

## HISTORY OF JOHN BENNION

### SHORT FORM OF HISTORY TAKEN FROM BENNION FAMILY BOOK VOL I

On Moor Lane, about one mile north of the village of Hawarden, Samuel and John Bennion, founders of the Bennion family in Utah, were born. Their father, John Bennion, was the lessee of a small farm and home that is known to this day as the John Bennion farm.

In the quiet stillness of this rural district was born Samuel, 11 December 1818 and on 9 July 1820 his younger brother John was born at the same place. The early life of these two boys we have but slight knowledge. We know that the educational facilities were very meager in the community, and little opportunity was given to either to attend even the poor schools of that time; yet we know that both became excellent penmen, both had a fair knowledge of mathematics, an appreciation of good literature, and above all, as they toiled and struggled through life, they appropriated and took unto themselves all that was good in the practical education of every day life. They became known everywhere as men of sterling worth and reliability, men whose word was equal to any bond.

There is no written account of the early life of John Bennion, but from his own lips, we learn that about the age of sixteen, having been accused of trespassing upon the game preserves of some wealthy noble man, by setting snares for hares or other small animals, and being threatened with prosecution for poaching, he left home very suddenly for Liverpool, no more to return for nearly forty years. He tells us that his father was able and willing to pay the fine that might be imposed upon him, but he felt that he would leave home forever rather than be subjected to the injustice and indignity of prosecution for trapping wild animals for food.

Arriving at Liverpool, he apprenticed as an iron molder and boiler maker, and as such he helped make the first marine boiler ever made. The ensuing years, from 1836 to 1842, he was so engaged, but during this time, he had become converted to the "Mormon" faith under the teaching of the late President John Taylor, and on 23 February 1842, eight days after his marriage to Esther Wainwright, set sail for Nauvoo, Illinois.

His faith in the Gospel, deep-rooted and strong, found satisfaction in the country, the people, the promises that had been held out to him and above all, in his firm conviction of the divinity of the mission and purposes of the Prophet Joseph Smith, whom he had met and come to know. He became an earnest advocate, by correspondence, with his father, his brother Samuel, and other relatives, of the good things to be found in America. He told them of the advantages of being aboard the good ship Zion, meaning being in close touch with the body of the Church. What success he had is shown by the arrival of Samuel and their father, John Sr., who was now a widower, who had sailed from Liverpool to join John in Nauvoo.

Following the reunion of the two brothers and their father at Nauvoo in 1845, we find each of the brothers living in comfortable brick houses, their father with them. The brothers not only cared for their farms but found time to work for others and in so doing

established a reputation for industry, good judgement, and square dealing that remained with them throughout their lives.

In May 1846, due to persecution and mob violence, they were forced to dispose of their homes for a mere nothing and journey westward to the wilderness of Iowa.

Together they had taken part in the defense Nauvoo, and now they fitted up their ox teams and wagons for a journey they knew not where. Their entire earthly belongings were loaded into the heavy wagons, ox teams being driven by the women as well as the men. They traveled 150 miles west locating at Garden Grove, Iowa, now known as Decatur. Here they raised cabins, brought new land under cultivation, planted a crop of corn and buckwheat. It was here that death from an attack of bilious fever and dumb ague, claimed the life of their beloved father on 24 September 1846. He was laid to rest at the foot of a big oak tree in the field where he had labored.

Early in 1847, they loaded up and journeyed westward to the Missouri River, where they joined the main body of Saints going to the Rocky Mountains. The Bennion brothers were not included in the original pioneer company but instead, made a trip to Missouri for provisions. Upon their return, they began the march to the westward wilderness, being attached to Joseph Home's Fifty and Edward Hunter's Hundred.

Much thought and care had been given in the preparation for this journey. The two wagons contained clothing, provisions, implements, seed grain, garden seeds, and everything else that thought and ingenuity could suggest that their limited means could procure. This wisdom was abundantly demonstrated during the next two years. Besides the oxen actually drawing the wagons, Samuel had two or three cows, John a gray mare, two cows yoked, two heifers and seven sheep. Any record of the Bennion brothers journey from the banks of the Missouri River to their Rocky Mountain home has been destroyed.

The arrival into the Valley was early enough to build for themselves a comfortable two story house. Samuel occupying the lower story, and John on the top story. This house was built on the southwest corner of the block situated diagonally across the street from the northeast corner of what is now known as Pioneer Square. Here they resided for a year. When spring came, they moved out on the Five Acre Survey, locating on Parley's Canyon Creek, west of Fifth East Street, where they spent the summer farming and fighting crickets for the crops.

President Brigham Young wanted the lands occupied by the Bennion brothers and, at his request, moved to a point across Jordan River north of Fourteenth South. On 9 January 1849, they crossed the Jordan on ice and began the settlement of "Over Jordan." The following summer they moved up river to Field Bottom, north of the present site of Taylorsville. John Bennion located at Field Spring, where they built a house out of whip-sawed logs, that had already served them twice for the same purpose, in Salt Lake City and at Fourteenth South.

