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MY MEMOIRS

RECOLLECTIONS OF PIONEER LIFE

IN BEAR LAKE VALLEY

Written by Walter Edward Clark

Chapter XVI

FARMING

Grandfather E. T. Clark had a natural interest in livestock and seemed to think agriculture was the most honorable of occupations. Father was strong, interested in livestock, and a hustler. He in turn thought I should be a farmer. I have heard him say two of his six sons were good farmers, meaning Orson and me. I think he did not know of my desire to follow a mechanical career. To design, supervise, and construct was my secret ambition. Many, many times I have said to myself, "I will not farm," but I had to complete the task at hand, and it was not until I was thirty-four years old that I was free to choose. At that age I entered college. I intended to brush up on carpentry but took as a mandate the advice of President Edward C. Rich who said, "Walter, prepare to teach." For the next thirty-five years education was uppermost in my thoughts and activities, but all my life I have been a farmer.

Today, 1975, I am glad we reared our sons on the farm where they worked with me, but have no regrets that none of them selected farming as an occupation. However they know how and could succeed as farmers. Wayne has both interest and ability and I think would enjoy it. Glenn, I think, would detest such activities. He, like me, is small. At six years of age he was driving the pull-up team for the rickeer. It was at times difficult to get him to lay down the book he was reading and start the team. One day he said, "I wish I had not started this, and I am about to quit." The other four boys could succeed under about the same conditions I have, but with more success. I heard Roy Robison say, "Walter is the only man I know who does not like farming yet has been successful."

The Clarks liked and had good livestock. At an early date, father, as foreman and manager for E. T. Clark and Sons, purchased some registered short horn cattle. After some years we purchased some Herford sires. The first and second cross were the most profitable. For many years I sold calves to 4-H boys. Norman Bartschi and Wayne and Owen, at different times, had a grand champion in the county fair. I was awarded a trophy for my encouragement and activity in 4-H work. I was not an official leader, but took our truck or car to transport boys and animals.

I accompanied a county agent to Boise where we received two registered DuRock Jersey broad sows. Wayne received one of them. Some years later I took another county agent to Malad, Idaho to get two prize Columbus ewes to start the Arthur Sorenson sheep club. They cost more than Arthur had contributed, so I paid the balance. Owen received them and when he was graduated from high school he started two boys out with two equally good ewes. We had many ewes from those two that weighed 150 pounds and sheered fifteen pounds of choice wool.

As a future farmer Owen was awarded as first prize a trip to the University at Moscow, which he did not accept. The excuse he had given the committee was, "I have too much school work to do." The reason he gave me was, "I am working for a bigger prize," which he received –a National Scholarship to Harvard. Owen did accept a trip to Purdue University as the top area contestant in dairying. A classmate commented at the county fair, "Owen gets all the prizes as well as top grades." His mother made a quilt using over one hundred of his prize ribbons in 4-H and Future Farmers.

Many of my boyhood days were spent on a saddle horse. Even with a saddle I had to get the horse in a depression or myself on the fence to mount. My small single-cinch saddle often turned, leaving me on the ground –at times to walk home. On one occasion the horse arrived home without the saddle or rider. About a week later I found the saddle hanging on a fence. The stirrups were large and my shoe sometimes slipped through and was difficult to remove. Fortunately both accidents did not happen at the same time. My dreams of being dragged were so recurring and vivid that I learned to ride with just my toes in the stirrups. Two Georgetown boys met death by being dragged by a saddle horse. Until Melvin was big enough to ride, the responsibility to take and get milk cows and horses from the pasture was mine. Work horses were pastured at night to save on hay.

It would be of interest to know how many hours I have spent preparing wood for the cook stove. In summer Woodruff Clark would pull one end of the saw. In winter, Albert Johnson, son of a widow, helped me not only saw wood, but milk the cows. I never enjoyed sawing wood. Had there been a man to keep the saw sharp it may have been more enjoyable as well as much faster. I preferred to swing the axe. Many of the men went to the canyon and secured dry standing trees for wood. I went for green aspen, cut them in advance to dry. I have had so much as a year's supply on hand, cut and ready for the stove.

In a priesthood class in Provo a questionnaire was given out asking for our training, occupation, and hobby. I had no pencil, and after borrowing one I did not have time to complete the form, so I left training blank. I listed my occupation as farming and my hobby as wood-cutting. I suspect that the last answer was interpreted as a "wise crack," but it is the truth. Work, eat, sleep, and go to church consumed all my time. I did not swim, hunt, fish, or dance, and I have been to few rodeos or sports events. I have always preferred concerts, lectures, and travel.

