

## WILLIAM COOK



William Cook, “Uncle Bill”, as he was affectionately known by most everyone during his adult life, was born in 1847 at Council Bluff, Pottawattamie, Iowa. His parents had made the long trip from Comstock, Kalamazoo, Michigan where they had embraced the gospel to Nauvoo, just as the persecution of the Saints there began in earnest. They, along with the other Saints were forced to move. Since they had so recently made a long trip, they stopped at Council Bluff for a few years to replenish their supplies and equipment. It was here that William was born, the sixth child and fourth son of Henry Freeman and Sophronia Strobridge Cook.

When he was still a small boy, nearly five, his parents took their family to St. Louis, Missouri, where a company was outfitting for the trek to Utah. They traveled with the Warren Snow Company, arriving in Salt Lake in October 1852. They spent the winter at Little Cottonwood. The next spring they were sent to Cedar Fort to help colonize Cedar Valley. The town was called Cedar Fort because the first fort built there was built of cedar posts made from the cedar trees, which were prevalent in the valley.

One winter because of trouble with the Indians, they lived in a ten by twelve foot dugout on the banks of the Jordan River.

William, as a boy, was not very well and at times his parents despaired for his life. At one of these times he told his parents he knew that if Patriarch Zebedee Coltrin, who was Patriarch of the Utah Stake and lived in Spanish Fork, would come and give him a blessing, he would get well. Brother Coltrin was sent for but could not make the trip out to Cedar Fort right then. He, however, blessed his handkerchief and sent it with instructions to wipe William’s face with it and he would be made well. These instructions were followed, and William began improving in health. From then on until he was quite old, he never had any more serious illnesses. Zebedee Coltrin had given his parents their Patriarchal blessings and was known to the family as a faithful man.

William learned to work hard early in life. He along with his father and brothers were partners in their farming, stock raising and freighting ventures. The Cook family had a considerable amount of stock, horses, cattle and some say sheep, as there were sheep in the Valley in the early days. The feed in Cedar Valley was not enough to take care of all of the stock owned by the settlers in the winter, so the Cook brothers would take their herd south where there was more feed. One of the problems in Cedar Valley was not having enough water to grow the feed needed for all of the stock.

William’s job was to stay at home to look after things. One of his responsibilities was to see that his father’s two families and the families of his brothers had all the supplies they needed while their husbands and fathers were out taking care of the stock.

Grandpa Cook told Alice (Barnes Cook’s wife) that his father had built a log house when they first came to Cedar Fort. It was not large enough for all of the family to sleep in the house, so he and his brothers slept in their granary. When the grain was harvested they would make their beds on top of the grain.

William served as a Reserve in the Black Hawk Indian War. As a Reservist he had to be trained. He had to buy a uniform, a rifle, and all other equipment necessary, and have them on hand in case he was called to active duty. He also had to have a good riding horse. When he reached pension age, he received a small pension from his service, which he used mostly to trace his genealogy and to help his children and grandchildren.

As is often the case, there were two young ladies in Cedar Fort whom he liked very much and they liked him. He asked one of them, Mary Almina Weeks, to be his wife, and they were sealed in the Endowment House of 6 March

1871. His happiness with her was short, as she died 12 March 1873 when her newborn child was eight days old. He was named William Lucene, born 4 March 1873. William's youngest sister, Marett, took over the care of the baby and had complete charge of him until William remarried.

On the 25th of October 1875, he was married and sealed to the other young lady that he had liked very much, Rebecca Rodeback. When asked why he had chosen Mary Almina first, he said he guessed it was because she was more active in the young people's activities and he saw more of her as she lived just across the street from her. The day after he was married to Rebecca, or Becky, as he and so many others called her, he had to go with his brothers on a cattle drive and was gone for nearly three weeks. When he returned home he found that his new wife had cleaned and moved into a small adobe house on his father's lot and had taken over the care of baby William. All of their six children were born in this small house.

