

HISTORY OF JOHN ALBERT STRONG

Native pioneer of Utah, born 8,--March, 1857

Springville, Utah

The information in this history is taken from personal remembrances of his children and grandchildren, history of his father, William Strong, and data by a grand-daughter, Pearl (Strong) Stevens. and recorded by her in 1933.

Written and compiled 1984 by Mary K. Timothy

WE REMEMBER GRANDPA

"Great Potter," Grandpa was partly muttering to himself from his place in the sun by the kitchen window, "If those big strapping men had to dig sego roots before they could have any breakfast, they'd know what hunger is."

It was in the late summer of 1934 with the great, world-wide depression sweeping the earth, that my grandfather, John Albert Strong, then in his 77th year, voiced his observations. He had come from his life-long home in Springville, Utah, to spend the fall and winter at my parent's home in the Uintah Basin at Cedarview, Utah.

At the time, my mother, Sarah Luella (Strong) King, the oldest child of Grandpa's 15 children, was in the midst of serving as Relief Society President of the Cedarview Ward. It was also the time of Delano Roosevelt's "New Deal" in which to stop the feeling of panic and hunger, Roosevelt had designated a program of welfare. Mother had been selected to distribute the commodities to those on relief in her area.

On "Delivery Day", the people gathered at the King home to pick up their rations. From miles around, they came in

rickety cars, buggies, afoot, and on horseback to carry away their allotments of flour, sugar, coffee, honey, or whatever was offered.

It was hard for Grandpa to comprehend or adjust to the situation that healthy, hardy men could submit themselves to have dole handed out free of charge. In his way of thinking, there should have been some kind of barter or exchange, or at least, an effort put forth for compensation.

The winter of 1934, Grandpa spent a week at our home on the farm in Ballard Ward, Roosevelt, Utah. I shall always appreciate the opportunity of coming to know my paternal grandfather better. At the time, our son, LaMar was a small baby and Grandpa seemed to feel useful and alive when he could hold and rock him. Once when we were finishing breakfast, I asked, "Grandpa, how on earth did you feed so many children?"

"Oh," said Grandpa, a sparkle of remembrance lighting his dark eyes, "we just raised what we ate and ate what we raised."

This was Grandpa's cue that he had a listening audience.

His mind didn't like staying in the present anyway, and this gave

him and opportunity to drift back and relive vital things in the days gone by. I partly cleared the table - gathering the dishes from in front of us, and sat back to listen.

"You know," Grandpa's relaxed mood permitting him to place a thumb under each suspender to expose his slightly-rounded tummy kept warm beneath a flannel shirt. His mind's eye was seeing, in reality, the old home, the long table lined with his many children. "With a new baby coming along about every two years," Grandpa continued, "your grandma was never in the best of health. It seemed to me that all through our married life, she was always expecting a new baby or else she was caring for a tiny one. It was my responsibility to feed the one next to the baby and learn 'em how to handle a spoon. Seems like, when I was home, there was never a time that I didn't have a youngster on my knee."

Grandfather's tone drooped into an incoherent groove, and feeling I hadn't time to sit longer, I went about my morning's work, but I felt guilty and tried to show more respect the next afternoon by setting a more appropriate stage. Soon I was to find that by politely listening and asking a question now and then, I was to be notably rewarded. I more appreciated the importance of these grandparents of mine for their link in the log book of my genealogy. Down the endless river of time, my grandparents had really contributed in their generation immensely, not only helping to conquer a pioneer wilderness, but to a numerous posterity, a planting of seeds, rich in characteristic development of integrity and noble personality.

I was surprised to learn that back in 1875, Grandpa had visited the Uintah Basin when it was all Indian territory.

When the Indian Reservation was opened in 1905 for white men to file on the land, Grandpa remembered about the lush grass and the wide expanse of country. "I wanted to move out there," Grandpa said, "but your grandma wouldn't go."

It happened at the time that my grandfather stayed with us, my husband, Weston and a neighbor were employed at the White rocks Reservation doing some carpentry work for the government. When Grandpa learned about this, he became excited and vitally interested. "I'd like to go there," he said, "I was there once - away back in '75, the summer before your ma was born."

And so it came about that at 7 A.M. the next morning when Weston left for work, Grandpa was all bundled in his coat, his overshoes, mits, and cap ready to go with his lunch sack protruding from his overcoat pocket.