In my boyhood days we carried the culinary water in a pail from a mountain stream. Before building a house of our own in 1930, Violet and I had a well driven and we provided plumbing as we built. We also had the house wired for light and wall fixtures. Ours was one of the first homes in town to have both running water by opening a tap and wall switches for getting light. The luxuries of yesterday become the comforts of today and the necessities of tomorrow.

In 1902, the year after Grandfather passed away, the Clark estate was divided. Father received land in Farmington and moved Aunt Wealthy in the old rock house his father had occupied. He also received land in Georgetown, including the old Clark home where Mother lived. Most of the land had been used for grazing.

Beginning in 1876 the Clarks brought cattle to Georgetown from Farmington in the spring and drove them back to Farmington in the fall. Only once did I help with the "drive." The annual drive during one Christmas holiday was made. I vividly remember how cold it was. Leaving Montpelier in the morning, I helped Uncle Joseph drive the cattle to Wixom ranch at the mouth of Emmigration Canyon, where we stayed the night. The next day Joseph rode to the front of the herd and said, "My boy, you must not let any turn back," meaning the leaders in front of me. I had tried, but success requires our best effort. That evening Father and Woodruff took the horse to Fielding, Utah to be wintered. Father and I stayed at a hotel in Franklin. The fourth night the four of us spent in a college girls' sleeping room in Logan. At what time arrangements were made for feed and yardage for

the cattle I do not know. From Logan, Joseph and Father took the cattle to Farmington, and Woodruff and I spent two days coming home on our saddle horses.

The summers of 1902 and 1903 I spent in Farmington, presumably to learn to farm. The spring of 1904 Father issued the challenge, "See what you can accomplish." We had three work horses, a wagon, a hand plow, and a third interest in a disc, harrow, and grain drill. We made many mistakes, wasted a lot of energy, but little by little more acres were brought under cultivation, the equipment was enlarged and increased, and the herd of cattle increased.

From June, 1910, when I graduated from the Fielding Academy until December, 1913, when I left for a mission to the Northern States I worked fast, hard, and continuous. The summer of 1913 Riley Hayes worked for us. He was young, but a good worker. He, acting for his father and brother, and I with horses and equipment, took a contract to stack Hyrum Smith's hay on what is now the Passey farm. Some years later Eugene Hayes asked me how much hay I stacked in a day. I replied, "We consider twenty-five ton a good days' work." He then said, "You stacked sixty-five tons the day we finished the Hy Smith job." I remember that day. I stacked it without help. The next day I slept in sacrament meeting, a habit that has stayed with me. As soon as I relax I go to sleep and sleep soundly, and then I wake up I am immediately ready to go.

April 18, 1916 I returned from my mission. Melvin was a senior at Fielding Academy. Part of the next year he attended the college in Logan. He was then drafted into World War I, which was followed by a mission, so the responsibility of managing the farm was again thrust upon me. I over worked and became despondent. I was never in the frame of mind to inflict death but did wish death would come. My about-face in 1919 is discussed in another section.

Money was scarce and very little changed hands. Most farmers milked a few cows for a cash income. We were no exception. Two stores in Montpelier, Brenen and Davis "downtown" and Burgoyne Mercantil in "uptown" received grain in small lots in exchange for groceries, dry goods, clothes, and hardware. Threshing crews took as pay every twelfth bushel. Flour mills kept a percent of the wheat. Tithing and fasting offerings were paid in kind.

The following example is personal, but little different for many if not all the boys in town. I was eighteen or nineteen years old when a 24th of July celebration was held. I was irrigating, but left the water for a short time and went to the store. (A country store is a center of activity.) I asked Milton Robison to accompany me and we had a dish of ice cream. The remaining mickle of my 25¢ went for gum, and I went back to the water. That was all the spending money I had all summer. William Johnson tells of his experience: He had 10¢ and for fear he would not get his money's worth he went home with his dime.

Even though I taught elementary school three part years and one full school year (1916-1920), I did chores, worked, and supervised a hired man. In 1922 I purchased part of the farm, borrowing $4500 from the Federal Land Bank. Four thousand went to Father, $225 the Association kept, and the remaining $225 I later used to go to college.In 1926, after graduation from college, I withdrew from the partnership with my brother Melvin. In 1928 Violet and I purchased forty-one acres and forty shares of water from Christian Sorenson and rented it to Alive Peterson until I discontinued teaching a second time in 1943. In 1937 Lela and I purchased twenty acres and twenty shares of water from Wilford W. Clark. I made a purchase of twenty-three shares of water in one transaction and several small purchases until we had 150 shares, only six coming from the original Clark water. The water was applied on the land purchased from the estate.

