, as quoted in Jorgensen 33.

<sup>22</sup>Raymond W. Taylor to Samuel W. Taylor, May 3, 1937, as quoted in Jorgensen 33.

<sup>23</sup>The new replacements in the Council of the Twelve were Elders George F. Richards, Orson F. Whitney, and David O. McKay. All were added to the apostolate on 9 April 1906.

marriage. On 5 October 1910,<sup>24</sup> because of a matter causing the First Presidency “much anxiety,”<sup>25</sup> an epistle was sent from the headquarters of the church to all stake presidencies informing them that there were still those performing plural marriages, despite the threat of excommunication. The local leaders were told, as noted above, that :

... no one has been authorized to solemnize plural marriages, and that he who *advises, counsels or entices* any person to contract a plural marriage renders himself liable to excommunication, *as well as those who solemnize such marriages*, or those who enter into such unlawful relations.<sup>26</sup>

A year later (in 1911), after the release of President Bassett, Elders Taylor and Cowley were called to a trial for their membership before the Twelve and the First Presidency. At that time, Elder Taylor was excommunicated because of his defiant attitude throughout the hearing. Elder Cowley was spared excommunication, but was disfellowshipped and had his priesthood held in abeyance from the time of the hearing until 1936 (when his priesthood blessings were restored to Elder Cowley), after he signed a confession of wrong doing regarding plural marriage while he was in the Quorum.

As Jorgensen and Hardy point out, it is ironic (the question of justice aside) that the two would receive such negative treatment when, by pursuing the same course a generation earlier they would have been lionized throughout the entire church for their defense of plural marriage, not reviled for their defiance of official church policy.

Perhaps no better summation of the entire matter can be given than that offered by Jorgensen and Hardy:

... neither the foes of Mormonism nor its apologists adequately perceived that much more was involved than exposing secret marriages and establishing who had or had not told the truth. Neither side seemed to comprehend the magnitude of theological dysfunction then afflicting the Church. Mormonism was, in fact, in the throes of doctrinal reformation. What had commenced as a posture of expediency became an increasingly orthodox departure from the past.<sup>27</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>24</sup>Two months prior to the release of T. E. Bassett from the stake presidency.

<sup>25</sup>Presumably a list of new polygamist marriages printed in the *Salt Lake Tribune*. This list has been reproduced in Briney (258) but President Bassett is not on that list.

<sup>26</sup>Clark, IV: 218. Italics added.

<sup>27</sup>Jorgensen, 35.

Chapter Twenty-Two  
THE BASSETT/HUNTER MARRIAGE

*National Elections*

1908 was the last year of Theodore Roosevelt's administration. The Democratic nominee (President Bassett's party) for president was William Jennings Bryan who was running for that position for the third time.<sup>1</sup> The election went to William Howard Taft from the Republican ticket.<sup>2</sup>

*Church Leadership and the Insurance Business*

President Bassett at that time was in the sixth year of his eight-year administration as stake president of the Fremont stake. Joseph F. Smith was president of the church and Heber J. Grant was the president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.

The names of the latter two appear prominently on the letterhead of the stationary of Beneficial Life Insurance (President Smith) and the Home Fire Insurance Company (President Grant). These are two of the companies for which President Bassett most frequently wrote policies in his own insurance business, and were at the center of a major change about to unfold in his own life. Therefore both President Smith and Elder Grant also had a business connection with President Bassett in addition to their church connection.

So new were the companies<sup>3</sup> that Thomas E. wrote to Beneficial Life that year noting that he felt the name of the company was not displayed prominently enough in the Rexburg area, and requested the company to supply financial aid to place ads in the local papers occasionally and to "place cards" around through the community. For such advertisement he offered to pay a reasonable share of the expense.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup>He had promised the party that if he was defeated (which he was), he would never offer himself as a candidate again.

<sup>2</sup>Only three counties in Idaho went Democratic that election. Fremont was not among them.

<sup>3</sup>Beneficial Life had been founded three years earlier at the suggestion of Heber J. Grant to help protect widows and children from the financial suffering he and his mother had endured.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas E. Bassett Papers. LDS Historical Library, Salt Lake City, Utah. #MS 6292 (100000464757) Reel 1. 11 March 1908.

## *Economic Problems*

However, of far greater concern for most individuals in Rexburg that year, including President Bassett, was the national economic down-turn of 1907-08.

In August of 1907 U.S. financial markets began to show signs of strain, and by late October of that year a full-scale panic was under way. By late November the panic had begun to ease slightly, but not enough to prevent a major financial depression in 1908.

The financial situation as it existed in Rexburg during February of that year is described in a letter from Thomas E. to his brother Will.<sup>5</sup>

I have tried in every place where I thought there were any hopes of making a loan on the notes that you sent, but I am sorry to have to say ... that the doors seem to be absolutely closed everywhere. There isn't a bank in Fremont County make a loan of a dollar to any one. ... Nearly every one else seems to have gotten the fever of holding on to all that they can get and have no disposition to place any out at any rate of interest.

Then Tom goes on to explain that he has more than twenty-five hundred dollars in loans that are owed him, which he can not collect because the owing parties are unable to make the collections owed them. In addition to the bank's refusal to make any loans, it was calling in the small loans President Bassett owed them.

To complicate matters even further, one month later (25 March) Bassett wrote to Elder Matthias Cowley (who was at the time his Beneficial Life Insurance business partner) the following, regarding a note that the two had signed with the Commercial National Bank in Salt Lake City. The note had subsequently been sent to Rexburg for collection and charged to President Bassett's personal account. He writes:

It will therefore be in order, Brother Cowley to make whatever payments you are in a position to make on this note, to me at this point, as the entire amount has been charged to me and has been deducted from my deposits at the bank. I hope that you will be in a position to make a remittance sufficient to pay up your portion of it as I am very badly crowded at present on account of the stringency in the money market.<sup>6</sup>

To help escape these dire circumstances, Bassett had written to the *Deseret News* in Salt Lake

---

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. Will had lost all his fortune in the crash, partially as a result of investing too heavily in mining stock the previous year, and had been left with a bunch of then-worthless notes.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. At that time the cashier of the First National Bank of Rexburg (which opened its doors for business four years earlier in 1904) was Ross J. Comstock, who became the bank president in 1909. Comstock's son Ralph married Bassett's daughter Gwladys less than a decade later. It would be interesting to know how, or if, this affected the relationship between the two families.



City asking them to advertise a section of his own land in Sugar City for sale.<sup>7</sup>

### *A Second (Plural) Marriage*

It was during that year that Thomas Edwards Bassett and Fannie Frances Fawson Hunter<sup>8</sup> entered into a plural marriage relationship, eighteen years after the issuing of the Woodruff manifesto that ostensibly put an end to polygamy in the LDS church. Frances had been a widow for approximately one year.<sup>9</sup> Thomas and his wife, Lucy Ann Lutz, had been married for twenty-two years, and had five living children.<sup>10</sup> Frances and her husband, Heman Hyde Hunter, had been married for the same number of years and had nine living children.<sup>11</sup> (Both families had lost one child in infancy.<sup>12</sup>) Thomas was 46 at the time. Frances was 41.

The marriage lasted approximately seventeen years, ending in August 1926 with the death of Thomas at age 64. Lucy, his first wife, lived until May of 1943, dying at the age of 76. Frances

---

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. Letter of 22 February 1908.

<sup>8</sup>“Frances” was apparently her name of choice, since that is the way it appears on Heman Hunter’s will. (See Appendix E.) However, Carol Hunter White (a granddaughter) has a document signed “Fannie F. Hunter.” Perhaps an analogous case is that of President Bassett’s son, who although he always signed his name “Thomas M. Bassett,” commonly went by “Myrthen,” his middle name.

<sup>9</sup>Heman H. Hunter died 4 June 1907.

<sup>10</sup>The Bassetts were married 14 April 1886. The numbers in parenthesis following each child’s name below indicate respectively the birth year, age at the time of their father’s second marriage, and the year of their own marriages: Lucy Maud (b.1891, 17, m.1910); Margaret Gwladys (b. 1894, 14, m.1917); Mary Merilla (b.1899, 9, m.1919); Thomas Myrthen (b.1903, 5, m.1925); and Hazel Irene (b.1904, 4, m.1928). None of the Bassett children were married at the time of their father’s second marriage.

<sup>11</sup>The Hunters were married 3 October 1885, six months earlier than the Bassetts. The numbers in parenthesis follow the same order as ft. 10 above: Amy Frances (b.1886, 22, m. 1904); Martha Louisa (b.1889, 19, m.1907); Ida Myrtle (b.1891, 17, m.1910); Davis Lloyd (b.1893, 15, m.1916); Horald Raymond (b.1896, 12, m.1918); Marion Louisa (b.1899, 9, m. 1917); Rada (b.1901, 7, m.1919); Cassia (b.1903, 5, m.1922), and Oakley (b.1906, 2, m.1927). Two of the Hunter children were married before the second marriage of their mother. (Source: Family Group Record sheet from Carol Ann Hunter White.)

<sup>12</sup>Elsie May Bassett was born in 1887, the first child of Thomas E. and Lucy. She lived for one day. Heman Ashland Hunter was born in 1895, while his father was serving a mission, and lived for four months, dying before the return of his father, who never got to see him alive.

died in June of 1951 at the age of 84.<sup>13</sup>

### *Prelude to the Marriage*

Had Heman and Frances Hunter followed their inclination to move to Boise for financial reasons in 1907,<sup>14</sup> the course of the history of two families might have been radically different than it was. However, fate was to have its way. Instead of relocating to Boise, they remained in the Snake River Valley, where Heman contracted pneumonia, leading to his death,<sup>15</sup> and Frances was left a widow, opening the door to her marriage to President Bassett.

The primary question posed by the descendants of both families regarding the marriage obviously is “Why?” Unfortunately, the full answer to that question is known only by the two participants. When confronted with that question by her granddaughter, Louie Quayle,<sup>16</sup> Frances’ only answer was “There’s a lot things you don’t understand.”<sup>17</sup>

There are those who attribute the marriage purely and simply to physical attraction between the two parties. Others insist on adding an economic component, while still others insist on a religious dimension, grounded in earlier teachings of the LDS church regarding polygamy. The answer, when known, will almost certainly involve a complex admixture of all of these and perhaps more.

### *Early Relationships*

No one seems to know how the two couples met initially, or what their social relationship was. The husbands came from very different backgrounds. Heman was a sheep rancher and farmer from the agrarian suburbs of Rexburg. Thomas was more of an urbanite, living in town, involved in civic and business matters (education, postal activities, newspaper work, state politics, real estate, and insurance, as well as having charge of the local tithing office).

The activities the two men shared in common were likely rooted in ecclesiastical matters. The two families might have become acquainted as Heman or Frances brought their farming

---

<sup>13</sup>The foregoing facts are founded on public and family records. The rest of what follows is based largely on family lore.

<sup>14</sup>Cassia Hunter Anderson, “The Life of Heman Hyde Hunter,” in *The Hunter Family* (hereafter cited as *HF*), comp. Nunham Stanford, 14.

<sup>15</sup>Cassia attributes the death to complications derived from pneumonia (*HF*, 14).

<sup>16</sup>Daughter of Ida Hunter Quayle.

<sup>17</sup>Appendix A.

products to town to deposit in the tithing office, or upon meeting with Thomas on matters regarding land or insurance. More significantly, Heman served the last five years of his life as the bishop of the Egin LDS ward in the Fremont stake,<sup>18</sup> over which Thomas presided as stake president. This factor alone would have brought the two men together often in dealing with matters of religious leadership of their common jurisdiction. In fact, Thomas, who was the stake president when Heman was selected as bishop, would have been largely involved in the choosing of Bishop Hunter for this calling. Thomas was the presiding local church authority at the installation of Heman.<sup>19</sup>

However, if there was a further social component to their relationship, it has not been recorded, although Hal Hunter (a grandson) suggests that Thomas was a good family friend and often in the Hunter home prior to Heman's death.<sup>20</sup>

### *The Economic Component*

According to Hunter lore, Thomas played a central role as a financial consultant to Frances, both before and after the death of Heman. He is said to have paid the premiums on a rather large insurance policy on Heman, written in Frances' name during the last and terminal state of her husband's illness.<sup>21</sup> After the death, Thomas helped her direct the use of the money, a large portion of which was ostensibly used to send some of the children to college.<sup>22</sup>

For example, in a letter dated 19 March 1908 (the year of the marriage) he writes to Frances:

Neither of the banks here are loaning any money at present but occasionally we find some

---

<sup>18</sup>Anderson, *HF*, 14.

<sup>19</sup>Atkinson, Max and Bonnie Atkinson, ed. *History of Yellowstone-St. Anthony Idaho Stake*. 1986, Caxton Printers, Lithographers. 231. Heman was ordained a bishop in June of 1902, five months after Thomas was called as stake president in January of that same year.

<sup>20</sup>Appendix A

<sup>21</sup>Ibid. Hal Hunter suggests that the amount on the policy may have been as much as \$200,000. This seems an exorbitant amount for the times, especially considering the later financial struggles of Frances.

<sup>22</sup>Cassia, in her history of her father (*HF*, 14) records that the three oldest daughters (Amy, Louise, and Myrtle) were sent to Logan for schooling. (Cassia records that Myrtle took piano lessons there as well.) If she is accurate in reporting this, it was not likely with money from the insurance, since Amy and Louise were both married by the time of their father's death, and Louise had moved to Canada the year prior to that event. Myrtle, who was 17 at that time, is a possibility, however. According to a telephone conversation with Francis Hammond, Lloyd, who was 15 at the time of his father's death, attended Brigham Young University. (Beginning as a church academy in 1875, BYU had reached college status in 1903.)

private parties who desire to place some of their surplus money out on a good rate of interest and I have done some little in this way and have helped to accommodate both those who wish to loan and those who desire to make the loans. I have just thought that perhaps you might have a little to put out in this way. If you have I will see to it that you are given the very best of security and interest at the rate of nine per cent.<sup>23</sup>

Then he adds, almost as a footnote, “How are you anyhow? I often think of you with pleasant remembrances.”

He also later supplied Frances with a home in Rexburg for a period.<sup>24</sup> While some in the Hunter family see these acts as an indication of Thomas’ generosity, others in the family, more critical of his financial connection, are quick to point out that the money was, after all, Frances’ to spend as she saw fit.<sup>25</sup>

### *The Religious Component*

Notwithstanding any other motives, the one dominant factor that presses itself to the forefront in the marriage is that of religion, and the view of the LDS church at the time toward the practice of polygamy. Thomas and Frances appear to those of the present generation to have defied the teaching of their church, having entered into a relationship that threatened not only their social standing in their community, but also the welfare of their eternal souls. Surely, such a step could not have been taken lightly.