The next day I was to get a full report of his day's adventures and also a detailed account of the trip he had made into the wilds of Eastern Utah so many years ago: In September of 1875, Grandpa, with another man, had gotten a contract from the government to deliver, by ox teams and wagons, two loads of freight, mostly flour, to the Uintah Agency on the Indian Reservation where soldiers were stationed at White Rocks to control Indian outbreaks. This trek had taken three months and almost ended in tragedy.

"Other than making our own roads causing slow progress," Grandpa remembered, "we faired very well on our way out."

In looking through our west window, Grandpa was quite sure he could point out the way where they had crossed our part of the country. On entering the Crescent Cove, they had come through a draw, which today, we called the "Siphon Hollow". We did this because of the large wooden pipe that was the means of siphoning water from the Snyder level to the Harmston Bench.

The glow in Grandpa's eyes and the enthusiasm he felt in reliving his story was contagious. In my mind's eye, I too could almost visualize the freight wagons, pulled by fat steers, slowly making their way through the gap, crossing the dry, clay hills, and at times, the burdened beasts would need to be reminded by the bullwhip not to stop and graze on gulch bottoms, unless, of course, cutting a way through deep banks took too much time. The way toward the north would be easier until they would come to the Bennett Hill - that would be a real rough climb to the top. The rocky flatlands of Hayden wouldn't be easy either, but at that time of year, the mire holes would be dried up and the Indian trails wide and passable. After that, the freighters would soon be at their journey's end. The White Rock's encampment was situated on a most desirable spot. Here the Uintah River entered the White Rocks River with grass and water aplenty for animals, and the river's rich growth, ample to furnish fuel and shade for man.

"You know - " Grandpa's mind's eye was taking him back a long way and I had to wait a while before he could take up the story again, "with all the cabins gone, the place didn't look like I remembered. Back in '75. those big trees were just whips

stuck in the mud. Today, I couldn't even reach around 'em." Then, like he didn't want me to think he hadn't had a good time, he contined, "I had a good time though - walked up the river a spell and watched some beavers making a dam."

To help Grandpa on with the story, I had to remind him about their trek back over the mountains.

"On our way back," Grandpa's tone changed like he was thinking again of the big men on welfare. "Men ain't strong like they used to be," Grandpa said, taking up his story again. "As I was saying, when we got back to the Strawberry Valley, we got caught in a big snow storm. We moved into the south end of the valley and pitched camp. The next morning when we woke up, there was two feet of snow on the ground covering all the feed for the cattle. We only traveled about two miles that day and came to an old mill house where a man by the name of Obber Dew had been sawing lumber. We was mighty glad to find somebody there and we turned our animals loose to browse on willows or whatever they could find."

"The next morning," Grandpa continued, "the snow was so deep, it took us quite a while to even get the door open, and when we did, we could see snow clear to the top of our wagon beds. The animals, three yoke of oxen and a horse team - poor, dumb, hungry things were like to be buried alive in snow. I could see if we were to get out of there, it was up to us men to flounder through the snow and trudge a trail which wasn't easy. We had to leave the wagons and most everything else. To follow along the road was a hard job. We could only find it where, occasionally, a tree had been cut along the way."

Grandpa didn't say what kind of shelter was found after their struggle of two miles to the head of Daniel's Canyon, but again the animals had to be turned loose to browse. During the night, the two horses left to go back to the mill camp. Grandpa said, "William Stewart and I went after the horses, but Stewart gave out and I was left to find the horses alone. Sure enough, they had gone back to the mill camp. Finding the horses too weak to ride, I had to lead them along the snow-blown trail, which, by then, was hard to find."

Grandpa paused a while as if he was reliving again the rigors of that night. "I traveled most of the night - the last half mile on my hands and knees."

I have always been grateful that I had the privilege of having my grandfather in our home, as a guest, for the delightful week when I come to know and love for the great man he was and is and to really appreciate the wisdom and strength of character he possesses, because I was never to see him again in this world. He died 19 January 1937, across the street from the home he loved, at his son, Elias Strong's residence in Springville, Utah.

TRUE NATIVE PIONEER

A true native Pioneer, John Albert Strong can be more appreciated and loved when one understands the circumstances which surrounded his birth, March 8, 1857, in Springville, Utah.