Lela and I set our goal to get out of debt by the time I was fifty years of age. We succeeded by soon went in debt again to join Willard Stoddart in a sheep venture. Willard and I sold our first holdings

and purchased a large band of sheep and more pasture. Our place produced hay enough for 100 head of cattle and 800 head of sheep, feeding an advantage of five and one months each year, in addition to 2000 bushels of grain. When Willard and his sons could no longer herd the sheep in the summer months we sold the sheep, forest rights, and pastures, keeping a farm band of 60 head which we kept on the farm until we retired in 1969. The venture was a success. It was mostly done with hired help, as our sons were in school or in the mission field.

We were continually trying new crops and different methods. Some of the first Turkey Red wheat in the valley was imported by the Montpelier Flour Mill, and we received a start. The county commissioners imported some Early Bart wheat which was about two weeks earlier ripening than the Oregon Club being raised. It thus could be used for flour instead of feed. The Bee brothers and Clark brothers of Georgetown each received a bushel. It had a mixture of several varieties. Melvin and I went through our acre and clipped the odd heads. Most of the Early Bart wheat in the north end of the county come from our start.

We tried sugar beets. The yield was good but the season too short to harvest before the ground froze. Digging the beets was difficult if not impossible. A comply provided pea seed and agreed to pick and receive the mature pea in the field. The first and only year of crop was very good but the market went off and the company picked only enough to pay their expenses. Raising seed peas was very successful and we did it until the company discontinued. The peas were taken to Rigby, Idaho for cleaning.

Our last year with peas we had a new experience for me. I had heard of scalding peas but the cause and result were unknown to me. Our peas were ready to irrigate and it was our turn to take the water, but the water master passed us by to save an alfalfa crop below. When we made inquiry, the water master said peas should not be watered until they blossom. I knew blossom was not the determining factor, but accommodated, as I often did, to our financial loss. When we irrigated it was hot and dry, the peas scalded and our sixteen acres produced very little.

In connection with the soil conservation personnel we planted five one-acre plots of grass. I tried several varieties of alfalfa. I finally settled on granger alfalfa for higher ground, Grim for wetter ground, broome gras, Laxton pea, Turkey Red and Bart wheat, Golden Cross (85 days) corn for late crop and Early Hybrid Bantum (65 days) for early corn, the Ogallala strawberry, Latham raspberry, and Russett potato.

Today improved methods and modern machinery has relieved the farmer from such hard menial labor, but the uncertainty of the harvest still exists. Pests, drought, frosts, severe climatic conditions that produce hail and wind, and death of livestock, coupled with poor judgment may result in failure any year. We lost two winter wheat crops due to frost –one July 2nd, the other July 4th. The critical time for any crop is blossom time.

I could product, but could not market to an advantage. I was too trusting and inclined to accommodate others. For many years we exchanged potatoes for groceries. One spring I took some to market and received $8.00 per hundred weight. A few days later a man asked for 100 pounds. I asked $8.00. He paid and said nothing in words, but his look still haunts me after fifty years. I still regret having ask such an exorbitant price. I have sold many tons of hay in the spring when hay was scarce and the price up, but I think I have never asked an inflated price.

The harvest of forage crops in the high mountain valley in 1919 was almost nil. Horses from Bear Lake Valley were sent to Idaho deserts to be wintered and they did not return. Star Valley sent cattle to Nebraska to be wintered. They were shipped back about May 1st. Spring had not arrived and, most of the cattle died between Montpelier and Star Valley.

Corn was imported into Bear Lake Valley towards spring of 1920. A car of corn was delivered at the

Georgetown railroad siding. Wilbur Bacon supervised the unloading and weighing. One man declined to receive what he had ordered, saying he was getting better corn in Montpelier for the same price. Actually, he paid more for no better corn on his next trip. Because I was the local representative of the Farm Bureau Wilbur came and asked me what could be done with the surplus. I replied, "put it in my grainery and I will pay for it." Before grass came our cattle were eating willow tops for roughage and corn for strength. I was fortunate to have the corn.