Thomas married Frances some time in 1908, presumably acting under the aegis of Matthias Cowley, formerly<sup>26</sup> of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, whose priesthood authority was rather tenuous at that time (he was not disfellowshipped and his priesthood held in abeyance until 1911). Elder Cowley’s role in that marriage is uncertain; however, both the Bassett and the Hunter families maintain that it was Elder Cowley who performed the marriage.<sup>27</sup>

The question of Cowley’s possible involvement in the Bassett/Hunter marriage is still problematic. In the course of his 1911 trial before the Quorum of the Twelve with his church membership at stake, Cowley testified “I did not marry Brother Bassett of Rexburg. He came to me

---

<sup>23</sup>Thomas E. Bassett papers. Reel 1. What she did with the advice is unknown.

<sup>24</sup>Appendix A

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Cowley and John W. Taylor had resigned from the Quorum in 1905.

<sup>27</sup>Appendix B

and asked if I could help him out and told him no.”<sup>28</sup>

However, Elder Cowley was guilty of several misrepresentations or outright falsehoods (intentional or otherwise) throughout the course of his trial, as Briny repeatedly points out throughout his transcription of the minutes of the trial. Cowley may also have been referring to an earlier request as well, and this truthfully.

Cowley likely knew that he would be quizzed on Elder Bassett’s case because Bassett’s name appeared on a list of 58 names that had been circulated by the First Presidency before the trial. The list (undated) was titled “Ask Brother Matthias F. Cowley about ...” Tho[mas]s E. Basset [sic] was #41 on that list.<sup>29</sup> During the trial Elder Cowley brought up the Bassett marriage before he could be quizzed more thoroughly about the matter. The question arises, “Was he just trying to protect himself and his church membership?”

If Cowley were not the officiating authority, it is very likely it was someone who had been recommended to the couple by Cowley. Whether it was through his suggestion or entirely through the behest of Thomas and Frances, we will probably never know. At the time of the marriage Thomas and Elder Cowley were partners in the insurance business and being seen together often would not have caused undue suspicion.

The Bassett-Cowley relationship appears to have started early in 1907, one year before the marriage. On 23 January of that year, Thomas wrote to Elder Cowley under the letterhead of the Fremont Stake Presidency in a way that suggests the beginning of their working relationship:

I was indeed surprised, but agreeably so, at receiving word from you. I have often thought about you and in fact not a day has passed but that you have been in my mind for the last year or two,<sup>30</sup> and my best wishes have been and still are for your success.<sup>31</sup>

Elder Cowley responded to the letter the next day, apparently suggesting a partnership of sorts between the two under the aegis of Beneficial Life. A second letter from President Bassett followed a week later. That letter indicates Bassett’s acceptance of the offer:

It would seem by reading your letter and mine that our thoughts run along together quite harmoniously and no doubt we will be able to do some nice business together.

Nothing would suit me better than to take a trip through the districts you name.<sup>32</sup> Like

---

<sup>28</sup> Briney, 186.

<sup>29</sup> Briny, 175.

<sup>30</sup> This would date back to the time of Cowley’s resigning from the Quorum of Twelve.

<sup>31</sup> Bassett Papers, Reel 1. This statement suggests that Bassett had been following the course of Cowley’s church problems.

<sup>32</sup> Presumably on insurance business.

you I feel the trip would do me a great deal of good. I have been tied here now for over 23 years<sup>33</sup> without getting out much anywhere and I have really felt for some time I would like a little trip off for a change. ... and think I can arrange a little later on for a mere distant trip if that would be agreeable with you.

Not long afterward the name of the two began appearing jointly on Beneficial Life Insurance stationary as agents for the company in the Rexburg area.

Three years previously, Elder Cowley had resigned from the apostolate, but was not yet disfellowshipped. That action was yet three years in the future. Given the conflicting statements of church leaders circulating at the time, and the ambiguity and confusion regarding plural marriage existing in the church, it would seem that it would have been relatively easy for Cowley to convince the young stake president<sup>34</sup> that the church hierarchy was still sanctioning, if not outright encouraging, clandestine plural marriages. Especially might this have seemed plausible since the Smoot hearings had ended the year before the Bassett-Hunter marriage, and much of the furor associated with those hearings had subsided.

A 1910 letter, over the signatures of the First Presidency, indicates that the Bassett/Hunter marriage was not a complete anomaly at the time. The letter notes, "... there are rumors afloat (and some of these rumors appear to be well founded) that there are still others guilty [of entering into post-manifesto plural marriage]."<sup>35</sup>

Of equal, or even greater concern to the First Presidency regarding those entering into such marriages, were those (including Elders Cowley and Taylor) who were "advising, counseling or enticing" church members into unlawful plural marriages (and this choice of words may shed some light on Elder Cowley's role in the Bassett/Hunter union). The presidency, prompted by "anxiety," were adamant in informing the membership of the church (and by extension the non-Mormon population) that "no one has been authorized to solemnize plural marriages," and those who do would have to deal with the discipline of the church hierarchy.<sup>36</sup> One year later, Elders Cowley and Taylor were called before such a tribunal.

On 8 October 1910, the *Salt Lake Tribune* published a list of over 200 men who had taken

---

<sup>33</sup>This would date back to 1884, the year Bassetts moved to Rexburg. This apparently is an exaggeration on Bassett's part, since the years of his mission and his time in the Idaho senate fall within that time period, as would his journeying to general conference in Utah.

<sup>34</sup>However, in the trial Cowley implies that the plural marriage was Bassett's idea.

<sup>35</sup>Clark IV:218.

<sup>36</sup>Clark IV:218.

additional wives since the manifesto of 1890.<sup>37</sup> (President Bassett's name does not appear on any of them.) Feeling a need to respond to these lists, the First Presidency and Council of Twelve answered these articles by removing from positions of authority known men who had taken additional wives after the two manifestoes. The removal of Elders Cowley and Taylor was also most certainly part of that action. Since Thomas E. was released from his calling as stake president on 18 December of that year, it is quite probable that he may also have been part of that purge.

### *All Things Considered*

In summation, the following might profitably be noted:

1) Thomas was serving as a stake president throughout the entire duration of the Smoot Senate hearings. During the early twentieth century the connection between stake presidencies and the church leadership was much closer than it is currently (with fewer stake presidents to know, and stake presidents such as Thomas being invited on occasion to address the general conferences of the church).

In addition, Elder Bassett had known President Smith on a personal basis for some time (dating back to President Smith's missionary experiences in Britain). Therefore it is quite likely that Thomas would have been at least partially aware of the inner workings of the church as they related to plural marriages. If so, it would have been relatively easy for Elder Cowley to convince him that all was not as it appeared on the surface.

2) However, Thomas also would have been well aware of the public resignation of Matthias Cowley from the Quorum in 1905—three years before the Bassett/Hunter marriage. Such a dismissal should have made the relatively young stake president at least somewhat suspicious of the credentials of Elder Cowley—unless the former member of the Council of the Twelve was representing himself as an apostle functioning outside of the quorum, with attendant priesthood power associated with the apostolic calling.

3) The fact that it had been eight years since the bestowal of the second anointings on President Bassett seems to negate suspicion that the second marriage was somehow related to that ordinance. However, at the same time, the fact of the earlier sealings should not be brushed aside lightly. It may, or may not, have had something to do with the way his release was handled, so far as church discipline is concerned (in that he appears never to have been excommunicated).

4) The death of Heman Hunter occurred the same year as the termination of the Smoot trials—and a perceived reprieve from governmental probing into Mormon affairs, including plural marriages.

---

<sup>37</sup>Between 13 November 1909 and 18 January 1911, the *Tribune* published several such lists, totaling 232 men who had taken additional wives after the Woodruff Manifesto. [Jorgensen, 32.]

5) It may well be that the friendship between Thomas and Frances had become such that when the above scenario unfolded, they wanted to believe that Elder Cowley had maintained the right to perform plural marriages, and they were willing to take a chance on his claim. Consequently, they may have prevailed upon him to perform the marriage ordinance for them– with or without his urging.

\* \* \* \* \*



Chapter Twenty-Three  
AFTERMATH OF THE PRESIDENCY

*Life Within the Marriage*

We know relatively little about the two-year period between the marriage and Thomas' release from the stake presidency. How well guarded the secret of the marriage was, at least for the first two years, is also difficult to determine. We do not know when Lucy was first informed of the marriage, but we do know her reaction. Like so many wives involved in plural marriage, she took it as a rejection of herself, and she was devastated. Both Gwladys and Myrthen remember their mother closing her bedroom door on occasion, and sobbing and crying "as if her heart would literally break."<sup>1</sup> Her son, Myrthen records that "she was broken hearted and never wanted to live in Rexburg any more."<sup>2</sup>

However, Lucy was not the only one to suffer. Although the years of the second marriage seem mainly to have been happy years for Frances, she was cut off from her family in Grantsville when they heard news of the marriage. Consequently, her children were forced to grow up without contact with their mother's family. Oakley, being the youngest of the Hunter family, seemed to have suffered the emotional brunt of the situation. He was repeatedly chased home from school, taunted, and bullied when news of his mother's polygamist marriage became known. Even as a grown man, when Oakley was in Rexburg, he continued to point out to his son Hal some of those who had been his chief tormentors. One of his major regrets was that he was not even able to participate in the scouting program of the church because of this persecution.<sup>3</sup>

However, Oakley's older sister, Amy Frances, seems to have had a much more congenial approach to the problem, as recorded in one of the delightfully poignant stories to come out the Hunter family history, entitled, "The Day Mother Threw Out the Relief Society."<sup>4</sup>

*Release from the Stake Presidency*

During the Fremont quarterly stake conference held on December 17 and 18 of 1910, Thomas E. Bassett was released as president of the Fremont stake, and replaced by Mark Austin, his first

---

<sup>1</sup>Appendix F

<sup>2</sup>Ibid

<sup>3</sup>All of this comes from Hal Hunter's history of his grandmother. See Appendix A and Appendix G.

<sup>4</sup>Appendix G.

counselor. The presiding official from church headquarters, Orson F. Whitney, effected the change following a rather unusual set of circumstances. According to the newspaper account:

At the end of the conference, Elder Whitney announced that a telegram had been received from President Smith authorizing him to honorably release President Bassett. ... This came as a surprise to the people as no rumor of such a change had been thought of. President Bassett has served in this office for years and is greatly esteemed by the entire community.<sup>5</sup>

This may hint at something to do with his plural-marriage situation, since the release occurred two months after an October 8<sup>th</sup> article in the *Salt Lake Tribune* listing those who had taken additional wives since the 1890 manifesto, as well as the subsequent response by the First Presidency.<sup>6</sup> However, no further clue is offered in the news account.<sup>7</sup>

We know little about the consequences of the plural marriage, so far as church discipline was involved, after Thomas' release from the presidency. The 1910 letter from the First Presidency, issued the same year as his release, indicates that cases like that of Thomas and Frances could be liable to result in excommunication. However, no evidence of any such action has been uncovered in church records.

### *The First Decade Following the Release*

Thomas lived for sixteen years after being released from the stake presidency. These years witnessed important developments in America: World War I (1914-18—the so-called “war to end all wars”); the beginnings of the Great Depression; the early years of the fight for prohibition in the U.S.; the transition from the Gilded Age of the 1890's to the Roaring Twenties. In 1918 a devastating international pandemic of flu swept across the world, leaving literally millions dead in its wake.<sup>8</sup>

During the decade from 1910-1920, several important happenings were also unfolding in the extended Bassett family. Thomas E. (as Ricks, Rigby, et al. before him) became partners in several

---

<sup>5</sup>*Fremont County News*, 22 December 1910.

<sup>6</sup>However, it is significant that President Bassett's name is not on any of the *Tribune* lists.

<sup>7</sup>It was evident in the author's interview with Bassett's daughter Gwladys that the family (at least Gwladys) was upset with the way the release was handled. She reported, “They just came into our home and took away his office.” However, her wording suggests that Gwladys may not have been familiar with church procedure, having been relatively inactive in the church for years at the time of the interview.

<sup>8</sup>Johnson NP, Mueller J (2002). "Updating the accounts: global mortality of the 1918–1920 ‘Spanish’ influenza pandemic." *Bull Hist Med* 76 (1): 105–15. As reported in *Wikipedia*, “1918 Flu Pandemic.”

business ventures, as is evidenced in the letterheads of the stationary he was using during this time. His major business, however, remained the Bassett Reality Co., whose subtitle on the letterhead read “Real Estate Loans and Insurance.”

1911. During the first year after Bassett’s release from the presidency the church trials of John W. Taylor and Matthias Cowley of the church’s Quorum of the Twelve were held. Elder Taylor was excommunicated “for insubordination to the government and discipline of the church.”<sup>9</sup> Elder Cowley escaped excommunication, but “for insubordination to the government and discipline of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ... he [was] deprived of the right and authority to exercise any of the functions of the Priesthood.”<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately we know little about the full activities of the Bassett/Hunter plural marriage after Thomas’ release from the stake presidency, nor about his activity in the church. However, we do know that Frances left Rexburg in 1911 for a two-year residency in Logan, Utah. Why she moved there is uncertain. It may have been occasioned by attendant humiliation, once the plural marriage was discovered. However, ostensibly she moved there to be with her daughters who were studying music at Utah State College.

Carol Hunter White (a granddaughter), claims to remember seeing on one of the Logan ward records a notice of twins born to a “Frances Hunter” –a “baby a” and a “baby b,” who did not survive their births. However, in going back 30 years later to search for the record, Carol was unable to find anything to substantiate her earlier memory.<sup>11</sup> Frances was 44 years old at the time she moved to Logan. If the account reported by Carol proved to be correct, the fact of Frances’ advancing age, and the fact that the babies were twins (who commonly are born prematurely) might account for their demises. Such a pregnancy would also add one more reason for Frances to leave Rexburg as she did.

Regardless of the reason for the move, sometime in 1911 Frances with her six children<sup>12</sup> settled in Logan, initially in the Logan 7<sup>th</sup> Ward. Then, in January of 1912, they moved to the Logan 1<sup>st</sup> ward, and eventually, over a year later, in August of 1913, back to Egin,<sup>13</sup> That took her out of Rexburg for at least two years.

---

<sup>9</sup>Briney, *Apostles on Trial*. Announcement from the Office of the First Presidency dated 28 March 1911.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid. Announcement from the Office of the First Presidency dated 11 May 1911.

<sup>11</sup>Interview with Carol White, November 2004. Appendix H.

<sup>12</sup> Lloyd, Horald, Marion, Rada, Cassia, and Oakley. (Appendix H.)

<sup>13</sup>Ibid. Records of the Logan 7<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> ward records, as researched by Carol Hunter White.

That same year, William (Thomas E.'s brother) moved to Sugar City, Idaho, to be near his parents and his siblings (which, of course included Thomas E.), with the intent of farming, a major passion of his life, but one for which he was ill-suited.<sup>14</sup> Things in Idaho never worked out. Eventually, after being kicked in the head by a colt (an accident requiring several stitches) he decided to move back to Utah and try farming there.