John's parents, William and Sarah (Garlick) Strong were early pioneers of Utah. Converts to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Coming from Pennsylvania, they had endured persecution and trials known to many of the early membership of the church.

William Strong, a grandson of James Strong, founder of Strongstown, Indiana County, Pennsylvania was a member of the "Mormon Battalion"

in Company "E", a private, age 18, under Captain Daniel C. Davis. Although, William Strong had been afflicted with rheumatic fever most of his life, a blessing he received in the Nauvoo Temple made him well. He walked the entire distance from Council Bluffs on the bank of the Missouri River of about 2,000 miles to San Diego, California. This trek took them over trackless, waterless deserts of burning, blowing sands, and over almost impassable mountains. Out of the 500 enlisted persons who left Council Bluffs, July 21, 1846 by the tune, "The Girl I Left Behind Me", 347, almost without provisions and clothes, worn down with fatigue, they arrived in San Diego, Calif, January 29, 1847, to be discharged July 16, 1847.

John Albert Strong's mother, Sarah Garlick, was first married to Benjamin Richmond, also a member of the "Mormon Battalion", Company "C", in 1853. This couple was sent by Brigham Young to Fillmore, Utah to help teach the Indians how to farm. Their son, David Alonzo was born there May 1, 1854. While living in Fillmore, Benjamin Richmond fell ill with mountain fever and died in February, 1855. On his deathbed, he exacted a promise from his best friend, William Strong, that after his death, he was to marry his widow, Sarah, and as soon as there was a temple available, he was to have Sarah sealed to himself, Benjamin, and raise a family up to him.

At the time, William Strong was already married to Martha Bromley Alvord. The marriage had taken place November 28, 1849 and a daughter, Harriet Louise, born April 23, 1853.

William Strong being a man of his word, kept his promise. Not only marrying Sarah (Garlick-Richmond), but another 18 year-old girl, Harriet Neeley the same day. The Temple Record shows that the ceremonies were performed by Brigham Young April 18, 1856 in the Endowment House. First William was married to Sarah for time only and then he stood proxy for Benjamin, and Sarah was sealed to him for eternity. Harriet Neeley was sealed to William Strong for time and all eternity.

In 1855, because Martha Bromley (Alvord) Strong could not commit herself to plural marriage, she secured a "Bill of Separation" from William Strong.

Grandpa was the first child born to William and Sarah. His birth was in Springville, Utah, March 8, 1857, and his full brother, James Jacob arrived there April 13, 1859. Grandpa used to say, "I am in a devil of a pickle, if I go with my mother, I won't have my father, and if I go with my father, I won't have my mother."

Before Grandpa died, he made a request that he be sealed to his father, William, and Harriet (Neeley) Strong. This was done March 3, 1950 in the Salt Lake Temple, approved by Joseph Fielding Smith, who said, "Your grandfather's wish should be granted. If it is not right, the Lord can fix it."

Indeed, my grandfather was born into a mixed family. With only one full brother, James Jacob, he incidentally acquired 21 half brothers and sisters:

William and Martha (Alvord) Strong issue:

Harriet Louise Strong b 23 april 1853, Harrisville,
Weber C., Utah

Benjamin and Sarah (Garlick) Strong issue:

David Alonzo Richmond b 1 may 1854, Fillmore,
Millard Co., Utah

William and Sarah (Garlick-Richmond) Strong issue:

John Albert Strong b 8 March 1857

James Jacob Strong b 13 Feb 1859

William Strong and Harriet (Neeley) Strong issue:

Sarah Elizabeth Strong b 24 Nov 1857

Harriet Lucinda Strong b 7 July 1859

Mary Lodeme Strong b 7 March 1861

William Hill Strong b 21 Feb 1863

Emaline Jane Strong b 6 Feb 1865

Lewis Napoleon Strong b 6 Dec 1867

Heber Parley Strong b 13 Jan 1869

Alice Louise Strong b 12 Oct 1871

Helen Maud Strong b 6 June 1874

LeRoy Neeley Strong b 21 Oct 1875

Ida Violet Strong b 2 April 1879

Ira Armelius Strong b 18 April 1881

Marvin Albert Strong b 10 June 1887

William Thomas and Sarah (Garlick-Richmond-Strong) Kerswell

Sarah Jane Kerswell b 30 May 1861

Talitha Elizabeth Kerswell b 21 July 1864

Benjamin Farley Kerswell b 18 Aug 1867

Mary Ellen Kerswell b 24 Oct 1869

Thomas Farley Kerswell b 10 Feb 1873

William Thomas and Sarah (Garlick-Richmond-Strong) Kerswell
issue continued:

