

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

WALTER STRINGHAM

(son, and only child, of William Stringham and Polly Knight (Jr.)



***photo of Walter and Polly Knight Stringham
and 11 of their 15 children
Manti, Utah ---early 1880's***

WALTER STRINGHAM was born 4 February 1837 in Far West, Missouri, the only child of William Stringham and Polly Knight, Jr. He was married 19 June 1859 in Manti, Sanpete Co., Utah. and died 16 September 1924 in Manti.

His spouse, MARY ELLEN TUTTLE, was born 5 May 1844 in Nauvoo, Hancock Co., Illinois. She died 3 April 1908 in Manti, Utah.

Walter's father, William, was married to Esther Kinght, the oldest daughter of Joseph and Polly (Sr.) Knight. They had four children, Julia Ann, Harriett, Harlo and Hyrum. When the Colesville New York saints moved to Ohio and then on to Kaw

Township, Missouri, the two daughters found employment and stayed in Indianapolis, Indiana. Son Harlo died very early. Early in the Missouri years Esther passed away. Polly, Jr., the youngest in the Knight family assumed the care of young Hyrum and married her widowed brother-in-law William Stringham in 1835. Young Hyrum passed away at age 12. Walter, their only child, was born to William and Polly in 1837 and was reared as the only child at home.

Due to the unreasonable religious persecution William and Polly, like most of the Missouri Mormon population, were forced to move from the Independence area of Missouri north to Far West, where Walter was born. Then on to Illinois settling in Nauvoo. In April 1844 Walter's mother, Polly, who had been suffering from health issues, died at the young age of 33 from Dropsy (a swelling of soft tissues and an accumulation of excess water) and is interred in the Nauvoo cemetery. Little Walter and his father were left alone.

Walter had lifetime memories of the June 1844 murder of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, when he, Walter was seven or eight years old, and remembered their remains being transported back to Nauvoo from Carthage. A year later, 1845, William re-married to Eliza Lake and with son Walter moved to Minden, Illinois where there was less religious persecution and conditions seemed to be better. They remained in Illinois until 1856. William was trained as a tailor and, among other customers, is reputed to have made suits for Abraham Lincoln in *Indianapolis*. In 1856 missionaries located the family in Jacksonville, revived William's faith and William and Walter were re-baptized. That year the family disposed of their property and prepared to move West.

The family joined a unique wagon train organized by Canute Peterson, an early Norwegian convert to the LDS Church, and crossed the plains to Utah. Early in the 1857 spring the family relocated to Manti. At this time a significant number of Scandinavian convert pioneers were settling in

Sanpete and Sevier counties and it is likely the relationship with Canute Peterson motivated the settlement decisions.

Walter had grown into a stalwart young man and had learned construction abilities such as bricklaying, plastering and carpentry and was a major contributor to his father in constructing a family home in Manti. There is also a record that during the Black Hawk war with Indians he, with forty others, in a skirmish with Indians, across the mountains in Emery County, whom they were pursuing to recover stolen livestock, his horse was shot out from under him. He was also known as a musician and played in the martial band.

On June 19, 1859 Walter was married in Manti to Mary Ellen Tuttle. Photos exist of Mary Ellen confirming that she was one beautiful young lady. Walter was age 22 and Mary Ellen age 15. They resided in Manti until 1865, beginning their remarkable family. There does not appear to be a written record of what Walter did to support his family, but history verifies they were off to a good start.

Walter and Mary Ellen lived in Manti until 1865. They begat the first three children of, can you believe, 15 offspring. Their beautiful daughters, Julia Ann, Sabra Ellen and Elmira Isabella blessed their home. Then, in 1865 they were targets of Brigham Young's "Call to Dixie." They moved to Washington County along with Knight family relatives, Oliver DeMille and his family. Most of the relocating families were destined to the Washington and St. George locale, but the Stringhams and the DeMiles were guided up the Virgin River Valley.

There does not seem to be a record of their first relocated home, but their fourth child, Walter, Jr., was born in Toquerville, the first habitation moving South in the Virgin River Valley. They moved on to Rockville at the confluence of the North Fork and the East Fork of the Virgin River and lived there for two or three years. Daughter Harriett Rowena was born in Rockville as a means for the family to celebrate New Years Day on January 1, 1867.

Then the two families were pioneers to move three miles up the East Fork towards Parunuweap Canyon and create, with others, a new town, Shunesburg on Shunes Creek. During the town's existence the population peaked at 80 human beings. Every spring the newly planted fields, orchards and gardens were damaged or washed away by the Virgin River spring run off. There were times when there were threats from local Indians the moved the Shunesburg residents to return temporarily back to Rockville. Walter and Mary Ellen produced two sons while living in this metropolis, John Henry and Luther Adelbert born January 18, 1869 and April 5, 1871.