1912. Two major events occurred in this second year following his release. In January of 1912, President Bassett decided to try his fortune at an additional business venture (while retaining his insurance and real estate businesses). During this year he went into a partnership with his friend, Ezra Dalby, who was still the president of Ricks Academy. Together with other brethren in the stake<sup>15</sup> they formed the Fremont Fish and Dairy Company.<sup>16</sup> Bassett served as the secretary of the organization, and Dalby as president. This was a business originally headquartered in Clawson, Idaho, that bought eggs of various species of fish from hatcheries, grew the fish, and then sold them (primarily to government agencies) to be turned loose into local streams. Initially the same agency was linked as well to the Teton Hatchery.<sup>17</sup>

The second major event of 1912 with which the ex-president was connected was the Eisteddfod held in conjunction with the Fremont County Fair in 1912.<sup>18</sup> These Welsh festivities, involving competition in poetry and music, were often held by Welsh expatriates wherever they settled throughout the world.

The major celebration, from which these smaller versions were patterned, was the National Eisteddfod held annually in Wales.<sup>19</sup> During the contests (that typically lasted for days) one poet was eventually chosen and crowned as the bard for that year, and one male chorus was selected as

---

<sup>14</sup>According to his daughter, Kathryn he was too much of an urban gentlemen to deal with the hard labor and dirty work of farming.

<sup>15</sup>Nathan Levine, B. C. Anderson, and A. Heath. Heath who originally served as the treasurer opted out of the company three months after it was formed.

<sup>16</sup>The "Articles of Incorporation" for the Fish and Dairy business are dated 2 January 1912. Several letters involving the activities of this company are on microfilm in the "Thomas E. Bassett Papers" in the Church History Library in Salt Lake City.

<sup>17</sup>Newspaper ads of the time indicate Bassett may also have been somewhat involved momentarily in the sheep business.

<sup>18</sup>Thomas E. was serving as the president of the Fremont Fair Association Limited that year, as evidenced by the letterhead on the stationary found in his file in the LDS church history library in Salt Lake City.

<sup>19</sup>"Eisteddfod." <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eisteddfod>

the outstanding musical group. Similar competitions were held involving fiddlers and harpists, and mixed choruses as well. This was also the case in Rexburg that year. Years later Ami Baird reports:

A very interesting event that took place in the [Rexburg] tabernacle was the Eastern Idaho Eisteddfod, a music contest on September 17, 18, 19, and 20. ... The Eisteddfod was planned by the city of Rexburg to draw people to the tabernacle. It was held during the Fair Week. Any amateur could sign up to compete for prizes in the competition for a mere \$1. Choirs had to pay a \$15 entrance fee. Each participant was given a piece of music chosen by the committee. The prizes were quite exciting for 1912; prize money totaling to \$595 for the whole festival. A sample of the selections included: “Lullaby” for large choruses, “Distant Bells” for ladies’ chorus and for a brass quartet, “Hail Smiley Morning.” Admission to the event was only twenty-five cents.<sup>20</sup>

1913. Lucy got her wish to leave Rexburg fulfilled temporarily, as her husband accepted employment with Beneficial Life Insurance in Salt Lake City in 1913,<sup>21</sup> near the time that Frances moved back to Egin from Logan. It was while the Bassetts were living in Salt Lake City that Myrthen’s mother first informed him regarding the second marriage.<sup>22</sup> He was ten when he was told.

1914. The following year, the Bassetts moved back to Rexburg for the duration of World War I. A major blow hit Rexburg that year with the dismissal of President Dalby from the college. Though the reason for the firing was never explained fully to Dalby’s satisfaction, Jessica Rhodes has argued that it was due to Dalby’s more liberal (scientific) views regarding biblical criticism, and his methods of Socratic teaching (that clashed with the more conservative views of the school board in Rexburg)—as well as his sympathy with teachers who had recently been dismissed from Brigham Young University for holding similar views.<sup>23</sup>

This led to Dalby’s moving to Driggs, Idaho, where he became the principal of Teton High

---

<sup>20</sup>Ami Baird, “The Rexburg Tabernacle: Built, Restored, and Preserved with Sacrifice, Love, and Respect.” *Upper Valley LDS Life* [A Saturday insert for the *Rexburg Standard Journal*], 10 February, 2005.

<sup>21</sup>Myrthen also mentions an invitation from Beneficial Life to go to Gridley, California. However, there is no evidence in Myrthen’s account that the family ever lived in Gridley.

<sup>22</sup>Scott, *OBHAL*, “Autobiography of Thomas Myrthen Bassett. Sr,” 3. Myrthen dates this event from his fifth grade experience in elementary school. Since he later (p. 4) mentions preparing to enter the ninth grade in 1917, this would place him in the fifth grade in 1913.

<sup>23</sup>See Rhode’s paper, “Ezra Dalby: Threat or Victim?” <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/BYUIOralHist/id/795>. The BYU purge is chronicled in “BYU Survives an Ideological Crisis.” Chapter 12 of Ernest L. Wilkinson’s *Brigham Young University, A School of Destiny*.

School, before obtaining a law degree from La Salle Extension University in Chicago, and launching out into a law practice in that community from 1918 to 1921.<sup>24</sup> As a consequence of being in Driggs, he was able to stay in contact as a business partner with Bassett, until his friend's death.

1915. While Thomas E. was living in Rexburg, Francis moved to Heman, Idaho (10 miles from Rexburg) in January, where she became the Relief Society President in the newly-created Heman Ward—a calling she occupied for over four years.<sup>25</sup>

Frances was an ideal person for this position, since the calling came during a day when healings were considered a major part of the responsibility of the Relief Society. She was noted for her gift of healing.<sup>26</sup> Just three months before her calling, a letter was sent from the First Presidency of the church to bishops and stake presidencies, addressing several questions that had arisen, centering largely in questions about washing and anointing sisters preparatory to their confinement.<sup>27</sup> The following are typical questions and answers from the letter illustrating practices of the time—many of which are no longer encouraged:

4. Have the sisters the right to administer to sick children?

Answer: Yes; they have the same right to administer to sick children as to adults, and may anoint and lay hands upon them in faith.

5. Should the administering and anointing be sealed?

Answer: It is proper for sisters to lay on hands, using a few simple words, avoiding the terms employed in the temple, and instead of using the word “seal” use the word “confirm.”

6. Have the sisters a right to seal the washing and anointing, using no authority, but doing it in the name of Jesus Christ, or should men holding the priesthood be called in?

Answer: The sisters have the privilege of laying their hands on the head of the person for whom they are officiating, and confirming and anointing in the spirit of invocation. The Lord has heard and answered the prayers of sisters in these administrations many times. It should, however, always be remembered that the command of the Lord is to call in the elders to administer to the sick, and when they can be called in, they should be asked to anoint the sick or seal the anointing.

The above letter from the First Presidency under President Joseph F. Smith's leadership was followed shortly after by a supplemental letter from the Relief Society General Presidency, with

---

<sup>24</sup>In 1929, Dalby moved to Salt Lake City and taught school, and was the principal of several high schools before dying in 1934.

<sup>25</sup>Atkinson, 260. This is another indication that at least Frances was in full fellowship in the church at that time.

<sup>26</sup>Appendix I.

<sup>27</sup>Clark, *Messages* IV:314-15.

additional instructions—among them, the following:

Thirdly, in reference to children in sickness, one could not always wait to consult the Presidency of the Relief Society; mothers, grandmothers, and often other relatives attend to a sick child, both in administering and in the washing with pure water and anointing with consecrated oil; but *generally in neighborhoods, there are sisters who are specially adapted to minister to children, and who have in large degree the gift of healing under the influence of the Holy Spirit, who are possessed of greater humility and have cultivated the gift, or whom the Lord has greatly blessed.*<sup>28</sup>

The italicized portion of the quote is a good description of Frances' reputation in her community. She was often called into homes as a midwife and nurse. Of her healing gifts, her grandson Hal has written:

Fannie Francis had as one of her gifts the ability to care for the sick and to see them healed. Troubled families would call on her for help in the illness of their family members. ... She would go into the troubled home, make a nest for Oakley [her youngest son] behind the cook stove, and she would stay with that family, night and day, until the danger of the illness would pass. Sage poultices would cover the injured or ill part of the body and sage tea would be sipped. Taking little heed for her own fatigue she would make the mother get her rest and she took over the care of the ill one.<sup>29</sup>

1916. A major turning point in Thomas' health came in the spring of 1916, two years into World War I, and ten years before his eventual death. At that time he was caught in the middle of a severe blizzard on his return from a business trip into the Teton Basin country.<sup>30</sup> His 13-year-old son, Myrthen, who was beginning to assume a more responsible role in the family, accompanied his father on the trip.

The weather, that had been mild and warm the day before, suddenly turned stormy. So intense was the storm that his son Myrthen records, "darkness [in the middle of the day] fell upon them. It was getting impossible to see, so the reins were tied to the dash board and the horses were left to find the road." As a consequence of the experience, Thomas was deeply chilled, and within days, he was stricken with a life-threatening case of pneumonia.

The same year Mary graduated from Ricks.

1917. The following year Gwladys married Ralph Comstock, and the U.S. officially entered World War I. All of Rexburg was soon caught up in the excitement of the war, which lasted until 1918. William moved to Ogden that year, and that was where he was living when he passed away

---

<sup>28</sup>Clark, *Messages* IV:316. Italics added.

<sup>29</sup>Appendix I. Apparently Frances was skilled in the use of herbs. as were many pioneers,

<sup>30</sup>Scott, "*OBHAL*," "Life History of Thomas Edward Bassett," 10.

the following year. Francis was living in Heman, and Thomas E. in Rexburg.

*1918.* This was the year of the flu pandemic and the end of the war. Thomas had his own battles to fight. Two years after recovering from his bout with pneumonia, he was seized by an onslaught of arthritis, the same problem that had afflicted him on the eve of his mission thirty years earlier. This time the arthritis was totally debilitating.

In February of that year, while World War I was raging across Europe, his doctor recommended that the ex-stake-president move to Lava Hot Springs in southern Idaho, and use the warmth of the springs to relieve the pain. Because of his father's illness, fifteen-year-old Myrthen was required to drop out of Ricks Academy to accompany his parents to residency at the springs. Thomas was unable to walk and was reduced to sitting on a chair while Lucy and Myrthen literally carried him everywhere he needed to go while in residency at the hot springs.

Three times daily they would carry him to the waters from his hotel room, to enable him to relieve the pain with the heat of the springs. The costs were sizeable, and the family suffered financially as a consequence, having to sell off most of their livestock.<sup>31</sup>

After a stay lasting a little over a month, and a significant cessation of the pain, the family moved back to Rexburg—only to have the arthritis flare up again. This time the doctor prescribed a lower elevation and a different climate, leading the family to move later that spring to Burley, Idaho, where Thomas' and Lucy's daughter Maud and her husband Scott were living.

Initially the Bassetts leased a farm several miles outside Burley, where they spent the summer. Later, in the fall of 1918, Thomas, who was an accomplished penman, obtained employment in Twin Falls as a bookkeeper with the Amalgamated Sugar Company.<sup>32</sup>

As mentioned, this was the year of the devastating flu epidemic that swept across the nation. Myrthen, who had just registered for school in Burley, contracted the disease in October of the year, and was unable to leave their house until the next February—thus preventing another year of school. At that point he decided to forgo the idea of further schooling because of the age difference between himself and his would-be classmates.

*1919-1920.* In the spring of 1919, Thomas was transferred to Twin Falls by the sugar company. There he and Lucy and their little family lived in one of the company houses that was close to the factory, and there is where he was living when the 1920 census was taken.

In that same census Frances is found living in Rexburg with her two youngest children, Cassia and Oakley. It is highly probable that her release from the Relief Society presidency came

---

<sup>31</sup>Scott, *OBHAL*, "History of Lucy Ann Lutz Bassett," 4.

<sup>32</sup>It may be that his connections with the sugar factory in Sugar City also came into play in acquiring this job.



as a result of this move from Heman to Rexburg.<sup>33</sup> Her grandson Hal records that Frances rented her home in Heman to Japanese-American laborers, and moved to Rexburg.<sup>34</sup> He further writes that Francis was provided (by Thomas) with “a little white house across from the college,” but Hal was unable to pinpoint the location more precisely than that. However, the 1920 census places her in Rexburg somewhere on 2<sup>nd</sup> East, “near 2<sup>nd</sup> North,” where she is listed as “renting.”<sup>35</sup>

The reason for Thomas and Lucy returning from Twin Falls to Rexburg later in the year is unclear. Myrthen records two possible conflicting incentives, but notes no precise date for the move. In one history of his father’s life, he indicates, “He [Thomas E.] resigned to return to Rexburg to his real estate and insurance business.”<sup>36</sup> And in a second account he notes, “When they [the sugar company] found out he was a polygamist, he lost his job again.”<sup>37</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>33</sup>She was released in September of 1919, which probably suggests that she moved to Rexburg near that time.

<sup>34</sup>Appendix A.

<sup>35</sup>This is also the address of the Bassett home previously described (Chapter 18). Therefore the “little white house” must have been somewhere very near the Bassett residence.

<sup>36</sup>Scott, *OBHAL*, “Life History of Thomas Edward Bassett,” 3.

<sup>37</sup>Scott, *OBHAL*, “History of Lucy Ann Lutz Bassett.” The latter account is the more recent, written specifically for his family while Myrthen was living in retirement at the home of his son, Thomas Jr. in Clearfield, Utah. The first account is from a history written for a more general audience in 1962 as a tribute celebrating the one-hundredth anniversary of Thomas E.’s birth.

## A NEW GENERATION AND THE DEATH OF A BROTHER

### *A New Generation*

Maud, the oldest of the daughters, was the first of the Bassett children to marry, which she did two months before the release of her father from the stake presidency. At the age of 19, she married Aaron Scott Gudmundsen, aged 18. Scott had been one of the students who boarded at the Bassett home while attending Ricks. This was a perfect setting for a courtship with both parties living in the same house. Because of this, Thomas and Lucy knew Scott well, and apparently approved of the marriage, especially since it was to be a temple wedding.

Maud and Scott were married in the Salt Lake LDS temple on the twelfth birthday of her sister Mary (12 October 1910). The couple settled in Burley, where Scott's parents and their family were living,<sup>1</sup> and where Scott was engaged as a salesman in a hardware business. There, in Burley, the first grandchildren of Thomas and Lucy were born, to the Gudmundsens: Denise (1912), Dorothy (1914), and a younger brother, B. Scott (Scotty), in 1921.

Being the oldest of the Bassett daughters, Maud set an example that was followed by her younger sisters with her schooling. She attended Ricks, graduating in 1908, while her father was the chairman of the board of education for the school. True to the Welsh tradition of the family, Maud was active in musical circles at the college.

In 1920, Scott and Maud were still living in Burley, where Scott was employed as a real estate agent.<sup>2</sup> By 1930 they had moved to Salt Lake City, where he is listed as a book salesman,<sup>3</sup> and in the 1940 census they were still in Salt Lake City.

Unfortunately, shortly after this time, the Gudmundsen/ Bassett marriage ended in a divorce.<sup>4</sup> After the divorce, and after the death of her father, Maud was to play an important supporting role in her mother's life.

---

<sup>1</sup>Scott's family was originally from Iona, Idaho, but they had moved to Burley, Idaho, by 1910, as shown in that year's U.S. census.

<sup>2</sup>1920 U.S. census

<sup>3</sup>1930 U.S. census

<sup>4</sup>Family lore suggests that Scott developed a drinking problem, leading to the break up.