Here fields were laid out, levies thrown up, fences made, and the water from Bingham Creek channeled to their farms. They lived here until the fall of 1850, when they moved further south to another bend in the river, where they built permanent homes. They again used the whip-sawed logs of 1847 in the new home.

During the years '49, and '50, the Indians had committed depredations on the settlers necessitating the sending of armed force against them and the Bennion brothers took part in the fight known as the Ten-Penny-Ute-War on the Provo River. This and other hostilities led to the building of forts, among them was the English Fort, about one mile north of the present sight of Taylorsville. The ground is now the Taylorsville Cemetery..

The Bennions brought with them from their eastern homes several cows and sheep, from which had grown herds of cows and sheep. But to the farming, step by step and inch by inch the stubborn salt grass yielded to persistent force and strength of ox and plow and when harvest time came, they gathered in the precious growth of the summer season. Boys and girls from 6 to 12 were assigned tasks demanding courage and responsibility in the care of handling of livestock.

John Bennion records that he spent the winter of '54-55 in caring for sheep and cattle on his homestead, hauling material to the fort, plowing, etc., but at the same time not forgetting to attend meetings, Sunday Schools, dances, supervise day schools, visit with old friends, practice sword drills with the militia and he also gave bond as assessor and collector for forting purposes.

The sheep and cattle belonging to the two brothers were driven to the north end of Rush Valley in the fall of 1855. The expedition in charge of John Bennion, who took his entire family with him. The late winter and early spring saw the return of the family to Taylorsville, and a long and tedious effort it was to get back to the old home with the weak and dying cattle and sheep. The loss in livestock was quite heavy. There was a constant interchange of labor, hunting of lost horses and cattle, washing and shearing of sheep, etc. especially is this true as between Bennion brothers and Joseph Harker and their children.

There came a period of growth and material advancement in which the Bennion family shared. Their livestock increased rapidly, field and garden yielded more and better products, with less labor, more money was in circulation, homes better furnished, merchandise could be bought at prices far below what had been heretofore known, and people felt themselves prosperous and happy.

On 20 July 1856, John took a second wife. He married Esther Ann Birch in Salt Lake City. She was the daughter of William and Mary Rogers Birch. On 19 April, 1857 John took a third wife. He married Mary Ann Turpin in Salt Lake City. She was the daughter of William and Elizabeth Tidswell Turpin.

The winter of 1862-3 demonstrated that Jordan range was no longer a suitable place for the increased numbers of livestock now being raised there, and on 8 July 1863 a party of twelve men, among them John and Samuel Bennion, started out exploring in search of new pastures. This resulted in the selection of the south end of Rush Valley for ranching purposes for the entire party.

The Bennion brothers were not slow to avail themselves of the grazing facilities afforded by the Rush Valley country. On 14th of August they started both cattle and sheep for the new herd ground. Upon arrival there a permanent camp was located on a small creek later known as Bennion creek, and the canyon out of which it flowed was known as Bennion canyon. This camp was designated in John Bennion's writings as "Mountain Home" but later was known as "The Old Place." Here each of the Bennion brothers built

Taylorsville  
Rush Valley

a cabin, corrals, a garden patch, and maintained for the next twelve years headquarters for both sheep and cattle interests, which grew and prospered abundantly during that time. The home thus established, while always humble and unpretentious, was yet the scene of much quiet enjoyment and contentment to the various members of the family.

On 25 October 1863, John, who had been acting as Presiding Elder of the Taylorsville branch of the West Jordan Ward was released and Samuel appointed to take his place, the former expecting to give much time and attention to the livestock interests in Rush Valley. He wrote and recorded in his journal on New Years 1864; the Year 1863 has now gone, a year with big events that were to take place in latter days. Wars and rumors of wars are becoming so common among the nations of the world that they attract but little notice among the Latter-Day Saints situated here in these peaceful vales of Deseret. And yet these things are pointing to the drawing near of the time of the coming of Jesus to put down the wicked rule and avenge the blood of the prophets.

A son has been added to the family, and we have named him William. The Lord hath prospered us in our labors. We have finished and moved into our new house. May we so adorn and beautify it that our children and grandchildren when they are scattered about on the waves of time and chance, may with pleasure remember the happy home on Jordan River.

In October 1864, John Bennion was called to go into Utah's Dixie and engage in the raising of cotton. But in lieu of going himself he outfitted and sent a substitute, William Jones. After a year or two of expensive experimentation this was found to be unsuccessful and was abandoned.

In the fall of 1868, after almost four years of assiduous labor on the Jordan Home, John received a missionary call to Dixie again, where he was to labor under the direction of Elder Erastus Snow, in strengthening of the "Muddy Settlements", located in Lincoln county, Nevada. To hear was to obey, and on November 11th with his wife, Esther A. and her family, he started on his mission. A mission that occupied five of the best years of his life, and that required him to establish not less than a half dozen different homes, as he was called from place to place by the Church authorities, and as in their judgement, he could best serve them, acting as caretaker of sheep and cattle for the people, or as bishop of the ward.