While the family was ensconced in this luxurious habitat, President Young indicated that the residents should look for a route for a passable lead to link with Mt. Carmel and Glendale to the East. In "I Was Called to Dixie" by Andrew Karl Larson he notes that Walter Stringham, Oliver DeMille and S.K. Gifford explored the east fork of the Virgin looking for a "passable lead" in September 1871 "but found no practicable way to surmount the towering crags of Parunuweap Canyon." No trail or road to the East was completed until the 1930's when the federal government tunneled through the cliffs of Clear Creek connecting Mt. Carmel with Zion's Park just a bit north of Shunesburg. Today, Shunesburg consists of memories of the birthplace of two of Walter and Mary Ellen's children, the ruins of the stone house of Oliver DeMille and the graves of a very few residents. Luther, in the 1950's hired a driver with a Jeep to take him to the site where he was born.

In 1873 Walter moved his family to Holden, just west of U.S. 15 between Scipio and Fillmore. Here the family built a home, still today (2014) identified by the residents as the "Stringham Home." The first year the home was a one room log home. At this time the family consisted of father, mother and seven children in a one roomed house. Crowded, yes, especially at meal time and in the winter. Of course, there was plenty of room outside to sleep in wagon boxes, tents and straw sheds. Then additional rooms were added to accommodate this

growing family. Walter farmed and planted an orchard and gardened.

The following is quoted from Luther's autobiography:

"We lived in Holden from 1873 to 1878 in which time three more babies were born in the family, Goldie, Will and Mead. My parents had to work very hard to augment the cost of living for the family. Father was a house builder, so he had all the work that he could possibly do besides he had the small farm work, raising wheat, corn, potatoes, sugar cane, hay and all the other vegetables and etc.,. Besides he made all the shoes the family wore. By this time he had built on an addition of a couple of rooms to the house. He usually made the shoes at night by the light from the fire in the big fireplace. The older children were getting able to do a lot of the work on the farm and garden. Now think of the work that Mother had to do. Now 8 or 9 children to take care of and to make their clothes and too, to make cloth to make their clothes from. While in Dixie they raised cotton and spun and wove it into yarn and cloth, but now in Holden they make it out of wool.

The two oldest children were girls so they could do a lot of that kind of work. I know that Mother had the greater burden to bear in rearing the family. Father was a fiddler so her is the way he would get his winters wood hauled and cut up. He would clear out the big room in the house and put on a dance. The boys and young men of the town would take their teams and wagons and go to the hills and get the wood. Then at night Father would give them a dancing party. So we would get our winter wood all up in one day. Then in about a week or so the men and boys would come and chop the wood up in stove and fireplace lengths and at night have another dance. So we mixed pleasure and work all together that made results very fine.

About this time and from then on I could begin to remember something of my life. My first school teacher was Aunt Louisa Bedda (?) who held school in her own house. We had no desks or tables but could use a bench to put our slate on

using a stool or block of wood to sit on. We would sit by her side and she would teach us the letters and numbers. Then a little later when was in the first reader I went to school in the school house. The teacher was a man by the name of Brown.

Now, at this time the church was beginning work on the Manti Temple. Father was induced to come to Manti to assist in building the temple. So grandfather Tuttle came from Manti with his team and wagon to help move us there. I well remember the occasion. Though we did not have a surplus of household goods we had all we could pile on and tie on two wagons. It took two good long days to make the journey from Holden to Manti." (from Luther's personal history)

Walter worked for several years on the stone masonry and plastering of the beautiful historic Manti Temple. During this period he and Mary Ellen begat five more children --- Hiram Ray, Rose May, Charles Melvin, Homer Milton and Della Tuttle. Of Walter and Mary Ellen's fifteen children Elmira Isabell passed away as an infant. Fourteen children matured, had families of their own and enjoyed good lives. Quite a history!! After the Manti Temple was complete, Walter and Mary Ellen were temple workers. They enjoyed life in Manti with family and so many friends. Walter was a musician and participated with family and church groups in musical enjoyment. He became a friend of all the Manti children because he always had in his possession candy of one form or another. Walter did suffer the sad loss of Mary Ellen in 1908 when she passed away April 3, 1908 at age 63. Walter lived another 16 years until September 19, 1924 when he died at age 87. One of his activities during those years was visits to Oregon where three of his sons had settled.

Life was not easy during Walter and Mary Ellen's lifetimes. But with their life experiences, their large wonderful family, the Gospel of Jesus Christ in their lives, the places where they lived and their friends **THEIR LIVES WERE MEMORABLE AND WONDERFUL!!!!!!**

by Howard Edwards, great-grandson 6/2/2014