

Homer Duncan Sketch  
Prepared for presentation by Jerry R. Capener to Box Elder Chapter  
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Homer Duncan was born 19 January 1815, at Barnet, Caledonia, Vermont to John Duncan and Betsey Putnam (a granddaughter of General Israel Putnam of Revolutionary War fame). His father, John Duncan, was a farmer and a deacon in the Congregationist Church.

Homer records, "When I was fifteen years of age, I first heard a portion of the Book of Mormon read and also heard the testimony of the witnesses. I was at once convinced of its truthfulness."

May 15, 1832, Homer's father and three other men were baptized by Orson Pratt and Lyman E. Johnson, an event that Homer had seen in vision the summer before. He also saw that he and his brother, Chapman, would later join the Church. Chapman was baptized in 1832 in Jackson County Missouri and Homer was baptized in the Grand River, at Adam-ondi-Ahman, Missouri in 1838. In 1839, he was ordained a Seventy in Far West, Missouri, by Heber C. Kimball.

Homer received his patriarchal blessing in Quincy, Illinois, by Joseph Smith Senior. His blessing stated that he would "have visions both by day and by night." These words were fulfilled on several occasions.

At Adam-ondi-Ahman the Prophet Joseph Smith said to those present, who were Hyrum Smith, Bishop Vincent Knight, myself and two or three others, "Get me a spade and I will show you the Alter that Adam offered sacrifice on." We went about 40 rods north of my house. He placed the shovel with care and placed his foot on it. When he took out the shovel full of dirt it barred the stone. The dirt was two inches deep on the stone. I recon about four feet or more was disclosed. He did not dig to the bottom of the wall. The stone looked like dressed stone, nice joints ten inches thick and eighteen inches long or more. We came back down the slope perhaps fifteen rods, to the level ground. The Prophet Joseph stopped and remarked that, "This place where we stood was the place where Adam gathered his posterity and blessed them and predicted what should come to pass to the latest generation." The next day he was on his way to Far West. I believe this was the only time Joseph was in Adam-ondi-Ahman.

In the Spring of 1839, Homer left Quincy, Illinois, on his first mission. He traveled through Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio to Buffalo, New York. From there he crossed into Toronto, Canada, then on to Cobourg, Canada. In Cobourg, Homer and his companion, Elder Amos Hodges baptized three people. They experienced the gift of healing as they were requested to administer to the daughter of a newly baptized. Within six days she was completely healed from the scabs that covered her head to foot. They baptized others in the Cobourg area and also blessed a sister who recovered from goiter. "By this time certain sectarian ministers began to say that these miracles were done by the power of the devil, etc."

In the Spring of 1840, Elders Duncan and Hodges crossed back into the state of New York. They went East through Northern New York holding meetings at Canton, Potsdam, Watertown, and other towns along the way.

Tired and with blistered feet, they arrived in Chautaugua. In spite of the opposition from local ministers, they continued to hold well-attended meetings, but none would be baptized. Discouraged, they considered leaving the town and decided to ask the Lord what they should do. They received the answer in a vision and understood it to mean they should remain. They baptized 76 persons and organized a branch. Homer received other visions in Chautaugua that directed him in his service of

administering to those in need.

In the Fall of 1841, he married Asenath Melvina Banker in Chautaugua, New York. Homer and his wife left New York in the Spring of 1843 and arrived in Nauvoo, Illinois, in early July of 1843. Homer crossed over the Mississippi River to Montrose, Iowa, and “was often called upon to visit the sick.” “Among others, I visited Abraham Hunsaker, who was very sick with bilious fever, and after praying, I laid my hands on his head and rebuked the fever in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. He said, 'I am healed;' and he wanted to get up and dress; but his friends prevailed upon him not to do so. The next day, however, he was up and out of doors. I saw him afterwards in Keokuk, twelve miles from Montrose on a certain occasion, when he was in great pain from inflammation of the bowels. I administered to him, and he was healed instantly.”

In 1844, “At the special meeting held at Nauvoo, after Joseph Smith's death, at the time that the mantle of the Prophet of the Lord fell upon Brigham Young, I sat listening to someone speaking with my head down, my face hid in the palms of my hands and my elbows resting on my knees. While in this position, Brigham Young came to the stand and commenced to speak with the voice of Joseph the Prophet. Being so well acquainted with the Prophet's voice, I nearly sprang from my seat, through astonishment, but I sat and heard the Prophet Joseph's voice as long as Brigham Young was speaking. Not only did the voice of Brigham sound like that of Joseph, but the very gestures of his right hand, when he was saying anything very positive, reminded me of Joseph. My decision was then made as to who should lead the Church, for surely the mantle of Joseph had fallen upon Brigham.”