William Young Kerswell b 18 May 1875

FAMILY TOTAL 23

The first four children of William and Harriet (Neeley) Strong were born in Springville, Utah. In 1865, William and Harriet moved to Salt Lake City and resided there in the 10th Ward until William died suddenly from a heart attack December 24, 1888.

It is not known under what circumstances that Sarah (Garlick-Richmond) Strong secured a divorce from William Strong. Grandpa's words he has told us, "A man by the name of Kerswell from Australia came in and took my mother away from my father."

The records show that Grandpa's mother, Sarah, married William Kerswell October 26, 1859 in Springville, Utah.

Grandfather hadn't much love for his step-father. "All I ever knew," he said, "was work, work, work. He kept me out of school, so that I had no education."

Grandpa's early life is a biography filled with innermost feelings of tragedy, humor and disappointment - a child in a man's world fighting to conquer situations of pioneer life in the raw. "In the summer time I herded cows along ditch banks, fields and up Hobbie Creek Canyon," he said, "Many times I had my dinner taken away from me by Indians. I remember few times when I was a child that I wasn't hungry. One time I wouldn't give up my lunch, an ugly-old Indian tried to scare me by pulling an arrow right in my face. I looked him straight in the eyes and he dropped the

arrow. The other Indian bucks made fun of him and jumped on me. They forced me to give up my dinner, which was pretty crummy by then."

"At the age of nine," Grandpa continued, "I began thinking about religion and received my first testimony. My mother had sent me to bring the cows from the field. A regular blizzard was sweeping the country. It was awful cold. I got confused and lost. I thought that I was going to freeze to death, and so I prayed. Although I was out of hearing, I heard my mother's voice. She called me twice from the opposite direction I was taking. When the storm broke, I found myself four miles from home in the mouth of Hobbie Creek Canyon."

"William Kerswell was a well digger by trade." Grandpa said, "He would take my brother, Alonzo, and me along with him to wind the windless that brought the rocks and dirt to the well top when Step-father would be down in the well digging. Sometimes, the buckets of rock and dirt would be awful heavy and mighty hard to bring to the top. Once when Alonzo was 12 and I was 9, Kerswell had the well about 20 feet deep and we could hardly lift the bucket. He kept yelling at us. A man who had known us all our lives came along, Seeing what we were doing, he came over and whispered in my ear, "When you get a bucket full of rocks to the top, let go the rope and kill the old man! Call it an accident."

"Even though I had no love for him," Grandpa said, "I couldn't do such a thing."

Alonzo and John Albert spent days hauling wood from the canyons to keep the fires burning in winter. They chopped logs, cut and set fenceposts. Folks around said that a mighty good job was done, understanding and praising the boys, as they could tell

by the "line up" who made the fence that surrounded the farm.

"As a result of my step-father's cruelty," Grandpa said, "Jacob had a bad leg where Step-father hit him. At the time, Jacob was eight years old, and Step-father made him glean wheat in the fields, tie it in bundles, strap it to his back, and carry it home on crutches."

So time went by, Grandfather's life was filled with a variation of jobs, herding cows, cutting hay and grain with a scythe, getting out timber from the mountains, or whatever the task might be.

At the age of 15, Grandpa's hard work and matured strength paid off. One day because the raking he was doing, by hand, did not suit Mr. Kerswell, he grabbed the rake from John Albert's hands and struck him over the head, breaking the handle in three pieces. John Albert stood up and faced his step-father with a courage unabated and final. "I am just as good a man as you are." Grandpa said with Resolution, "You have hit me for the last time!"

Grandfather became a man that day, and from then on, although he continued his hard labor, he made his own decisions, and Mr. Kerswell never hit him again.