A hard winter was followed by a drop in prices, and a depression. This example will show how severe a depression can be: Willard Stoddard sold John Kunz some yearling steers for $75 each. Mr. Kunz kept them two summers and one winter and then received $75.00 a head. Willard bought sheep, borrowed money from the bank, giving all his sheep as security. In the winter he went to the bank management, stating he was offered 60¢ per pound for his wool. The bank which had equity in the sheep replied, "I think we will get 75¢. The wool sold for 12¢ per pound. Many banks were forced out of business, causing losses to depositors as well as stock holders.

Another depression came in the early thirties. In 1930 Melvin sold holstein steers at cost to him, or 1 1/2¢ a pound live weight. In 1944 we sold twenty-three cows for $1631.19.

The going wage when I first hired men was $1.50 for a ten hour day. After World War II I paid $4.00 for an eight hour day. When I retired the wage for a farm hand was $2.00 an hour, much lower than industrial wages. It was only the exceptional farmer who received over two percent on his investment. We had a good farm and a good lessee. It only nets three percent in the 1970's, not figuring depreciation or any interest on investment or capital for operation.

Grandfather Clark had his family organized in the manner of the United Order. My Father followed this principle, as did I. Never has one of our children worked with the idea of a definite remuneration. We operated as Walter E. Clark and Sons. Many times I have had to explain that the name was not a legal entity, but a family arrangement. The oldest boy at home carried the main responsibility. We had a joint checking account which was used when they left for college.

We used a family automobile. A Montpelier mechanic, noting the low milage –an average of 4000 a year for about ten years, asked if I had any sons. I replied, "One 21 and one 18 of age." He asked me how I kept the mileage down. I explained I had told the younger he could do either of two things: (1) spend his money as he made it and always be poor with a poor paying job, or (2) save and get an education and have all that could go with it. I think the mechanic, Brother Vaterless, adopted my policy, for his sons went through college and are active in the Church.

Alan was married and had a teacher's contract when we purchased a second hand car for $1500 for him. It was not until Wayne was to leave Berkeley, California for Texas that I sent him $1500 to apply on his first car. We did spend $1200 to Owen in Austria to purchase a Voltswagen to bring home. The three boys at Harvard used it and when Glen married, in 1963, it was given to him. Owen and Nolan's fiancee's had cars. Gladys used the family car more than the boys. One winter she had it in Provo. Wayne and Alan had the car in the spring of 1951, the spring Alan and Janet were married and Wayne and Colleen were courting. We had a pick-up truck at home. We did purchase a small car as a wedding present for Virgil.

Wayne and Alan and their wives spent considerable time on the ranch. Virgil lived in the basement the first summer of his married life and worked for Don Rex, but was granted time off to help us stack hay.

The loyalty, respect, and willingness of our children to follow my suggestions were largely due to the influence of their mother who was always helpful and always encouraged me and made it possible for me to keep my many appointments on time. To them I express my appreciation. The chil-

dren have kept the commandment, “Honor thy Father and Mother.”

Farm life was a hard life for women. In addition to caring for children, they made bread, churned butter, laundered clothes, canned fruit, vegetables and meat, and cooked for hired men. There was no automatic equipment, gas or electric stove, refrigerator, deep freezer, or even modern utensils. Before we retired from the farm we had many conveniences that today are necessities.

Most of the work on our farm was done by our sons. They worked early and continuous, taking few excursions, attending few sports or amusements, and milking cows while attending high school. “A hell of a life!” (or was it?) My sons spent more time with their family in play, outings, amusement, reading, etc., in any month of the year than I spent with my family in an entire year in those activities. My greatest regret is not providing more time for sports, outings, etc.

The boys were with me in the hay field and they attended school very regularly, usually topping the school in attendance. The children did have a variety of activities, as school paper editors, band participants, state youth legislature, and two in basketball. The four younger boys attended national scout jamborees.

In 1967, we sold our grazing permit on the Caribou National Forest and most of our cattle, and in May 1969, we sold our home and left for the mission field. Floyd Clark operated the farm for 6 years, including 30 cows. Installation of a sprinkling system for the 1975 crop was a must, which meant the expenditure of $20,000 to $25,000, so we sold the farm to Don C. Clark who owned the property on two sides, and arranged for him to care for the cattle until spring when we hoped to sell a cow with a calf at her side. In March 1975, calves were selling for $2.00 to $2.50. Stockmen who had to purchase feed gave the advice, “Don’t let any one give you a calf.” The cost of raising was more than the cattle were bringing.” We had that experience in 1919-20. November 1, 1920, cattle did not sell for enough to pay the previous years expense. Such is the life of a stock farmer.