### *Gwladys and the Comstocks*

Gwladys, who was 15 at the time of Maud's wedding, was the next to marry (seven years later)—to Ralph “J” Comstock, on 16 January 1917. News of impending war was in the headlines at the time. Although Germany had gone to war with some of the European nations (including Great Britain) in 1914, the U.S. had tried to retain neutrality and avoid the conflict. Two weeks after the Comstock/Bassett wedding, Germany announced unrestricted submarine warfare against all vessels, neutral or not, that entered the war zone around the British Isles, France, Italy, and the eastern Mediterranean. On 3 February 1917, congress supported President Wilson in severing diplomatic relations with Germany. It was evident by that time that war was inevitable.

In late March of that year, three weeks after the Comstock/Bassett wedding, a massive patriotic rally was held in Rexburg, consisting of a large parade followed by a patriotic rally held in the Rexburg tabernacle. Ralph's father, Ross Comstock, was the master of ceremonies at the rally. By that time many of the unmarried young men in Rexburg had enlisted in the national guard with the intent of going to war. Ralph was not directly affected because of his recent marriage. On 6 April, war was officially declared. The Rexburg Commercial Club created a committee on patriotism, headed by the elder Comstock.

An official holiday was declared in Idaho on 5 June 1917, so that men from 21-30 years of age could skip work and register for the draft. Three-hundred and twenty-four young men in Rexburg registered during that single day. One-hundred and forty-two of these volunteers were chosen for battle by a national lottery.

With the slogan, “Food Will Win the War,” Rexburg responded by setting aside a “beef-less Tuesdays” campaign, followed by “wheat-less Wednesdays,” and “pork-less Saturdays,” so that these foodstuffs could be used by the government to feed the troops. Victory gardens were planted by several of the Rexburg citizenry,<sup>5</sup> and Fremont County was honored nationally for being the first county in the nation to have 100% of the school children buying war savings-stamps.<sup>6</sup> Ross Comstock and his committee were the driving force behind most of these activities.

At the time of their marriage and the outbreak of the war, Ralph and Gwladys were each 23 years old. Since Ralph was not a member of the LDS church, the marriage presented a dilemma for

---

<sup>5</sup>These were large gardens created to supply foodstuffs for the local citizenry so that their regular farm crops could be donated to the war effort. Being the gardeners that they were, the Bassetts were undoubtedly involved.

<sup>6</sup>Crowder, 181-87. These stamps were placed in a small paper-backed booklet designed to house them, and when the booklet was filled it was traded in for a savings bond to be redeemed with interest later when the bond had matured (usually after the war).

Thomas and Lucy, not unlike that experienced by the character Tevye in Harold Prince's and Jerome Robbins's musical, *Fiddler on the Roof*—who wrestles with the principle of tradition (especially with the marriage of his children outside the faith) throughout the duration of the play,.

Mormon theology recognizes two types of marriage: 1) an LDS temple marriage, designed to last throughout the eternities, and 2) a civil marriage designed to terminate with the death of either spouse. Gwladys' love for Ralph led her to take a chance that things would eventually work themselves out, and opted for a civil marriage outside of the temple.<sup>7</sup>

Gwladys had graduated from Ricks six or seven years earlier, and was already making a name for herself in the musical circles of Rexburg and the surrounding area. Like her older sister Maud, Gwladys had been active in the arts at Ricks, not only in music, but also in drama—starring, for example, as one of the major leads in the school play *A Box of Monkeys* in 1909.<sup>8</sup>

From her early teens, Gwladys's life was intertwined with music. She became an accomplished pianist, and was often hired to provide background music for the early silent movies in the Elk and Columbia theaters in Rexburg. She ultimately became the president of the Idaho Federation of Music Clubs.<sup>9</sup>

Other than the religious concern, Thomas and Lucy could not have asked for a more desirable match. The Comstock family at the time was at the top of the social ladder in Rexburg. Ross Comstock, the patriarch of the family, and his wife Jenny had moved their family<sup>10</sup> from Green City, Missouri, to Rexburg sometime between 1900 and 1903.

Family lore indicates that Ross, a young banker by vocation, had decided to move to California with \$5,000 in his pocket, seeking employment in the west. Upon arriving in Pocatello, Idaho (a hub for the Union Pacific Railroad), he learned of financial conditions in Rexburg, Idaho, and their desire for a bank. So, instead of continuing on to the west coast as originally planned, he

---

<sup>7</sup>She might have used the argument that her own grandparents had gone through a like experience in Wales, when her grandfather was a member of the church, and her grandmother was not for a period of nearly fourteen years.

<sup>8</sup>A photo of the cast is found in Crowder, between p. 196 and 197.

<sup>9</sup>This led to a musical scholarship offered by that organization in her name.

<sup>10</sup>Four children: Ralph J., Leila, and Ada had been born in Missouri. A fourth child, Elma was born after they moved to Rexburg. (1910 census.) Since Ada was born in Missouri in 1900 and Elma in 1903 in Idaho, the move westward must have occurred between those two dates.

turned northward to investigate the situation in Rexburg, and ultimately decided to stay.<sup>11</sup>

The First National Bank of Rexburg was organized in 1904, and Ross was appointed its first cashier. Five years later, in 1909 (while T. E. Bassett was still the president of the stake), Comstock became the president of the bank, and the first link in a three-generation dynasty of Comstocks fated to serve as bank presidents.

Since the initial president and the initial vice-president of the bank, Charles H. Woodmansee and James W. Webster, were President Bassett's two counselors in the stake presidency at the time, he likely got to know Ross through them. However, neither the president of the stake nor the cashier of the bank dreamed at that time that 13 years later their children would marry.

### *The Rexburg Commercial Club and the Presbyterian Church*

In late January of 1906, in a room in the newly constructed First National Bank of Rexburg, twenty-five merchants of the town got together to organize the city's Commercial Club. Its mission was to promote the commercial and social interests of the town and the Upper Snake River Valley. Eventually this organization evolved into the Rexburg Chamber of Commerce.

Ross Comstock was among the charter members, and from the earliest days of the club his name appears prominently either as a member of, or as the chair of, some of its most active committees in the community.<sup>12</sup> The one that likely brought him most noticeably to the attention of the community was his leadership of the aforementioned Committee on Patriotism during World War I.<sup>13</sup>

Through the instrumentality of the Commercial Club and his role in the bank, Ross was often at the center of activity in the community. He soon became the secular counterpart to President Bassett, the leading religious personality, so far as community prominence was involved.

In 1915, two years before his marriage, and some years after graduating from Ricks, Ralph Comstock became the cashier of the bank, while his father was the president.<sup>14</sup> By that time he had become one of the most promising young bachelors in the town.

Throughout his life, automobiles were one of Ralph's major passions. As early as the first decades of the century, the Comstocks, father and son, were among a select few owning the new

---

<sup>11</sup>Telephone interview with Robert Comstock (great-grandson of Ross), 10 February 2015.

<sup>12</sup>Crowder, 123. During his own lifetime, Bassett also served as president and as secretary of the club. Crowder, 183-85.

<sup>13</sup>Crowder, 183-85.

<sup>14</sup>Crowder, 125.

vehicles.<sup>15</sup> In May of 1909, Ross made the local news by the purchase of a flashy new red Rambler.<sup>16</sup> Soon after his father's purchase, Ralph obtained a little roadster from an individual who couldn't figure out how it functioned—but Ralph did, and soon both he and his father were offering townspeople rides, free of charge, between Rexburg and St. Anthony, traveling at the unheard of speed of 35 miles an hour.

During the summer of 1909, the car owners in Rexburg—Ross and Ralph (and perhaps Thomas E.) among them—formed the Fremont County Automobile Association. Before long, the car owners in town were lobbying for the removal of the tie-posts that lined the main streets of the city used to tether the horse population, and soon those individuals with horses, or teams, were required to tie them on side streets. Modernity was making its way into Rexburg.

There was also a strong religious dimension in the lives of the Comstocks. Ross was actively involved in the emergence of the Presbyterian church in Rexburg—the second non-LDS faith to organize in the town.<sup>17</sup> In 1916, one year before the marriage of Ralph and Gwladys, members of that faith organized a building committee to gather money to build a church house of their own. Ross was appointed the chair of that committee, and in March of 1918, the newly constructed Presbyterian church house on College Avenue in Rexburg was dedicated. This was one year after the marriage of Ralph and Gwladys and the birth of their first child (Ralph J.). The little congregation consisted of sixty-five members. Ross was appointed as Elder for the church, and Ralph, the treasurer of the board of trustees.<sup>18</sup>

Three years later (1921), Gwladys gave birth to a baby daughter, whom they named Margaret, followed by another son, John Emerson, in 1925. Ralph and Gwladys decided that their children would be reared Presbyterian—possibly because of the responsible roles the Comstock men occupied in the newly-established faith. It would have looked rather awkward for the grandchildren of the Elder of the church to be reared Mormon.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup>The Thomas E. Bassett papers in the LDS Family History Library in Salt Lake City has a statement dated 28 February 1901 from the “Studebaker Bros. Mfg. Co.” in Salt Lake City, made out to “Thos. E. Bassett, Rexburg, Idaho,” indicating that President Bassett may also have owned a Studebaker automobile at the turn of the century..

<sup>16</sup>Crowder, 154.

<sup>17</sup>The Roman Catholic church being the first.

<sup>18</sup>Crowder, 167-68.

<sup>19</sup>In addition, it had been eight years since Gwladys' father had been released as stake president, and by that time his prominence in the community had diminished to some extent. Also, Gwladys indicated to the author of this sketch in a private conversation shortly before her

### *The Death of William*

In the dead of winter (January 1919), two months after the armistice ending World War I, Thomas and Lucy were informed of the passing of Thomas's brother William, who was at the time living in Ogden, Utah. This event signaled the beginning of the end of the second generation of Bassetts in America (Thomas and Margaret representing the first).

Will's passing occurred near the end of the influenza epidemic of 1918 that had taken so many lives (President Joseph F. Smith among them). During that year schools were closed, church meetings suspended, and public assembly completely avoided. Dozens in Rexburg were buried every day, and so many died in this period that the papers could do no more than print a notice of the death. Grave-side services became the norm.

During the time of his brother's death, Thomas had pause to think back on the life of William, who had not only been his older brother, but also his close friend and mentor—the link to President William Preston of the Cache Stake, who had championed some of Thomas's first important callings in his early life.

Of all of Thomas's siblings, William had been the one that relocated the most.<sup>20</sup> In 1895, five years after the Woodruff manifesto, William moved to Provo to help in the management of the Provo Woolen Mills, working under the immediate direction of Reed Smoot of the Council of the Twelve Apostles. When Elder Smoot was elected to the Senate in 1903, William was chosen to manage the mills. During that sojourn he also served in Provo politics as the president of the Provo board of education, at the same time that Thomas was serving as the chair of the tri-stake academy in the Fremont Stake. For a short period, once again, the two brothers were serving simultaneously in similar positions.

Like his parents in Canton, Wales, and his brother Tom in Rexburg, while living in Provo William established a home that was one of the show places in that town. His daughter, Kathryn Bassett Pardoe, records:

Our lot had a beautiful garden, the show place of the city. Father was the first to plant trees on the sidewalk, and was arrested for using City property. They are the beautiful sycamore trees still standing on the Center Street [in Provo].

---

death that she was still bitter about the abrupt manner in which her father had been released—attributing the release, as she did, to his plural marriage.

<sup>20</sup>The bulk of the following material on William comes from an interview with Kathryn Bassett Pardoe, conducted on 10 July 1951. In Clela R. Bassett's "William Edward Bassett."

In 1906, because of financial troubles for the Woolen Mills, William presided over the dismantling of the mills, and the dispersing of its holdings. Two years later, he himself was forced into a financial crisis as a consequence of having invested too heavily in mining ventures during the national financial crisis in 1908. That year he resigned from his office as president of the school board.

In 1911, he moved to Sugar City, Idaho, to be near his parents and his siblings. When things in Idaho didn't work out he subsequently moved to Ogden, and farmed in the Clearfield area, specializing in the raising of tomatoes. However, before long he again found himself sliding back into debt.

His next move, in 1913, took him and his family to San Francisco, where he opened a studio on Market Street to help stutterers overcome their impediment. He himself had been deeply troubled by stammering, especially in his early life. In 1900 he had traveled East to Indianapolis in order to attend the Bogue Institute for stammerers. There he had learned to overcome stuttering by swinging his arm, and voicing syllables to the rhythm of the arm motion. Obviously this was an unacceptable solution to his problem. It appeared so awkward.

Then, according to his daughter Kathryn, one night "he got out of bed and prayed about his speech, and told the Lord that he had been promised that he would be cured."<sup>21</sup> About four o'clock in the morning he awoke and had a plan, as clear as could be, used it, and cured himself." Then he set about teaching others in Provo how to overcome their speech problems. It was this success that led him eventually to San Francisco and the establishment of a studio for stutterers in that city.

In 1917, when America entered the war, William returned to Ogden. He was living there when his sons were conscripted into the armed forces, a fact that was extremely distressing to him. He was immensely relieved when news of the armistice was announced in November of 1918. At the time he was living at the top of 25<sup>th</sup> street in Ogden, where he had a good view of the celebration that took place there when the armistice was announced: fireworks, dancing in the street, etc. His reaction was simply, "Thank God, they [his sons] are safe."

He was, at the time, suffering intensely from cancer of the intestines, and upon finding out that his sons were safe, William retired to his bed and was never active again. He passed away two months later on 11 January 1919, and was buried in the Ogden cemetery. Perhaps no more comprehensive epitaph could have been written of William E. Bassett than that from his daughter Kathryn.

He had traveled thousands of miles in the search of truth and happiness—his religion,

---

<sup>21</sup>This according to his patriarchal blessing.



his speech impediment, his desire to be a successful tiller of the soil, his wanting the nicer and better things for his family, his search for work that gave him satisfaction and ample remuneration, his ill advised investments made with such fond hopes—his was a life of conflict in which he overcame almost all obstacles, remained a glorious father, and kept true to a faith that motivated his every major ambition.

His last instruction to his family was characteristic of his life, and could well have been repeated by his brother, Thomas. William told his son-in-law, Earl Pardoe, Kathryn's husband, to keep his [Earl's] family together, and to be with each other often.

Try and live close together. Let your families know and always love each other. Your children are all that is left of me. Keep your names honorable in the eyes of God and with your fellow men.

### *Two More Marriages*

While his parents were still in Twin Falls, Myrthen left temporarily to live with his sister, Mary, and her newlywed husband, Robert L. Salmon, who were living in Ogden, Utah. Mary's marriage is another of the great mysteries of the Bassett family. Bob, who like Ralph Comstock was not LDS, appears to have been reared in Colesville, Utah, and, as far as is known never lived in the Rexburg area. Therein lies the mystery—how does a young man from Colesville, Utah, meet, court, and marry a young woman from Rexburg, Idaho?