Nearby lived the family of Hutchings. John Albert became aware of their beautiful daughter, Sarah Jane. One bright summer day he chanced by and saw her in the field hoeing corn. He was barefooted, and she was barefooted, but this did not dim his interest. He went over to get better acquainted, and this encounter ended in a courtship that was to last through eternity. They were married on Grandpa's eighteenth birthday in the old Endowment House, March 8, 1874, by Daniel H. Wells. In Grandpa's words: "To show how rich we were in those days, the

house I 'sparked' my wife in was one room about 16 feet square. Tall stakes had been driven into the ground - then brush interwoven into the stakes and plastered with some dirt and mud. We sat on rawhide-bottomed chairs made by my father-in-law, Shepherd Pierce Hutchings."

In the year of 1874, the church was trying to live the "United Order" in Springville. This was in operation at a sawmill in hobbie Creek Canyon. John Albert Strong had secured employment there as a logger. He was to have been given a bill of lumber, enough to build a small house, which consumed the biggest part of his summer's wages, but somehow the mill took fire. All of his lumber was destroyed, and the Order failed.

Having secured a contract for getting out timber the early spring of 1875, John bought a team of young oxen and earned his wedding stake. (Note, this would have been the team of oxen taken into the primitive wilds of Eastern Utah when John Albert Strong made the memorable trek to the Indian Reservation on his freight trip. Also, we can assume, that this was the team of oxen that Mr. Kerswell tried to claim as his own, making the assumption that John Albert wasn't "of age" when he bought the oxen.)

The spring following Grandpa's marriage, he filed on a tract of land near the Utah Lake, then known as "Lake Shore Indian Reservation". With great enthusiasm, John Albert began mowing grass and plowing the land. Grandpa said, "This didn't work out either, as the engineer who was hired to survey the canal made a grand mistake; he got the wrong end of the ditch to the river. The outlet was about four feet higher

Some time after the Lake Shore episode, a new canal was made, but the Strong's never went back, as by that time, they were located on virgin, sagebrush-covered land lying partway between Spanish Fork and Springville, which was to become known as "Straight Line". This spot of good earth was to be the home of the "John Albert Strong Family" for the next 57 years. It was here that John built a one-room log house. He and his wife, Sarah Jane cleared, plowed and planted the ground.

With only a secondary water right, water was scarce. "For many years," Grandpa stated, "we didn't get water enough more than to raise a garden, and a few fruit trees. The first water we got, your grandma and I sat up nearly all night watching the water run down the rows of our, newly-planted, bean patch."

The Strong's first four children were born in the log house:

Sarah Luella Strong b 24 Dec 1875

John Carlos Strong b 26 May 1877

Shepherd Delucous Strong b 21 May 1879

Eliza Effie Strong b 17 Feb 1881, died 19 Feb 1881

"About the time our baby, Effie was born and died, we decided to build a larger home. The frame house was built on Straight Line—consisting of four rooms, front room, kitchen, and two bedrooms, with a garret large enough to serve the older boys for sleeping."

Elias Alonzo Strong b 7 Aug 1882

Etta Jane Strong b 13 Sept 1884, died 24 July 1886

Asa Strong b 31 Aug 1886

Pearl Strong b 28 May 1888

Emma Mae Strong b 29 Jan 1891

Ernest Albert Strong b 31 May 1892

John Strong b 22 Oct 1894

By 1897, John Albert Strong was operating a brick kiln in Springville, and built a new, brick, six-room home, one of the nicest in Springville at the time. The last four children were born in the new house:

Bessie Strong b 28 April 1897

Marvin Hutchings Strong b 29 Jan 1899

Maud Strong b 27 March 1901

Jessie Ardella Strong b 8 March 1903

Grandpa's strength of body and mind were developed during a lifetime of hard labor. At one time, he was noted to be the champion swimmer of Utah. My mother told of an incident she vividly remembered all her life. Although at the time, she often recalled the story that brought excitement to the lives of us children: "One summer," she would begin, "our family was visiting my aunt and uncle who lived near the Utah Lake. My pa had caught a barrel of fish which my mother had salted down. When it was time for us to go home, the fish and our roll of bedding were loaded into the wagon and we started out. The ox team Pa drove, was young and not very well broken. We had to ford the Spanish Fork River that emptied into the lake. The crossing we should take was up the river a ways and was shallow, but it was very deep where the river entered the lake. The oxen, anxious to get home made a turn for the deep water. In spite of the "G's" shouted at them, they "Hawed" and walked off the bank into the deep water. The team and running gears sank out of sight to come up further on, leaving us afloat in the wagon box that was fast filling with water. My mother, clutching her tiny baby to her breast, shouted, "I guess this is it!"

