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MY MEMOIRS

RECOLLECTIONS OF PIONEER LIFE

IN BEAR LAKE VALLEY

Written by Walter Edward Clark

Chapter IV

BOYHOOD IN BEAR LAKE

My earlier recollection, only vague, is of seeing men on a building, –shingling the machine shed near our house in Georgetown. As before stated, we moved into the old Clark home, one of those first four built in Georgetown in the spring of 1871. I think the Clarks returned to Farmington for the winters at first. Then the members took turns staying in Georgetown. Hyrum and wife stayed one winter, and Charles and his wife one winter, where Charles' oldest son, Marion, was born. Mary Elizabeth and children stayed one winter while she kept house for her brother, Wilford. He married a local girl and remained in Bear Lake. Joseph moved there in the spring of 1876, expecting to stay only one year, but remained fifteen years.

During my boyhood very little of the land below the town was under cultivation. It was a pasture for the cattle, especially in the fall after they were gathered from the summer range and before the "drive" to Farmington where the cattle were wintered. Uncle Wilford, though living in Montpelier, had his main economic interests in Georgetown and he came there often. During the summer months he came early in the week to bring his oldest son Woodruff and gave directions to farm laborers; then late in the week he would return to take Woodruff come to Montpelier for the weekend.

Woodruff, three years my senior, was like a brother to me. He lived in our home and we rode together checking on cattle and horses and working with hired men. I learned to milk on the opposite side of the cow from him. On weekends it was my responsibility to do the milking. Even after the division of the property in 1902, Woodruff and I worked together.

Uncle Wilford was like a father to me and I sought his advice. When I read the story of his life as written by his grandson, John, I felt that I knew him better than anyone except perhaps his immediate family. Occasionally I was privileged to spend an enjoyable weekend with Uncle Wilford's family in Montpelier. I remember Uncle Wilford showing me off by having me read for his company. I must have been better then than I am now, or at the imaginative age where I made up the appropriate words.

The Clark barn consisted of two oblong log structures, 16 feet apart, connected and placed under one roof, with a lean-to on the back. It was described as having as many compartments as the Omaha Stockyards. It was the play center for all the boys in town, and there were a large number of boys about my age. We played hide-and-seek, steal sticks, kick-the-can (the can as a substitute for a football), or anything that did not call for equipment that we couldn't improvise. Horseback riding was popular, and in the winter-skating or coasting down the hills on home-made sleds. I have done

many foolish things that could have resulted in injury. Skating reminds me of one. I have held onto a pony's tail on ice skates on a snow road, with the pony being urged to run fast from one side of town to the other. Swimming in Bear River was also popular, but that came late in the afternoon when the water was warm, and that was chore time for me. Thus I never learned to swim, nor did I learn to dance. It was partly because I have no sense of musical time, but more likely because I was too bashful to meet a girl–to say nothing about asking for a dance or date.

When I see my grandsons have a tantrum I am reminded that my father had to learn to control his temper, and of my own outbursts of vengeance against my sled as though it was the cause of the wood falling that was stacked high to be taken to the house to furnish heat for warming the house, heating water, and cooking. It was a very nice, long, store-bought sled with three cross bars. It had a wide center board, a narrow board on each side, all three extending ahead and back of the cross bars, and a round stick on each side connecting the bowed end of the runners. When the wood from the woodpile fell off, I would pick up a stick and hammer the sled, there were 25 sections to be broken. Before it was completely ruined, I learned to replace some boards with clumsy but more substantial pieces of timber or wire. It was the beginning of "a farmer can repair anything with wire" for me. At times I would whip a cow or attempt to punish a horse, but they could fight back and I soon learned that kindness secured better results.

For many years calves were allowed to take their food from their mother and the competition was keen to see whether calf or man could get the most milk. In time we separated the cow and young calf. Teaching the calf to drink was difficult. I was slow in learning that I fed the calf too well. If they get hungry, they will drink. We taught a calf to drink by letting it suck a finger in a pail of new, warm milk and pulling out our finger. I even tried wrapping cotton and cloth around a wire as a substitute for the finger. (If you are going to try feeding a calf, limit the milk to one pound for ten pounds of weight per day for a time.)

One of my favorite sports was to put my small saddle on a calf, mount a rider, and open the barn door, allowing the calf free range in a large corral. The calf usually dismounted the rider and worked itself out of the saddle. To pick up the saddle was much easier than to catch the calf.