We know that Thomas and Lucy's daughter Mary was living in Rexburg in 1918 because she is listed as one of those active on the Military Entertainment Council.<sup>22</sup> Two years earlier, in 1916, Mary had graduated from Ricks, where she, like her older sisters was active in music and in school politics, having served as the Vice President of the student body. In September of 1919 she married Robert Salmon. Their only son, Robert Jr. was born in 1921, one of three grand-children born to Thomas and Lucy Bassett that year.

Because the Bassett's daughter Gwladys had opened the door to a non-temple wedding, there was not much that Thomas and Lucy could say in opposition to the wedding. Since, as far as we know, Mary had never lived in Colesville, and Bob had never lived in Rexburg, it seems likely that Salt Lake City was likely the meeting ground, and that Ogden, where Bob ran a grocery and

---

<sup>22</sup>Crowder, 190. This was a council composed primarily of young ladies, created to raise funds through the sale of coupon books. These books were then sent to those in the Armed Forces to enable them to gain admittance, at greatly reduced prices, to Liberty Theaters installed on training camps. These theaters provided the very highest class of entertainment for those in the armed forces. In turn, the money raised was sent to the theaters to help meet their costs.

confectionary store, was the site of their first home together.

Shortly after Bob's and Mary's marriage, Myrthen moved to Ogden to live with them and to help out in the store. About this same time Thomas and Lucy moved back to Rexburg from Twin Falls. Myrthen only worked in Ogden for a short while before he came down with pneumonia, and almost lost his life. In order to regain his strength he moved back to live with his parents in Rexburg.

When he felt he had sufficiently recovered, he returned again to his job in Ogden. However, it was just a short time before his mother Lucy convinced him to return to Rexburg, where he gained employment in the grocery department of Henry J. Flamm and Co.

There he met Henrietta Minson, who worked as the cashier at Flamm's. Henrietta's grandfather, Thomas Minson, the patriarch of the Minson family, had emigrated from England in the mid-1800s, had crossed the plains with the Mormon wagon trains, and then settled his family in Cache county. From there they had moved to Paris, Idaho.<sup>23</sup> Minson's son, Arthur, after serving a mission in the eastern states had become a traveling salesman for the family business, and eventually settled in Rexburg.<sup>24</sup>

Arthur's wife, Rachel Eckersell, was from Scottish ancestry. Rachel's mother (Henrietta McPhail), and grandfather (Archibald McPhail) had crossed the plains with the ill-fated Willie handcart company. Due to her father's death en route during the trek,<sup>25</sup> upon arriving in Salt Lake City, Rachel's mother had lived for a short time in the home of Brigham Young before marrying Rachel's father, James Eckersell, also an active member of the faith. Therefore Myrthen's wife, Henrietta (named after her grandmother McPhail) also had strong ties to the LDS church on both sides of her ancestry.

Myrthen had known Henrietta most of their school years, but had hardly ever spoken to her. Now as an adult, overcoming his shyness, he eventually asked her out on New Years, 1925. After five months of courtship, they were married in the Salt Lake Temple on 3 June of that year.

---

<sup>23</sup>Scott. *OBHAL*, "History of Thomas Minson," 1-2.

<sup>24</sup>Scott. *OBHAL*, "Life Sketch of Arthur Minson," 1-2.

<sup>25</sup>Rachel's grandmother McPhail had passed away in Scotland prior to the trek to Utah. Her grandfather, Archibald McPhail, had remarried (to the sister of his first wife), and the second wife had crossed the plains with the company as well. However, Henrietta McPhail (Rachel's mother) had never bonded with the second wife, and when her father died while crossing the plains, and the Willie's company arrived in Salt Lake City, Henrietta and her step-mother went their separate ways.

Myrthen purchased a diamond for Henrietta shortly before the Rexburg bank went broke during the financial crisis of the 1920's. He was always glad that he had taken out his money for the ring, since he, like many in Rexburg, later lost all his savings in the collapse of the bank.

Both Myrthen and Henrietta then found themselves without jobs when Flamms went under at the same time. Fortunately, they were able to move into one of the apartments in his boyhood home without having to pay rent. Living largely off a garden he planted, they were able to get by until he obtained employment, working part-time in a grocery store owned and operated by Stewart Mason. After Myrthen's marriage, Mason offered him a full-time job, opening and managing Mason's second grocery store in nearby St. Anthony.

### *Financial Hardships*

The intervening years between the return of the family to Rexburg and Thomas' death are largely shrouded in silence. These were financially troubled days in Rexburg, as they were throughout the nation during the early days of the Great Depression. The Rexburg First National Bank was forced to close its doors in 1925, and many companies in the town went under as a consequence.<sup>26</sup>

Short months after Myrthen and Henrietta moved in with Myrthen's parents, the mortgage company took possession of the Thomas E. Bassett home. As a consequence of his father's losing the house, Myrthen records having to move to a little apartment across the street from his employment before moving to St. Anthony to open the store there. He does not state specifically what happened to Thomas and Lucy relative to a new residency after the foreclosure. However, he does note that after Thomas' death, Lucy was left nearly financially destitute, and moved eventually into her daughter Maud's home in Salt Lake City, and then to St. Anthony, where she lived first with Maud in the Guinn apartments through the block from Myrthen's home, and then with Myrthen and his family until her death in 1943.<sup>27</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

---

<sup>26</sup>Myrthen mentions specifically the Flamm and Company department store, one of the larger stores in Rexburg, where both Myrthen and Henrietta had been employed. Scott. *OBHAL*, "Autobiography," 4.

<sup>27</sup>"History of Lucy Ann Lutz Bassett." Appendix F

Chapter Twenty-Five  
THE ENDING OF THE SAGA

*The Roaring Twenties*

Although President Warren G. Harding claimed to have brought back normalcy to political life in the United States, the post-World War I era throughout the nation was anything but normal. Perhaps society changed more drastically in that period than in any other period in American history. Automobiles began to pour out onto the streets; telephones, radios, and other electronic devices became the norm in most homes, and sports and movies rose to the forefront of the entertainment world. A new generation of celebrities emerged as opera houses (featuring vaudeville) in every small community were turned into movie palaces (featuring talking pictures), and baseball stadiums began drawing crowds numbering in the thousands.

Women's styles changed dramatically as corsets were tossed aside, and hemlines rose. Women's social life changed, giving rise to the new "it girls" of the "flapper era." A new form of music filled the air, and a new dance style, the Charleston, became ubiquitous, giving rise to the term "the Jazz age." The new skyscrapers in the eastern U.S. soared to ever-greater heights, and Art Deco became the architectural style of choice. The age of prohibition, with its attendant "speakeasies," fostered the rise of organized crime.

*The Early Stages of Prohibition*

Although prohibition—the nationwide constitutional ban on the sale, production, importation, and transportation of alcoholic beverage—is commonly associated with the "roaring twenties," its roots stretch back much further in history. Rexburg is a prime example. There prohibition became an important issue as early as the last years of President Bassett's administration (at the end of the first decade).

Although Mormonism had, from its very early days, taken a stance against alcoholic consumption, because of the Word of Wisdom,<sup>1</sup> the most vocal voices in favor of prohibition in Rexburg were those of secular organizations. In 1908, prompted by the leadership of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Anti-Saloon League, a petition opposing the sale of alcohol in the city (commonly known as "local option") was presented to the city council and signed by about 85% of the voters in the Rexburg city limits. Nevertheless, after much deliberation on the part of

---

<sup>1</sup>Doctrine and Covenants 89:4-7.

the city council, the petition was rejected by a 3-2 vote of the council membership.<sup>2</sup> However, this did not dissuade those opposing the consumption of alcohol in the city. Groups, such as the local Salvation Army, continued to speak out in favor of prohibition throughout 1908.<sup>3</sup>

In mid-September of 1909 (the last full year of President Bassett's administration) the question of local option for prohibition was presented on a ballot to the voters of Fremont County, and overwhelmingly passed in favor of going "dry."<sup>4</sup> However, legislating against a practice such as alcoholic consumption, and enforcing that legislation, are two entirely different matters. Bootlegging and the establishment of "speakeasies," typical of the roaring twenties, became commonplace in Rexburg during the second decade of the century.

State laws against alcoholic consumption, replacing local options regarding prohibition, took effect on 1 January 1916. On 7 November of that year the Idaho state constitution was amended, "to 'forever prohibit' the manufacture, sale, keeping for sale, and transportation for sale of intoxicating liquors for beverage purposes."<sup>5</sup> By late October of 1919, the issue of prohibition had risen to the national level, and became law under the eighteenth amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

After the chaotic and troubled times of the "roaring twenties," this legislation was, in turn, repealed by the twenty-first amendment, on 5 December 1933 (with Utah casting the deciding vote). However, President Bassett never lived to see prohibition repealed, as he passed away in 1926.

### *The Death of Thomas E.*

Thomas' death occurred on a warm day in August 1926 while he was at Frances' home in Rexburg. At the time, Lucy was in Salt Lake City visiting with her daughters Maud and Hazel.<sup>6</sup> The members of the Hunter family who were there in their mother's home were gathered around the piano singing hymns, not realizing that Thomas E. was about to leave them for good.

It was fitting that hymn-singing should be the final activity of this transplanted Welshman. Nearly a century earlier the Lord had told Emma Smith (through her husband, the Prophet Joseph) that His (the Lord's) soul delighted in the song of the heart; and that He considered the song of the

---

<sup>2</sup>Crowder, 140-41.

<sup>3</sup>Crowder, 142.

<sup>4</sup>Crowder, 151-52.

<sup>5</sup>Crowder, 162.

<sup>6</sup>Scott. *OBHAL*, "Autobiography." 5. Maud was living in Salt Lake City at the time, and Hazel was there studying elocution.

righteous as a prayer unto Him, and that it would be answered with a blessing upon the heads of the participants.<sup>7</sup> In that sense, Thomas was ending his life in the act of a form of prayer, and he was soon to receive whatever blessings heaven holds in store for a life well-lived.

Music had played a central role at the Savior's last supper,<sup>8</sup> and a hymn had proven a source of comfort to the Prophet Joseph in the moments preceding his martyrdom.<sup>9</sup> It had been a mainstay throughout Thomas' life. It had played a crucial role in softening his mother's heart in her fourteen-year journey into the church, which in turn opened the door to his own baptism.

It may be that one of the more appropriate descriptions for these last few minutes of his life might be lifted from the *Juvenile Instructor* that appeared two years after he arrived in Mendon, and applied to this setting:

There is no place on earth more fascinating than home to the husband and father, tired out with the trials and toils of the day, and as the shades of night gently close around the earth, hushing the busy hum of industry, and while the spangled heavens, like a benediction sweet, form a grand and glorious canopy overhead, the family circle naturally gather around the music stand, and drink of the delicious strains, until the mind becomes refreshed, and they retire to rest, feeling at harmony with the peaceful adornings of nature, and perchance to dream, during their undisturbed slumbers of the quiet night, of heavenly music in other spheres.<sup>10</sup>

While engaged in song/prayer on this occasion, the hand of this transplanted Welshman—weakened and tired with the trials and toils of his life—began to shake from an impending heart attack; he took his leave from the assembled company, and retired “to rest ... perchance to dream, during [the] undisturbed slumbers of the quiet [eternal] night, of heavenly music in other spheres.” This was to be his final change of address, but this time not of his own volition. A Mind far greater than his made this decision for him.

As quickly as possible, the body was moved to the then-existent Bassett residence so as not to create a major scandal. Lucy was notified, and returned post-haste.

### *Postlude to the Death*

Soon after the funeral of Thomas, Fannie received a note of reconciliation from Lucy,

---

<sup>7</sup>D&C 25:12.

<sup>8</sup>Matthew 26:30.

<sup>9</sup>“A Poor Wayfaring Man of Grief,” sung by John Taylor.

<sup>10</sup>Jl, XIII:18 (Sept. 15, 1878). 210.

thanking her for the role she had played in the life of Thomas E. It is said to have been a kind and sympathetic letter. Fannie accordingly left the letter on a table where her children might find and read it and be less bitter about the situation.”<sup>11</sup>

Frances Hammond, who slept in the same bed with her grandmother after Thomas’ death, records that her grandmother always kept a picture of both husbands (Heman and Thomas) on the vanity in her bedroom, and also a smaller picture of each in a locket she always wore around her neck. On one occasion, after questioning her grandmother about the pictures, the grand-daughter was told the story of a dream.

According to Frances, her grandmother, Fannie, told her of wondering, to the point of deep concern, which of the husbands she would be with in the eternities. One night in a dream, she found herself walking hand-in-hand with Thomas down a long path. At the end of the path the couple came to Heman, her first husband. She reports that they stopped, and Thomas placed the hand he was holding into the hand of Heman, and walked on. Frances said she awoke, feeling certain at last that she knew her marital situation in the eternities.<sup>12</sup>

### *The Death of the Original Bassett Sisters*

Thomas’s death was the second of the sons in the original Bassett family that had emigrated from Wales. This left only his four sisters who had been involved in the series of emigrations.

Three years after the death of Thomas, his sister, Margaret Muir, the first of his sisters to pass on, died in July of 1929. She was soon followed in death by their sister Mary, in December of the same year.

On the advice of her parents, Mary had left her only known love affair behind in Wales, and had accompanied her sister, Rebecca, to Zion. She never married. Rather, she spent her entire life living with, and caring for her parents, and often acting in the role of a surrogate mother to her nieces and nephews across the road. She had been of greatest help during the time of her mother’s blindness.

Years after Mary’s death, her niece, Gwladys wrote her memories of her “Auntie May” at the request of Gwladys’ cousin, Walter Muir.<sup>13</sup> In this memoir Gwladys describes her aunt as being “short in stature,” with “large dark eyes,” and “long white hair she braided around her head.” Since Mary lived just across the street from her brother Thomas, his children were frequent visitors at her home, and were treated as if they were her own children.

Gwladys reports that Mary often expressed a desire to see Wales, but was never afforded the

---

<sup>11</sup>Letter from Hal Hunter. Appendix A.

<sup>12</sup>Telephone conversation with Frances Hammond in 1990.

<sup>13</sup>Undated letter in the possession of the author. Appendix J.

opportunity.

Her entire life was spent in the little humble home in Rexburg, don't remember whether she ever left it for any length of time to go any where, perhaps to Mendon, or over to Teton, or out to Aunt Margaret Muir.

After I was married and lived in Rexburg, she used to come to my home real often and I can remember what a pleasure it was for me to have her come. When I moved away from Rexburg to Nampa, Idaho, I came back to Rexburg on a visit and just a year before Auntie Mae passed away I begged her to go back to Nampa with me and live with me, telling her I was worried about her there alone, as none of our folks lived in Rexburg at that time.

She told me that she would at first and then when it came time to leave she told me she just couldn't do it, she thought she had better stay with her home. A night or so before she died she was afraid—and who knows—thought perhaps she was going to pass away and wanted to go home with Aunt Sarah Baker. It was there [at her sister Sarah's] she passed away. I have always felt she was afraid to die there [in Rexburg] alone.

Gwladys ends the memoir with these observations.