Father yelled, "I guess you'er right!"

But Father wasn't to give up so easily. Just as the box went under, Pa caught Ma under one arm and told me to hang to his suspenders. Father's great strength kept us afloat until he managed to catch some brush growing along the river's edge, and pulled us to safety. Even my little two-year old brother, John was hanging to Pa's pocket."

I always wanted to know what happened to the barrel of fish and the bedding.

"Oh," she would say, "Your grandfather was too good of a swimmer to let all be lost - he swam back and brought out the roll of bedding, but the fish went to the bottom. With the help of a good-sized boy who happened along, the wagon box was retrieved, and the boy brought the oxen and running gears. Ma found a dry quilt in the middle of the bed roll which she wrapped us kids in."

In Grandpa's life, spirituality was a shield of faith. Strong, like his backbone, these together with a sound mind, gave him strength to fight against the adverse ways of the world - a great power made manifest in the characters of his 13 children who lived to maturity.

When Grandpa's obituary appeared January 20, 1937 in the Deseret News, it summarized his life in this manner:

Mr. Strong was born in Springville, Utah March 8, 1857, and has made his home here since. During his early life, he operated a saw mill in Spanish Fork Canyon, and for a number of years, he contracted ties for the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad Company. He also operated a brick kiln in Springville. In later years, he engaged in mining and farming, retiring several years ago

He was active in the L.D.S. Church, being a presiding for a number of years, and was a High Priest at the time of his death.

He married Sarah Jane Hutchings March 8, 1875, in the Salt Lake Endowment House. Mrs. Strong died April 9, 1921.

Preceding Grandpa's burial in the Evergreen Cemetery at Springville, his body, in earned dignity so time-worn and fulfilled, lay "in State" in the beautiful home of a son, Ernest A. Strong, former Bishop and Stake President, and then serving president of the Intermountain Branch of the Associated General Contractors of America.

In my way of thinking, Grandpa was somewhat like Abraham of old, possessing strong, mental powers, and endowed with great faith and a numerous posterity.

In his Patriarchal Blessing, he was told that he was among the chosen ones, who were kept to come forth in this Dispensation of Time. The Lord knew that Grandpa and Grandma would be strong in defense of righteousness, and rewarded them with a lovely family, all 13 of whom, lived to maturity, were worthy of a "Temple Marriage"; were self-sustaining to raise families of note-worthy character.

For over 30 years, another son, Marvin H. Strong organized in 1937, the Strong's Military Band, that delighted and brought pleasure to thousands of folks who gathered at Liberty Park in Salt Lake City, on Sunday afternoons, to relax and appreciate good music.

Although Grandpa, John Albert Strong's history is filled with adverse circumstances, he lived through it all to develop

character like an old oak tree, unwarped by the rigors of time, he maintained a dignity of noble durability.

Aunt Mae (Strong) Child sort of told it when she totaled "Character Building" in the "Strong Family". Once when she was past 70 years of age, an involvement came up wherein she was challenged to do a slightly dishonest act that would have brought money to her pocket. "Nope," she declared with firmness, "my broughten up wouldn't allow it."

At the time of Grandpa's death in 1937, there were eight living children, 78 grandchildren, and 40 great-grandchildren. May the uncounted thousands of descendants sense worth of truth to grow in worthiness, and have deep appreciation for the heritage that Grandpa left us, not of gold or worldly wealth, but blessings everlasting of integrity, and a determination to be alive to all opportunities when they come, and to live life to its fullest. Truly, it could be written, Grandpa was a man who loved life, who loved people, who loved God, and if the need was there, he would have a willingness to dig "Sego Roots" for breakfast.

JOHN ALBERT STRONG FAMILY

Left to right:

John Carlos
Marvin H.
Maud
Sarah Luella
Asa
John Albert Strong
Sarah Jane (Hutchings) Strong
Jessie
Pearl
Bessie
Shepherd D.
Bertha
Ernest A.
Emma Mae
Elias A.