In the Spring of 1848, Chapman Duncan returned from Iowa and helped Homer and Asenath travel to Council Bluffs and cross the Missouri River to Florence when they stopped for ten days and then left for the Elkhorn where they stayed until July.

“Homer initially traveled to the Salt Lake Valley in the Willard Richards Company in 1848 as a captain of ten. He traveled with his wife, Asenath Melvina Robinson Banker, and their three children, Julia Emily, John Chapman, and William Platt Putnam, and his brother Chapman Duncan and his wife Martha Jones.” They reached the Great Salt Lake Valley 16 October, 1848 through Emigration Canyon.

Homer and Asenath settled on a piece of land lying between Big and Little Cottonwood Creeks.

The crickets that came and devoured the crops in 1848, returned in the Spring of 1849 and destroyed the grain that Homer had planted in February. They experienced “the miracle of the crickets and the sea gulls.”

In the Fall of 1850, the Duncans moved to Salt Lake City. In 1855, Homer served a mission to Texas. On his way home to Utah, in May 1857, he led a company of emigrants as their captain.

From 1857 to 1860 Homer tended cattle in Rush Valley, Tooele County, visiting his wife and family in Salt Lake City occasionally. Homer served a mission in England from the Spring of 1860 and returned to Utah in September of 1861. He again served as the Captain of one of the many emigrant companies he led.

In 1862, he went to Florence, Nebraska, to bring another company of emigrants to Utah, arriving in Salt Lake in September.

His obituary states that he “crossed the plains by ox team 21 times before the advent of the railroad and has never made that journey by steam power.”

Homer returned to Salt Lake and again began raising cattle in Tooele County. During this time, my grandmother, Emma Jane Duncan, was born in Salt Lake City on 20 October of 1864.

In October Conference of 1861, Homer and Chapman and others were called to found the “Dixie Mission” or “Cotton Mission.” A census of the mission in St. George in the summer of 1862 shows both of those men as being there but doesn't mention their families.

In 1863, Homer married a second wife, Sarah Trippess, whom he had met on his mission to England. They were married in Salt Lake City. Homer settled Sarah in St. George and in 1869 he brought his first wife and family to Cedar City.

Eventually both families lived in Cedar City. Homer and Asenath were the parents of ten children. Homer and Sarah Trippess bore eight children.

Homer Duncan was also involved in the industry of mining iron ore in Iron County. The Church had settled Parowan in 1851 to provide iron for the settlers, but over a six year period little iron was produced so the effort was discontinued. A second attempt was made in 1868. Peter Shurtz, Homer and Chapman Duncan, and Ebenezer Hanks formed the Union Iron Works and organized a settlement 22 miles west of Cedar City called Iron City, now a ghost town known as Old Iron Town. The colony lasted until 1876. Litigation against the Church over the Edmunds-Tucker Act and the economic Panic of 1873 forced the closure of the iron works. Remaining ruins feature a preserved beehive-style charcoal oven, and parts of the original blast furnace and foundry.

Homer Duncan served as Mayor of Cedar City for a time. Several landmarks continue to bear the Duncan name: Duncan Mountain, Duncan Spring and Duncan Canyon Trail.

Homer moved back to Salt Lake in 1886. Homer's daughter, my grandmother, Emma Jane, relates in her memories of her father, “It is easy to remember father as a tall, straight figure, hair white as snow and short, square cut beard; white shirt, black hat, soft tie, suit, shoes, and overall tailored red lined, black wool, military cape. He had the habit of rising early and eating three good meals each day, reading the daily paper and on Sundays walking to church some three or four blocks. When he retired from active life, he also had a mare which grew old with him. For perhaps twenty years, as surely as the day came, good weather or bad, the mare (she had no other name) was hitched to the buggy and driven to town for groceries or other business. The last trip to town was on a cold foggy day in the winter of 1906. From the bad weather father contracted a severe cold and in a few days passed away of pneumonia at the age of ninety one years.”

Homen Duncan passed away 23 March 1906 and is buried in the Salt Lake City Cemetery.

1. 7 November 1841, Homer Duncan married Asenath Banker.
2. 20 October 1864, Emma Jane Duncan was born to Homer Duncan and Asenath Banker.
3. 10 September 1886, Emma Jane Duncan married William Jacob Strong.
4. 27 August 1901, Mildred Irene Strong was born to Emma Jane Duncan and William Jacob Strong.
5. 27 August 1925, Mildred Irene Strong was married to Russell Cleveland Capener.
6. 3 November 1942, Jerry Russell Capener was born to Mildred Irene Strong and Russell

Cleveland Capener.