I have often wondered just what she could have accomplished in life if she had been given the opportunity to live her own life. She had great judgment, was bright and alert, could always see the other person's view point, generous in nature, strong in character, kind and considerate—but, as stated above, hers was a life of sacrifice for others. ... I will ever remember the Auntie Mae who came to America with her parents and accepted life as it was dealt out for her. Hers was a life well spent, ready to meet the Master.

Nearly ten years later, Mary's sister, Sarah Baker, in whose home Mary had passed away, died in November of 1939, having outlived both of her husbands. This left Rebecca Hughes in Mendon as the only remaining daughter of the original Bassett family from Wales. Rebecca lived until 30 December 1951, outliving her sister Sarah by 12 years.

At the time of her death, Rebecca had been a widow for 47 years—which years had not been a heavy burden to bear, given the troubled relationship between this “reluctant bride” and her polygamist husband, Henry Hughes. A far greater source of grief was the death of her sister-wife, Sarah Ann Goatman, who had been her constant companion in Mendon. Of that relationship, Rebecca's granddaughter, Dorothy Schimmelpfennig, has written:

Toward the end of her life Sarah Ann suffered a stroke, leaving her speechless and frequently disoriented. Communication between the two women proved difficult but not insurmountable. It was Sarah Ann's night-time wanderings that were most burdensome to Rebecca. There was an ever-present danger that the handicapped woman would stumble and fall in the darkness, or she might wander away into the hills and die of exposure before she could be found. It was not until November of 1923 that Sarah Ann Goatman Hughes died.

Disruptive as her condition had been, her absence left a void in Rebecca's life. The two women had been constant companions for fifty-two years. They had shared a husband



and five children, had wept together, laughed together, and had been emotionally closer to each other than anyone else they had ever known. [Her death] was the end of another phase of Rebecca's long life.<sup>14</sup>

For the last twenty-eight years of her life, Rebecca experienced a great degree of loneliness, punctuated at times by the visits of her own children and grandchildren, William's children, and the infrequent visits of her sisters from Idaho, until they also passed away. Schimmelpfennig concludes her grandmother Rebecca's biography with the simple epitaph:

After ninety-four challenging and rewarding years, death came swiftly and mercifully to Rebecca Bassett Hughes. She died in Logan, at the home of her daughter Rosa Jane, of causes "incident to old age" The date was December 30, 1951.<sup>15</sup>

Thus ended the saga of the Bassett emigrants from Wales, that began with the simple wedding of their parents, Thomas Bassett and Margaret Edwards, in the little Welsh Baptist tabernacle in Cardiff, Wales.

### *The Passing of Thomas' Wives*

Sometime after the death of Thomas E., Lucy Ann Lutz, his wife and the mother of all of his children, left Rexburg for good. Apparently she moved first to Salt Lake City, and lived for a time with her daughter Hazel, who at the age of 23 married Evan "D" Miller in June of 1827, less than one year after the death of her father.

According to the 1930 U.S. census, Lucy was living in Salt Lake City with Hazel and Evan, next door to the Gudmundsens, Maud and Scott. Hazel died in childbirth later that year, and Lucy eventually moved again, back to Idaho, where, as noted, she lived with her son Myrthen and his family in St. Anthony.<sup>16</sup> In the 1940 census, Scott and Maud were still together in Salt Lake City with Scottie, their only son. Scott [the father] is listed as a traveling salesman for a wholesale tea company, and Maud as a cook for a rest home.

It was apparently around this time that the Gudmundsens were experiencing marital problems, that eventually ended in a divorce. By February of the following year, Maud was in St. Anthony, living in the Guinn apartments, just through the block from Myrthen's home.<sup>17</sup> Lucy was

---

<sup>14</sup>Schimmelpfennig, 56.

<sup>15</sup>Schimmelpfennig, 59

<sup>16</sup>1940 US Census.

<sup>17</sup>Myrthen and Henrietta's daughter Ann was born on 1 February 1941, and when she was born, the author and his brothers were sent to stay overnight with Lucy during the birth. At that time Maud was living with her mother. Myrthen and Henrietta had four children prior to Ann's birth: Ruth (who died hours after her birth) in 1926, Thomas Myrthen Jr. in 1929, Richard Jay in

with her. This appears to have been only a short stay. Soon after the birth of Myrthen's last child (Ann—named after her grandmother, Lucy Ann), Maud moved back to Salt Lake City into a house of her own, and Lucy retired to Myrthen's home.

That house<sup>18</sup> was a very small two-bedroom house, hardly like the home Lucy had known for so many years in Rexburg, but she was afforded a room of her own. Her three grandsons were relegated to one bedroom and the little daughter Ann shared the other bedroom with her parents. Myrthen, who was very adept at carpentry, simply closed off one end of their kitchen, and created a bedroom for his mother. That way she could stay with his family rather than being alone in one of the Guinn apartments, where she had been living with Maud.

Lucy's health was never good during these last months of her life. She was troubled by a bad back and by coronary heart disease. To treat the latter, her doctor (who made house calls at the time) prescribed nitroglycerin pills for the pains in her chest.<sup>19</sup> She was also instructed to walk around in the house every day. This she often strenuously resisted because it was so painful for her back, but Henrietta knew that it was needful, so she kept encouraging Lucy to walk, offering her arm in support. This insistence on Henrietta's part led to harsh words from Lucy, and often to arguments. It is doubtful that many women would have had the quiet patience to work with such a mother-in-law as Henrietta did.<sup>20</sup>

Lucy stayed in that home with Myrthen's family until her death of heart failure on 10 May 1943. She was laid to rest in the Rexburg cemetery by the side of her husband, Thomas E. and not far from her firstborn, Elsie May (who had died in early infancy). Lucy was 76-years-old at the time of her demise.

Fannie outlived Lucy by eight years, dying in 1951 at the age of 84. She passed away in Heman, Idaho, and is buried in that town's cemetery.

\* \* \* \* \*

---

1932, and Arthur Ray (the author of this biography) in 1935.

<sup>18</sup>328 East Main

<sup>19</sup>As a young eight-year old, the author thought this rather strange since the only use he knew for nitroglycerin was as an ingredient in dynamite (TNT ).

<sup>20</sup>The arguments that ensued led me to think of my grandmother as a rather crotchety old woman. However, in comparing notes with my older cousins later, I found that their memories of Lucy were very different. They remembered her primarily as a carefree, playful individual.

## APPENDIX A

### *HAL H. HUNTER - LETTER #1*

October 3, 1990  
Rexburg, Idaho 83440

Dear Arthur:

A good name out of my past. I didn't know you boys too well since I went to Sugar Salem to High School, but we were all Yellowstone Stake people and I knew you there. I think your father and mine may have been Bishops at the same time, in the stake, but I am not sure. My father was Bishop of the Heman Ward from 1941 to 1947. We did enjoy your father's store on the corner in St. Anthony.

Yes I am a professor at Ricks College in Anthropology and Sociology. After ten years at the Polynesian Cultural Center and BYU Hawaii we came to Ricks. We have been here about fifteen years and have really enjoyed it. I have kept track of you and family, minimally, through our very nice association with Martha [Remington] over the years. We had some contacts in Hawaii and now at the Idaho Falls Temple. We were in Hawaii at the sad occasion of Burdett's [Martha's husband] death and then Martha came over for a year or so residence in our community.

I am glad to share what I know of our common family history. And it isn't much. If you will accept all this understanding I cannot document anything. It comes from a lifetime of occasional comment but little of that. Following your letter I called a cousin, Frances Hammond, in Colorado City to just check on what she remembered and then also a call to an aunt, Louis<sup>1</sup> Quayle, in St. Anthony. They each verified an item or two that I was't [sic] sure of. And we're still not sure but this is what we believe.

My grandfather, Heman Hyde Hunter, died of typhoid fever<sup>2</sup> in Heman, Idaho in 1907. My father was one year of age at the time of his death and his wife, Fannie Francis Fawson Hunter, became a widow with nine children at about age 47 years. She was a beautiful woman, talented and dynamic. She was a famous midwife and nurse in our little farming communities and was thought to be responsible for saving the lives of children and adults through her persistent care.

Thomas Bassett apparently was a good family friend and was often in Heman's home prior to his [Heman's] death. Heman had a houseful of beautiful daughters and three sons, my father being the baby of the family. I cannot find any evidence to substantiate that Pres. Bassett was in the insurance business but he is said to have been. The story is that he put much insurance on my grandfather when he was in his last and terminal illness. The insurance, which may have been as much as \$200, 000 was in my grandmother['s] name with the only premium being paid by Pres. Bassett. We do know that there was a lot of money involved and that, in 1908, Pres. Bassett married my grandmother as a plural wife. The marriage was said to have been

---

<sup>1</sup>Marion Louisa?

<sup>2</sup>Carol Hunter White, Hal's sister, maintains that their father died of pneumonia, not typhoid fever.

performed by an Elder Ivens [sic], father of Antone R. The exact circumstances have not been know[n] by anyone I know. It was long after 1889 and was met by universal condemnation when it became know[n].

My grandmother rented the family ranch, in Heman, to some Japanese farmers and she moved to Rexburg into a little white house provided by Pres. Bassett. I have not been able to find the exact location of the home except that it was “across from the college.” I tried to pin my aunt down on this and asked her if it was west, east, south, or what and she just didn’t come up with anything I could verify. Anyway this is where Francis and much of her family lived. This is where my father lived and was educated in the Rexburg Schools. This is the community where my father feels he took some of the brunt of the persecution that followed the knowledge of this marriage. As a boy, visiting Rexburg with my father, he would point out to me individuals who had been his particular persecutors when a boy. Being chased home, beaten, shouted at, etc. He was never able to participate in scouting because of his unacceptance. This he attributes to his mother and her marriage.

President Basset [sic] was said to be a very dignified and talented man and a natural leader. His photo shows that. He was generous with Francis’ family, sending Lloyd to BYU and the girls to Logan to school to study music. To others of the family he does not get credit for generosity since they feel it was Francis’ insurance money he was spending.

My aunt Louie repeated a couple of times in my visit that Pres. Bassett simply could not let this beautiful, young, widow, be courted and won by just anyone. It needed to be someone who would appreciate her. She thinks the marriage was, in a way, to protect her. When Aunt Louis asked my Grandmother at one time, “Why did you do that?” grandma just answered, “There[‘]s a lot of things you don’t understand.” Whatever that means. Francis Hammond remembers that she slept in the same bed for a couple of years with her Grandma Hunter. On the vanity were pictures of Heman and Thomas. She is sure she truly loved them both and they were good husbands.

My Aunt Louis Quayle is sure your grandfather died in my Grandmother[‘]s house but that it was not the ranch house in Heman. It was the white house in Rexburg. The marriage lasted from 1908 to 1926. Far longer than I had thought. It lasted until the death of your Grandfather. Aunt Louis was visiting her Grandma Francis on that day in 1926. (She thinks that was the year.) She was about 13 years of age and Grandmas [sic] girls and Pres. Bassett were there singing hymns around the piano and my Grandma was playing. Pres. Bassett had his hand on Louis’ shoulder and she noted that his hand was really shaking. He excused himself to go in another room and lay down. Within five minutes my Aunt Cassia went in to check on him. She came rushing back to announce that he had passed away. It was so sudden and there was no sound from him at all. He was quickly taken back to his other home.

Francis’ daughters never felt comfortable around Pres. Bassett. They resented his courtship when they lived in the big ranch house. They wondered where his first wife was as she was never a part of the situation and was never seen by this other family. However, after the death of Pres. Basset[t], my grandmother is said to have received a letter from the first wife, your grandmother. It was a kind and sympathetic letter. My grandmother left the letter on the table where her children might find and read it and be less bitter about the situation.

Apparently none of the money was left at the death of Pres. Bassett and my grandmother moved back to the ranch home in Heman. The ranch was now heavily mortgaged. In 1937 my father and all of our family moved in with my Grandmother and we spent the next many years trying to save the ranch from foreclosure.

This we did. My Grandmother, Francis, lived with us, or we lived with her, from 1937 until her death in 1951. I was on my mission in New England at the time of her death.

The only other detail I know of this situation is that my father and two brothers had taken out desert claims in the Foggs Butte area of northern Fremont County. They built cabins and barns and raised livestock. I was born in the cabin there. Apparently our ancestors also did this. There is an account of Francis and Thomas spending a day rolling up barbed wire along the Kilgore road just to salvage it for reuse. But they were both out there with leather gloves and loading rolls into a wagon.

Well this is all there is. It isn't much. I have thought I would send this along and it will be followed by a picture of my grandmother, a picture and an article about your Grandfather, taken from our local paper with article attached, and also a picture of the ranch home where my grandfather died and where your grandfather courted my grandmother.

I have appreciated that my parents never did speak disparagingly of Brother Bassett or to portray the act of marriage as evil or anything. They were pleased that, apparently, no church disciplinary action was taken against either of them, such as excommunication. At least that is what we understood. Those years were probably very happy ones for my grandmother and only she will know why or under what conditions she chose to enter into the marriage

Hope all is well with you and your family. It was my daughter, Leslie, who lives in Alpine, who called to say that I may hear from you. She had spoken to Woody Miller's wife, Susan Hunter Miller, who seems to be the one who is in your class.

We send our love and regards,

Sincerely yours,

Hal [signed]

Hal H. Hunter

---

## APPENDIX B

### *HAL H. HUNTER - LETTER #2*

(no date)

Dear Arthur;

I am slow getting back to you but I do enclose a couple of documents. One is a picture pedigree of my own that shows my grandmother Fannie Francis Fawson Hunter with Husband Heman Hyde. She is about 40 years of age at this time. Also I send along a copy of a photo of you[r] grandfather Thomas E. with accompanying article. I searched for the original but couldn't find it. That would then have included the publication and date of the picture and article. I cannot locate the picture of the old Egin home but that is not important. At one time I was of the opinion that might have been the home your grandfather died in but it was not.

One additional bit of information. The Ivins that I said married our grandparents did not do it. I was uneasy about that but now can confirm that it was Matthias Cowley. If you remember he was released from the Twelve in 1887,<sup>3</sup> two years before the manifesto because he would not support the end of polygamy. Even stripped of the keys he still continued to marry people plurally. He would take groups to Mexico to avoid the laws here. And he did presume to marry our grandparents. I received this information from Francis Hammon at Colorado City, Arizona. I have many relatives in Colorado City living in polygamy and they take great comfort and motivation from the fact of the Bassett-Hunter marriage.

Hope all is well with you and that this might add to your understanding.

Sincerely yours,

Hal [signed]

Hal H. Hunter

---

<sup>3</sup>Matthias Cowley resigned from the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles in 1905, and had his priesthood held in abeyance as the result of a trial before the Twelve in 1911.