About the only other time he made an extended trip from home was to take a load of flour to Boise, Idaho and to bring back a load of apples.

He bought the Craft home across the road to the east of the Cook lot. The house on this lot was torn down and a new five-room adobe one built just north of where the old one was. Rebecca's brother, Barnes Rodeback and a friend, Matt Gibbs, built the new house. They took for their pay in farm produce, a cow a horse and some money. He moved into this home when his youngest son Barnes was just a small boy. Grandpa Cook lived in this house until his death. It has had a face lift now and then, but the original walls still stand.

William's father's brother, William, lived in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and when he heard the gospel, he believed it to be true and was baptized. He soon came to Utah, but his family would not come with him, so he came alone. He lived with his brother, Henry Freeman at first. He worked in the field and one day while clearing out some wild bushes, something flew up and hit him in the eye and he lost the sight in that eye. When it got so it did not hurt him, he went back to the same place that he had been working and began to clear more rose bushes out. Something flew into this other eye and he lost the sight in that eye as well. From then on he was known as Blind Uncle Billie.

William and Rebecca had another room built on the northeast corner of their house. It was a frame room with a cellar for fruit and a milk cupboard in it. They asked Uncle Billie to come and live with them. He used the new room for his bedroom and lived with them until his death.

William Cook was quiet, unassuming, honest, generous and hospitable. He and his wife Becky helped many people. Their house was always open to travelers and peddlers. Trades people always made their house their headquarters. The room built on for Uncle Billie was used for a camp house where travelers slept while their horses were given feed down at the stable. Some of the travelers ate in the kitchen where Grandma Cook prepared a good meal. Others cooked their own meal on a stove in the camp house. There was a stove with two lids but no oven. There was also a bed in the room. Many travelers have been put up for the night at their home.

William was active in the Cedar Valley Ward. He was sustained as a counselor to Bishop Eli Bennet 10 May 1896. On 30 December 1906, he was sustained as Bishop of the Cedar Valley Ward where he served until 26 February 1911.

He was kind to the Indians who came every fall to pasture their horses and cattle in the town field when it was open for pasturing after the crops were gathered. They pitched their tents near the town at first and later when there were not so many coming, they pitched their tents in William's lot. The Chief of the tribe called himself "William" and his wife was "Becky". The first night they made their camp, William and Becky came to the Cook home to spend the evening and to have supper. While camped here, the squaws would visit the homes and beg for food, which was given to them. It was placed in a sack which they carried and taken back to their wickiups for later use.

William was very meticulous about his person and his work. No matter who was visiting, he would excuse himself and go do whatever he had to do. His chores always had to be done at a certain time.

He loved and was kind to his children and grandchildren. They knew, however, that if they were caught in his

cornfield, haystacks, wheat bins, or any number of places the children loved to play but shouldn't, they would get their legs switched with a little willow switch. He never really hurt any child, but they all knew he meant what he said.

His hair was dark and thick. It was only partially grey at his death. His expressive blue eyes could speak volumes. He wore a beard most of life to cover an ugly scar made by a kick of a mule. He had a small captain's chair, which stood, in front of a window by the kitchen range. It was here he sat to rest or read.

On the 14th of February 1892, grief came to William and Rebecca when their fourth child, Mark Henry, was kicked by a horse and killed. He had gone with his father to feed his animals in the field. The horse kicked him in the stomach and he died within a day or two.

Rebecca died 12 August 1900 as a result of a fall, which broke her hip in such a way, that nothing could be done for her.

Their twelve living children testify that Grandpa Cook was a motivating force for good in shaping their lives. He passed away quietly on 27 November 1934, and is buried beside his two wives in the Cedar Fort Cemetery. His posterity numbers many who are all stalwart members of the church.

The Captain's chair, which he used, is now in the Old Stage Coach Inn at Fairfield. It was one of the chairs used in the courthouse when Cedar Fort was the county seat of Cedar County.