Baseball was and is my favorite sport. I liked the catch, but couldn't throw the ball as far as second base. I would stay at school during noon hour to play. One day I was late coming home and milked after dark. Father said, "I have no objection to your milking by lantern light, providing it be in the morning."

To appreciate that comment one should know that the Clarks, except father, were patient and never seemed to be in a hurry. They worked as many hours as others, but later in the day. A common saying as the moon came over the eastern hills was, "There comes the Clark lantern." Father was the exception, unless it was his younger brother Amasa. My early training was followed by the necessity of having six to eight cows milked, the hoses tended, and breakfast over when hired men reported for work at 7 a.m. (It may be interesting to know that at that time a ten hour working day, with a wage of $1.50 and dinner, was the going wage.) People used to ask me where my lantern was, and I would jokingly answer: "I don't need one; I've developed cat's eyes."

Fighting was very common and the larger boys urged the younger ones on. Joe Robinson, my most intimate friend, lived across the street. No one knows how many fights we had. They were friendly, but we went at it to win. I must have been getting the better of him, for I was led to believe that I could whip him with a hand behind me.

The worst whipping I ever received was while school students were waiting for the mail to be distributed at the Lewis home. A square hole, about 15 inches, had been cut in an east wall of the home and the mail was handed out. What I did to provoke Emeline Lathram, one of the robust girls, I do not remember, but she straddled me and

scrubbed my face with rough snow. William Johnson likes to remind me of the time when I tried to fight him and his twin brother with a hand tied behind me. I was trouncing William one day because of an uncomplimentary remark when Mrs. Olive Barkdull stopped us. I remember her advice to me. "Stick and stones will break your bones, but words will never hurt you."

One Sunday, when I was about ten, it was time to start Church, but a group of us were throwing rocks at the mud bird nests under the eves of the tall new white frame church house. I was shorter than the rest, and the rock I threw went through a window. George Hoff and Frank Bacon, who sat on the back row, hurried out. All the boys, except me, ran. I instinctively stood still, ready to face the consequences. But one of the men said, "There the little rascals go." and went back into church without even noticing me. I turned and went into the meeting with them, never having to confess my guilt.

It was about this time in my life that I had an experience that turned me against untruthful statements. I can overlook most anything in a hired man but untruthfulness, and exaggeration, to me it is a form of falsification. I copied a burlesque blessing on the food and put it on the table when only the hired men were going to eat. It happened at a time when Father was in Georgetown. The men left it there. Father demanded to know who wrote it. It took considerable time to break me down. He just replied, "I would sooner lose our best cow than have you tell an untruth."

I have been told I am too honest to be practical. A new manager of the J.C. Penny store was suggested for an appointment as a school board member. We met one day and I introduced myself. I told him I had been waiting to meet him, and he replied, "And I have wanted to meet you. They tell me you are so damn honest it hurts." The appointment had been made to another party so there was no occasion to tell him why I had wanted to meet him.

A second boyhood experience helped to emphasize the value of telling the truth. Father sold a young registered shorthorn bull to John H. Miles, who was slow in paying for it. I was present when Father was talking to him and Miles commented, "Besides, the animal was older than you said." Father was quick on the trigger in spite of the fact he had learned to control his temper, and he quickly replied: "I do not remember what I told you, but the age I told you was the correct age." I knew Father was speaking the truth, and I admired him.

A hired man was once driving Mother and her children to Utah through Emmigration Canyon (above Sharon), going down Strawberry Canyon. Before arriving in Mink Creek we met several wagons, in front of which several men were walking, inspecting the road and throwing out rocks. They asked us how the road was that we had passed over. The hired man, having been over the road when it was really bad, said, 'It is good." We then asked how the road was that they had traveled. Their answer was "very bad." The two answers should have been reversed, as the rest of our trip was on far better road than that we had previously traveled. I learned that we judge by comparison, and we all have our own standard of measurements.

My boyhood days were pleasant, full of activity, and I had many boyfriends. To a boy's delight, but not for his best good, school was only held six to seven months a year. It was not until the 1904-05 school year that Georgetown had an eighth grade class and the graduation class only had one boy, Marion C. Clark, who had early schooling in Morgan, Utah. It was during these years that my habits and ideals were formed. I hope and think they were good.