## APPENDIX C

### NEWSPAPER INTERVIEW BY EASTERN DAILY PRESS

#### MORMON MISSION AMONGST US

It may not be generally known that five missionaries all the way from Salt Lake City have quartered themselves in Norwich, and are striving to establish amongst us the Kingdom of Latter Day Saintship. They are somewhat remarkable people. Having no contributed funds, and collections being strictly abjured, all expenses have to be met out of the missionary's private means—a circumstance about which there is something decidedly prepossessing. They beat no drums; they do not even resort to the milder expedient of bringing down a “crack” preacher. When in Norwich—which is no a mission field in itself but merely the centre of a missionary district—they occupy a stuffy and unpretentious room over a shop in Dove Street, the site whereof is only indicated by a black tin plate setting forth the hours of service. Anything less suggestive of the “rushing whirlwind” than the methods of these humble emissaries from the Land of the Many-Wived it would be hard to conceive. The age is so remarkable for propagandism of a militant assertive sort that some may be indisposed to attach much meaning to so obscure and unobtrusive a crusade, and yet the result of Mormon missionary effort, taken as a whole, is astonishingly real. Every month a vessel leaves Europe carrying proselytes to the faith of Joseph Smith, Liverpool and one of the Scandinavian ports being alternatively the points of departure. There are thirteen mission stations in the British Isles, at each of which there is a corps of Mormon believers actively engaged in propagating the following articles of faith. The outline of belief herein described is as definite and exact as a builder's specification. The most lynx-eyed of orthodox Churchman could detect no downgrade tendency here. He who can subscribe to the whole thirteen points, including the one which proclaims the Book of Mormon to be the Word of God, at least suffers no deficiency in the matter of simple faith:

It looked somewhat out of accord with the shy and retiring ways of the Mormon missionaries that one of our representatives should be invited to call upon the president of the Norwich contingent at his quarters in Dove Street. He half expected to witness some such scene of conjugal felicity on a large scale as Artemus Ward encountered when he visited Brigham Young. But he was spared so embarrassing an experience. Instead of being initiated into a sort of Mormon *Parc aux Cerfs* [stag park] he was introduced to five staid middle-aged gentlemen, who were living comfortably *en gareen* [in the garden]. The walls were ornamented with some coloured texts from Holy Writ. A number of ponderous trunks and travelling bags piled up in the corners served as a reminder that the missionaries are birds of passage only. The President, by name Thomas E. Bassett, is a youngish-looking man of not more than 30, perhaps [actually Elder Bassett was 27 at the time], and appears to be the junior by several years of at least three of his colleagues. All of them spoke with an unmistakable American accent. Their manner was mild and subdued, and it was hard not to feel that this mission across the Atlantic is to them a matter of intense religious import.

“The British Isles,” said the President in explaining the *modus operandi*, “are divided into thirteen missionary districts, or conferences as we call them, the head one being at Liverpool, and each conference

comprises a president and a staff of travelling elders, from three to fifteen in number. Four travelling elders and a president have been allotted to the Norwich district, which embraces Norfolk, Suffolk, and parts of Lincoln and Cambridge-shire.

“What sort of success do you meet with as regards making converts, Mr. Bassett?”

“Well, we reckon that a thousand Mormon converts leave Europe every year for Utah, and of that number 450 or 500 are recruited from the British Isles.”

“Is there any native church?”

“Not worth mentioning. There are at present 102 Latter Day Saints in the Norwich district, but they are only waiting till they have saved sufficient means to emigrate. There are very few who refuse to go to Utah when once they have accumulated the wherewith. There used to be a thousand in the Norwich district alone.”

“A thousand! How do you account for the decline?”

“Oh, they have emigrated. It is only the poorest who remain. Our numbers are recruited chiefly from the poor—the labouring agricultural class mainly. We are not very successful in the large towns.”

“And have you no contributed funds—no means of subsistence provided by the Church in Utah?”

“None,” said Mr. Bassett, in the opulent tone of a man to whom bank-notes are things of no account. “We bear our expenses out of our own private means. We been called upon by the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and we expect to finance a mission of about two years’ duration, preaching what we consider to be the principles of the Gospel as taught by Christ.”

The appearance of the missionaries was fairly comfortable and well-cared for, but it was a little surprising to learn that they were able, out of their own resources, to undertake a two years’ European tour. “I take it, then, that in your own country you are men of substance?”

“No. We have our flocks and herds in Utah, but we are not what you would call wealthy.”

“I observe that nothing is said in your articles of faith about polygamy.”

“No, and in preaching we do not advocate it. But we think it is permissible, because there is nothing in the Scriptures forbidding it. It was commanded of God anciently. The number of Mormon men having more than one wife is estimated at from 7 to 10 percent, of the total adult population of Utah. We do not even persuade men to take one wife. Our mission is simply to preach the first principles of the Gospel.”

“Would you—er—mind telling me how many—er—wives you have each?” asked the pressman, putting so delicate a question with natural embarrassment. (The photograph of a charming Mormon lady lay upon the table.)

“Oh, we have only one each,” they replied in chorus, “except one of us, and he has no wife at all.”

“No, I am not married at all,” said the elder indicated, laughing sadly at the unblest-ness of his condition.

“The Mormon Church seems to have got itself into hot water with the United States Legislature in regard to polygamy. How can you go on practicing it in view of your article 12, which proclaims subjection to the law?”

“But,” said the President, “we do not believe that the Legislature in trying to uproot polygamy and confiscate our church property is acting in accordance with the law. The Constitution of the United States says that congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise of religion. Now polygamy is part of our religion, and we hold that the law passed in prohibition of it is



unconstitutional and therefore carries with it no obligation to be obeyed. This permission to practise [sic] polygamy has been revealed to us by our Heavenly Father, and we believe it will tend to the salvation of the human family and ameliorate its condition here on earth.”

“But has it not yet to be proved that there is a surplus female population all the world round?” asked the visitor, reflecting that Mr Hepworth Dixon found in some of the mining States that the proportion of men to women was as twenty-five to one.

“There are States, in the Union,” said Mr. Bassett, where the males predominate, but taking the whole population of the United States females of marriageable age predominate over males of marriageable age.”

“How about the Book of Mormon; do you preach from it?”

“No; we simply preach from the Bible. The Book of Mormon contains a sacred history of the ancient inhabitants of America and the fulness of the everlasting Gospel as taught by our Saviour to the inhabitants of that land after His resurrection. It is to some extent doctrinal, but mainly a historical book.”

“Well, barring your views on married life and the Book of Mormon, there is nothing extravagantly unorthodox in your theology.”

“No, perhaps not, but there is a great deal of objections raised to the claim we make that the Gospel is again restored to the earth. We teach that the Church of Christ was organised by Him, was taken from the earth about the close of the sixth century, and that, according to the prediction of John the Revelator, in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> chapters of Revelation, it was restored to earth again through the instrumentality of a holy angel from heaven. We meet [word unclear] opposition on this point. Our views too on the subject of the Godhead are a source of objection. We believe in a God with bodily parts and passions. But we encounter no actual opposition such as we had to endure years ago. Then our meetings were broken up, and we were pelted with rotten eggs; but all that is stopped now. The clergy and ministry treat us with indifference. They do not oppose us; but neither on the other hand do they in any way recognise us.”

“Just one last question, Mr. Bassett. What are the legal prospects of the Church in the United States?”

“Well, fairly encouraging after the report recently made by a Committee of Congress. On application being made for the admission of Utah as one of the State of the Union, a committee was appointed to make investigations, and here are extracts from its report.”

“The report would almost make it appear that the period of “paradise glory” has begun already in Utah. The people are chaste and sober, the proportion of illiteracy is very low, and industrial prosperity prevails. The latest figures of the Mormon Church give 12 apostles, 70 patriarchs, 3,719 high priests, 11,805 elders, 2069 priests and teachers, and 11,610 deacons, or a total of 31,877 officers for a population a little over 150,000. The intense proselytising effort put forth by so small a community seem to indicate that the Church of the Latter Day Saints is enjoying the full vigour of infancy. What sect in Europe exercises such discipline and control over its adherents as to make them missionaries by word of command and scatter them in scores across the sea at their own cost and charge? The chief blot on the system—plurality of wives—forbids anything more than a modified sympathy on the part of people who believe that the sanctity of the marriage bond as between one man and one woman, is the very basis of a healthy social fabric. But for this weak point in President Bassett’s theological harness, one might complacently regard the Dove Street Mormons as a cheap and effective emigration agency. A sentiment of antipathy is unavoidable; but so also is an undercurrent of sympathy. Have they not taken this for a guiding principle:—“If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report, or praiseworthy, we seek after these things?”

—Eastern Daily Press [?]

## APPENDIX D

### RESPONSE TO EASTERN DAILY PRESS INTERVIEW

The *Eastern Daily Press* has just discovered that there are mormon [sic] elders in Norwich on the look out for converts to polygamy. "DAYLIGHT" dealt with Mormon missions in Norwich some eighteen months ago, and I'm afraid the Mormon elders did'nt [sic] much relish the manner in which they and their religious "fixins" were handled. A Mormon elder wrote several letters in defence [sic], and invited your reporter to visit the temporary Tabernacle in Dove Street. Your report, however, being unfortunately, or otherwise, a married man, was compelled to decline the honour. ...

Having failed with "DAYLIGHT" the Mormon elders have tried the *Eastern Daily Press* and got a splendid notice But isn't it rather a singular coincidence, Mr. Editor, that following so soon after the "puff" of the beauty of the female Primrose Leaguers by S'Arry Bullard, the Mormon elders are on the rampage after coverts in Norwich? Great Scott! Mr. Editor, surely they have'nt [sic] designs in that direction! Brigham Young was a beggar for "Sealing" wives, and I suppose, as it was in the days of Brigham so it is in days of his successors. It is history that on the return of the Mormonite elders from their prosleytizing [sic] campaign in the British Isles, they were compelled to parade with their female converts before Brigham, who "sealed" the loveliest as wives for himself. Begad, Mr. Editor, if the Mormonites now in the old city were to carry off all the female members of the Norwich Branch of the Primrose League, I hardly know which would morally be the most blameable, S'Arry for his "puff" of Primrose loveliness or the *Eastern Daily Press* for its big "boom of the Mormonite elders, eh? ...

And here is yet another very singular coincidence, viz; in the same issue of the *Eastern Daily Press* in which appear the big editorial advertisement of Mormonisms, is a capital notice of a recent Primrose gathering, the catering for which was secured by the father of an *Eastern Daily Press* reporter. I know there are hundreds of hard hearted "Rads" in Norwich who would be only too pleased too [sic] aid the Mormons in bolting with the whole of the Local Branch of the Primrose League, and I cannot allow even my strong political feeling to carry me as far at that. Great Heavens, Sir, fancy a Mormonite Brigham Young carrying off the lovely Dame President! Perish the thought.

**APPENDIX E**

Heman Hyde Hunter – Will

IN THE PROBATE COURT OF FREMONT COUNTY

STATE OF IDAHO

In the matter of the	)	
	)	
Estate of Heman H. Hunter	)	DECREE OF DISTRIBUTION
	)	
deceased	)	

The petition of Frances Hunter, the administratrix of the Estate of Heman H. Hunter, deceased, heretofore filed herein, praying for the distribution of the residue of the Estate of Heman H. Hunter, deceased, in the hands of the administratrix of said Estate, among the persons entitled there to, coming on regularly for hearing, and it appearing that due and legal notice of such hearing has been given as directed by the order of the Court heretofore made and entered herein, that all claims against the Estate are fully paid, that the final accounting of said administratrix has been duly made and confirmed by this Court, that all the taxes due from said estate have been paid, that the whole of said residue is the community property of said decedent and his surviving widow, Frances Hunter, who as such survivor is entitled to one half thereof.

That said deceased died intestate and his only heirs at law are his said widow and six minor children, David Lloyd Hunter, Harrold Hunter, Marion Louisa Hunter, Rodie Hunter, Cassia Hunter and Oakley Hunter, and also the following who have attained their majority or have married, Amy F. Stanford [sic], Martha Louise Decker and Ida M. Hunter, and all resident of Fremont County, except Amy Frances Stanford [sic] who is residing at present at Albert Canada.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED ADJUDGED AND DECREED that said residue of said estate be distributed as follows, to-wit: one-half of said estate (beside the homestead already set apart to said widow) thereof to said widow, and one ninth of the remaining half of said residue to each of said children, David Lloyd, Harrold, Marion, Louisa, Rodie, Cassia, Oakley, Amy F. Stanford, [sic] Martha Louise Decker and Ida M. Hunter.

That the property affected by this decree is described as follows:

Three horses valued in the inventory at \$375.00

SE 1/4 Sec.12 Twp.7N. R.39. E. B.M. and twelve shares of Egin Water, valued at 16,000.00 Section seven, was set aside as a homestead by the Hon. Judge of the Probate Court on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of June 1907 to Frances Hunter, the administratrix herein, with the improvements thereon.

Dated April 19, 1909.

John Donaldson  
Judge of the Probate Court

Seal  
Filed April 19, 1909

\* \* \* \* \*

## APPENDIX F

From "HISTORY OF LUCY ANN LUTZ BASSETT" BY THOMAS MYRTHEN BASSETT

As Father was in the real estate and insurance business, he became acquainted with a Mrs. Fannie Hunter whose husband had passed away and she had quite a large family. They lived in the Heman Ward which was nearly twelve miles north of Rexburg. At the time of her husband's death, he left her financially in bad shape and she was about to lose her farm when she came to Father for assistance to help solve her situation.

Evidently this acquaintance became very personal and they were secretly married by whom or when no one but them ever knew. This happened just after the Manifesto was issued by President Wilford Woodruff. My mother was never told about this. I suppose my father knew she would never give her permission and would be the cause of much unhappiness in our home. At this time the manifesto was issued and there were some frictions among the general authorities. Mathias Cowl[e]y, one of the counsel of the Twelve was not in harmony with the Manifesto and I understand went about the Church performing some marriages.

Some of my readers may be inclined to think of my father as an evil man. In the defense of him,—although, I have never upheld him in this—Father was not an evil man, but a man who was a firm believer in staying true to his own convictions and once anything wa[s] right, it was always right and he stood on this.

President Joseph F. Smith allowed Father to have his second endowments. None of us ever knew what this entailed, but when ever [sic] Father would talk about this, he would always say, "You can't understand". Well, sometime I suppose we will know and understand better. I don't know how much time elapsed before my mother became aware of what had taken place and when she did find out she wa[s] broken hearted and never wanted to live in Rexburg any more.

Well, the opportunity came when the Beneficial Life Insurance Company offered Father a job in Salt Lake and then in Gridley, California. We moved to Salt Lake when I was in the sixth grade and one day my mother took me in her bedroom and told me about what Father had done and I wasn't to tell anyone.

As I look back on all of this, I can see that this was the downfall of my Father. I've heard my mother sob and cry until I thought her heart would literally break. Our home was never the same although Father always treated my mother with greatest respect. At the time Ricks Academy was building the new academy building Father mortgaged our once beautiful home for \$1,500 and gave it to help build the building. He never was able to pay off the mortgage and lost the home. Everything seemed to go wrong for him after this.

We moved back to Rexburg and Father had a terrible siege of rheumatism and I had to give up my schooling to go with Mother to Lava Hot Springs so Father could use the baths there. Mother and I carried him on a chair three times a day from the hotel to the baths, for over a month. He finally got so he could return home and a return to the same illness and the doctors prescribed a lower altitude and so we moved to Burley and Twin Falls, Idaho where he worked for the Amalgamated Sugar Co., in their office but when they found out he was a polygamist, he lost his job again.

Mother and Father returned to Rexburg again and Father's heart wrecked by rheumatism passed away at the age of 63, but Mother was left almost destitute. She lived with my sister Maud in Salt Lake for awhile and then Mother moved and made her home with us in St. Anthony.

Her last days were surely not her happiest. She suffered with a terrible pain in her back for a long period of time.

## APPENDIX G

### *THE DAY MOTHER THREW OUT THE RELIEF SOCIETY*

One thing I remember well about mother when I was just a little boy. The Relief Society held its meeting in the different homes and this day it was held at our place. The meeting was over and mother was out preparing some lunch. She came back into the room and [sic] for some reason and one of the women was crying. "What are you crying for?" mother asked, calling her by her first name. "Oh these women have been criticizing me, because my daughter, -----, had a baby when she wasn't married.

Mother turned to the women and said "You ought to be ashamed to even mention the subject in a relief society meeting."

One of the women spoke up and said: "What about your own mother, she was no angel, either!" It should be mentioned here that my grandmother Hunter, was involved in polygamy, when it was outlawed by the church. But it was a very unwise thing for another person to criticize one's mother, and my mother flew into a rage.

Lunch was forgotten and mother flew into the bed room and brought out all of the coats and flung them into the middle of the floor. "All of you get your coats on and get out of here!" she demanded. "If that is the way the Relief Society is going to act."

When they were a little slow getting out of the door, she helped by shoving some of them. I went out where they were untying their horses from the fence and heard one of the women say: "She damn near bit my arm off!"

\* \* \* \* \*

## APPENDIX H

*E-MAIL FROM CAROL WHITE, DATED THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2004.*

Dear Arthur and Janet:

It was nice to meet you Monday and get some insight about my grandmother Fanny Frances Fawson. Thank you for the information [from Nunham Stanford] you gave me. I found that I had some of the information, but I was happy to get a copy of the letters.

I went downtown to the Genealogical Library and looked at films showing member records of Logan 7<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> Wards 1907-1913. Logan 7<sup>th</sup> Wards [sic] shows Fanny with her six children Lloyd, Horald, Marion, Rada, Cassia, and Oakley. Their records were received from Egin Ward in 1911. Their records were then moved to Logan 1<sup>st</sup> ward 27 Jan 1912. From the 1<sup>st</sup> Ward, their records were moved to Egin Ward 3 Aug 1913. They appear to have lived in Logan from 1911 to 1913. It has been 30 years since I have looked at those films. I was unable to find the film with the ward histories. I looked through the records of births in the two wards and found none listed for Fanny and Thomas Bassett. When I have more time, I will look further. I also looked through Logan Temple sealings for the year 1908 and could not find a sealing for Fanny and Thomas.

On the Church website lds.com, I found some temple information. Fanny and Heman Hunter were sealed in Portland Temple 1 June 2001, and their daughter Marion was endowed again (19 May 2001) and sealed to them (23 Aug 2001). Fanny and Thomas Bassett were sealed in San Diego Temple 10 Jan 1998.<sup>4</sup>

Again, thanks for your help.

Carol White

---

<sup>4</sup>It is unlikely that she could have been sealed to two husbands.

## APPENDIX I

### *FANNY FRANCIS<sup>5</sup> FAWSON HUNTER*

by Hal H. Hunter [Grandson]

My Grandma Hunter was a rather large woman with a ready smile. Large and penetrating eyes and with a hard life to look back on. Born just after the American Civil War, in 1868, she had great parents and a good heritage. I don't know where she learned so much about pioneer medicine but she became an herbalist specializing in the healing qualities of sage, an indigenous plant of Southern Idaho. She used it in all of its possible forms. As a tea, a poultice, a bath etc. And the trunk and branches of the sage plant kept many a pioneer home heated in the Idaho winters.

The Fawson family settled in Grantsville, Utah. There also was the family of Bishop Hunter, Bishop of Grantsville. A Hunter boy, Heman, fell in love with a Fawson girl, Fannie Francis. They were married in Salt Lake City, Utah and then they moved to Oakley, Idaho with a band of sheep. Bishop Edward Hunter had traveled by horseback from Sacramento, California, after the trek of the Mormon Battalion, and he crossed the Oakley Country. He was impressed by what he saw. He encouraged his sons to go up there and to settle on the Idaho-Utah Border.

Heman and Fanny lived in Oakley from 1890 to 1904, having many of their ten children born in Oakley. Then he sold his sheep and moved to the Egin Bench area in Southeastern Idaho. He bought 160 acres, built a fine brick home, from bricks hauled through the fields from two miles straight East, and settled down to raise his family and create a ranch.

Fannie Francis had as one of her gifts the ability to care for the sick and to see them healed. Troubled families would call on her for help in the illness of their family members. She was the Relief Society President and used her gift when ever called upon. Oakley Hunter, her youngest child, recalls being often with his mother at these times.

He says that she would take him with her as a very small child. She would go into the troubled home, make a nest for Oakley behind the cook stove, and she would stay with that family, night and day, until the danger of the illness would pass. Sage poultices would cover the injured or ill part of the body and sage tea would be sipped. Taking little heed for her own fatigue she would make the mother get her rest and she took over the care of the ill one. My father has described the joy of the family in finally seeing the illness break and the ill begin to mend.

A most dramatic incident involved the Cruser family. They lived across the canal from the Heman Church House. The family members were not members of the predominant Mormon faith but Grandma Hunter was no respecter of persons. Crusers had an ill son, Matt. They had sought out the best medical

---

<sup>5</sup>Apparently the name was recorded different ways at different times. Carol Hunter White (Hal's sister) has a document signed "Fannie F. Hunter." I have chosen to use the name Frances because that is the way it appears on her husband's Will.

advice in St. Anthony and Rexburg and had finally been told they could do no more. They suggested taking Matt home and to keep him comfortable for his last few days. Finally the Relief Society President was called upon to come to the Crusier home to see the sick boy.

Grandmother followed her usual pattern, moving right in with the family. Matt lived and the Crusier family was forever after giving Grandma thanks for her time and effort in his behalf. I don't know the nature of his illness.

Heman was called on a mission to the Southern States by his church. He left his ranch in the hands of good men and his wife and eight children in the big home. He served in Tennessee and Kentucky. He was working in Ashland, Tennessee when a little son was born to Fanny Francis. Having helped so many others Fanny was unable to save this little boy. She named him Ashland Heman after the town her husband was in at the time of his death. Heman served a six-month mission and returned home. He contract Typhoid Fever<sup>6</sup> and died in 1906, the same year his last child, Oakley, was born.

In 1908 Fanny Francis married, plurally, Thomas M. Bassett,<sup>7</sup> a Stake President in Rexburg, Idaho. She spent the next eighteen years in a little white house near Ricks College. The other wife lived in the big, brick, Bassett home near the courthouse in Rexburg. She became cut off from her family in Grantsville. Oakley was raised not only without his father but also without the support that might have come from the grandparents and uncles and aunts who could not accept what Fanny Francis had done. Bassett died in 1926 and Fanny Francis moved back to the ranch out on Egin Bench.

Oakley never did mention to his children these hard years in Rexburg. He did mention often going to live with his older siblings and once, when in Rexburg with my father, he pointed out to me a man who had been one of his particular persecutors during his grade school years. For example, he was never able to attend scout meetings because of the persecution.

The ranch had been operated through these years by fine Japanese farmers. Lloyd, her oldest son, farmed the ranch in some of these later years as did a son-in-law, Frank Decker. Finally a huge mortgage was placed on the ranch to finance the purchase of a dry-farm in Drummond, Idaho. The dry-farm was lost but not the mortgage on the ranch.

In the will of Heman Hunter each child received eleven acres of the ranch. All of these parcels were not involved under a mortgage and it was the Depression years. They all relinquished their share and let Oakley, and his brother, Horald, try to salvage the ranch. Between 1937 and 1944 it appeared very doubtful that the mortgage payments could be made. However they were blessed to finally pay off the mortgage. It was in 1937 that Oakley and his family moved to the big, brick home for residency with Grandma Fanny Francis Hunter.

During the thirteen years of our residence with he [sic] I remember most her passion for Temple Work. She, herself, could not go to the temple.<sup>8</sup> But she was always requesting of us teen-age grandchildren that,

---

<sup>6</sup>Actually Heman died from pneumonia. See Appendix A.

<sup>7</sup>Thomas E. Bassett. Thomas M[yrthen] Bassett is his son.

<sup>8</sup>“It is interesting to note that in her letters from Canada in February and March of 1940 that she mentions going to the Cardston Temple on several occasions. Nunham Stanford, her son-in-law, was a bishop at the time. Could he have been instrumental in reconciling her to the Church and getting her a recommend?” [ftn. added by Nunham G. Stanford on 30 January, 1994]



if we ever received a paper dollar bill in our travels, to save it for her. These she would send to the temple to assist in that work.

She passed away in 1951 while I was serving my mission in Yarmouth, Maine. I received the news by mail after her burial. I went right on working but remembering the influence she had had on the lives of us all. I was also stricken with guilt that I had not been more faithful in writing letters to her. I still have the little book she sent as a Christmas Present for the Christmas of 1950 and I remember her teaching me how to tie a tie in preparation for my mission. She has been missed by all who knew her.

Toward the end of her life her children were living in various places in the West. Oakley, Horald and Rada had made their homes on Egin Bench. Cassia was in Blackfoot and Marion was in Garland Utah. Myrtle lived on the "island" in St. Anthony, Idaho. Lloyd had settled in Colorado City, Arizona. Before she passed away she had mourned the loss of two daughters: Amy Stanford and Rada White.

## APPENDIX J

### *MEMORIES OF MARY BASSETT*

by her niece, Margaret Gwladys Bassett (Comstock)

I remember Aunt Mary Bassett best when---

As a very small little girl I used to spend many happy hours at the home of my grandparents Thomas and Margaret Bassett in Rexburg, Idaho. They lived just across the street north from my childhood home so it was very near us. Some of the choicest memories of my childhood are the many times I crossed the street to their house and played there in the house as well as the yard.

Auntie<sup>9</sup> Mae as she was affectionately known by us was so wonderful to me as well as to my brother and sisters. In their home was a cellar and you entered it by trap door. In the room where you entered the cellar there was a window which opened out into the kitchen, the room was called their pantry. Very patiently Aunty Mae would let us use this pantry to play post-office by the hour. We used the window of course to call for the mail and you can imagine how we would diligently create the mail to be called for. It would not be convenient for Aunty Mae to always keep the trap door closed for us but she somehow managed to be disturbed without letting us know about it.

Another favorite spot was an old cellar out in the yard, in the evening we would play anti-i-over by the hour and our noise did not seem to bother her too much. Once I broke my arm while playing on this cellar. Along the ditch bank close to the cellar was a row of wild gooseberries and I used to help Aunty Mae pick these and thought it was much fun.

It was Auntie Mae who helped me first to braid my hair, or I should say, taught me how to braid it. Many things I am sure she taught me that I do not now remember.

We lived near her all our life, while living in Rexburg, and she was a part of our every day living. Never in all the years do I remember her speaking a cross word to me or taking a stand against me no matter what the situation was, and I sure I must have been trying at times.

I was one who would rather spend a few hours at home with Auntie Mae than do most anything. It used to be my pleasure to sit at the side of my grandmother Bassett who was blind, and who sat in the corner in the kitchen mostly in her rocking chair--hour after hour reading to her and sometimes singing for her. I loved her dearly and I think the feeling was mutual as she was so very kind to me. I can see her now as I sit here remembering, with her little black lace cap, black dress and white apron. In the pocket of this apron she always had peppermints and lemon candy, and often she would reward me with a piece of each. She would sometimes tell me stories of the Old County while Auntie Mae would be working around in the kitchen and often Auntie Mae would join in. How I wish now that I had written down all the many stories they used to tell, but youth somehow does not seem to appreciate the real important things until it is too late. I am sure

---

<sup>9</sup>Gwladys fluctuates between spelling the word "Auntie" and "Aunty." I have maintained her original spellings throughout.

there would be many interesting things to tell about now with my adult mind.

In summing up all I know about Auntie Mae is that she was a dear quiet little lady (and I mean a lady) who lived her life for her parents never leaving them I am sure on account of Grandmother's blindness. [sic. no punctuation in preceding sentence.] Her life was a life of true sacrifice, with kindness to everyone. She was respected by all who knew her and never harmed any one. Her entire life was spent in the little humble home in Rexburg, don't remember whether she ever left it for any length of time to go any where, perhaps to Mendon, or over to Teton, or out to Aunt Margaret Muirs.

After I was married and lived in Rexburg, she used to come to my home real often and I can remember what a pleasure it was for me to have her come. When I moved away from Rexburg to Nampa, Idaho, I came back to Rexburg on a visit and just a year before Auntie Mae passed away I begged her to go back to Nampa with me and live with me telling her I was worried about her there alone, as none of our folks lived in Rexburg at that time. She told me that she would at first and then when it came time to leave she told me she just couldn't do it, she thought she had better stay with her home. A night or so before she died she was afraid—and who knows—thought perhaps she was going to pass away and wanted to go home with Aunt Sarah Baker. It was there she passed away. I have always felt she was afraid to die there alone

There were a few times she said to me I remember, that she would like to see Wales again. If she was ever unhappy with her lot, she never let it be known nor did she complain. I suppose my sister Maude, myself, and her name sake, Mary, sister Hazel, and Myrthen were almost like her own children. There were other nieces and nephews I know who were close to her and loved her, but us being so near, she sort of felt responsible for us many times.

She was short in stature, long white hair she braided around her head with large dark eyes. People in Rexburg loved and respected her always. In her quiet manner and charm she made people aware she was there.

She kept care and watch over her aged parents all their lives and kept their home where all the relatives came and went throughout the years—in perfect shape. It was quite a gathering place—and I know meals were prepared many many times for visiting relatives. These relatives I know were good to bring her things from their farms to eat, such as vegetables, fruit and meats. All were thoughtful of her and loved her, and spent many happy hours there. Always the welcome mat was out for everyone who crossed her doorway.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*More Thanks Than I Have the Power To Express To:*

My Dad (deceased)

for teaching me to love my Welsh heritage and all things Welsh while he was alive

My Wife Janet and especially my Daughter Julene

for accompanying me and assisting me in the libraries and graveyards

My other Children: Kedric, Bevan, Morgan, and Britany

for carrying over my love for all things Welsh into another generation

My Sister, Ann Bassett Scott

for compiling many of the earlier histories of this family

Hal Hunter (deceased)

for supplying information on the Hunter line and connecting me to other members of that family

Ron Dennis

for sharing his extensive website on Welsh emigration and for his encouragement along the way

*And for my long-lost Cousins*

Dorothy Schimmelpfennig

whose pioneering work *Reluctant Bride* inspired this volume and provided much crucial information on the life of her grandmother, who was Thomas E. Bassett's sister.

Wayne Baker

for extensive information regarding the Baker line

Cleta Bassett

for much helpful information on the William Bassett line

Carma Muir Golding

for her encouragement and sharing her extensive compilations regarding the Muir line