At the end of five years, he was released, and returned with his family to the Jordan Home, to which, in the course of this mission, he had made several trips. During one of which he had, under a suggestion from President Young, visited his old home in England for the purpose of gathering up genealogical data, and of once more getting in touch with the members of his family. The trip he enjoyed very much, being well and cordially received by his relatives there. The data has been carefully compiled and is carried in the family genealogical record.

Following the return from the Dixie Mission, he devoted himself to the care of the Jordan Home, but especially to the watchcare and education of his large family, consisting chiefly of boys ranging in years from infancy to fifteen. Feeling that he himself had passed the zenith of his life, and that his circumstances were sufficiently prosperous and affluent that he could afford to look upon life rather from the social and intellectual side than from the financial and material point of view as had been largely his wont heretofore.

And thus his life, hitherto one of strenuous toil and activity, rounded out by a period of three or four years, following the return from Dixie in 1873, of peace and happiness, surrounded by a large family that loved and honored him. During this time his energies were devoted to the further improvement of his homes, planting of trees, the teaching of his young boys how to work, encouraging and directing them in educational matters, and generally by precept and example, living a life of a plain, honest, God-fearing man, whose whole aim and ambition was not personal gratification and aggrandizement, but rather the uplift of mankind in general and especially that his family should grow up in the nurture **and admonition of the Lord, capable, intelligent, and useful men and women, worthy of the high ideals** which he had conceived as the natural and logical product of the religious faith which he had espoused and for which he had always fought so valiantly.

While thus engaged, and on the morning of August 31st, 1877, he mounted, a gentle old horse to ride over to Brother Sam's to arrange for a threshing machine then working there to come over to his place and likewise thresh his crops. While on the way he stopped at the Webster Blacksmith shop to attend to a small matter of business, and having accomplished it, mounted his horse by stepping first upon the tongue of a spring wagon that stood conveniently near. The action resulted in an internal injury of some kind from which he suffered extreme agony for nearly twenty-four hours, and from the effects of which he died the following day. His funeral was held under the shade of the trees he had planted and loved so well, and of him it was well and truthfully said; "One of nature's noblemen has passed away from earth." John is buried in the Salt Lake City Cemetery.

The foregoing account of the lives and labors of Samuel and John Bennion is taken from the letters and journals of the younger brother, but since same was written a study of other records has been made and in accordance therewith the following story of the life of Samuel Bennion, the elder brother, has been written.

We have shortened this history greatly and have just touched on the highlights of John's life to give you a knowledge of the trials and accomplishments he made during his lifetime. For a more detailed study of his life and accomplishments, we urge you to read John's and Samuel's complete history in the Bennion Family Book, Volumes I, III and IV.

## Looking Back

# The night Brown Sal was 'stole

by W. KENT GOBLE  
FEATURE WRITER

From the journal of John Bennion we obtain some fascinating information about Bingham Creek and Bingham Canyon prior to the much ballyhooed discover of low-grade ore in 1863.

Bennion, an early Mormon pioneer who settled on a ridge-line prominence west of the Jordan River along what became known as Redwood Road, frequented the canyon often.

For example, he genuinely mentions obtaining Wood from "Bingham Canyon." The Salt Lake Valley was virtually devoid of trees and the Oquirrh Mountains provided the closest source of timber.

That Bennion and his sons frequented the Oquirrh there can be no doubt. In fact, his journals covering the period 1862-73 are a treasure trove of historical information albeit written in cryptic style.

His account is of particular interest to descendants of Abraham Coon, another early Mormon pioneer. Coon (initially spelled Gohen, Gohn, or Cohen in German) established a ranch at the mouth of Coon's Canyon in 1852. He began clearing a toll road into Coon's Canyon that same year to serve the timber and lumber needs of the residents of Salt Lake City and Brighton. On January 8,

1859, Bennion records, "S.R. (Samuel R. Bennion) hunting about the mouth of Coon Canyon."

The journal also speaks of the demise of Lot Elisha Huntington, uncle of Lot Huntington Hancock and Susie Coon Hancock. Seems Lot borrowed Bennion's mare, Brown Sal, on January 14, 1862, a Tuesday. John wrote, "... after night I went up to the bishop's, four miles, to settle my tithing. Rode the brown mare. Tied her to Frederick Cooper's yard fence. I tarried at the bishop's until after midnight settling tithing and conversing. When I come out to start home my horse was missing. I walked home surmising the mare was stole."

Brown Sal had indeed been pilfered. Bennion's son, Samuel R. and neighbors Samuel Bateman, John Irving, and Orson Cutler set out after the rustler the following day riding through new fallen snow several inches deep. Sheriff Orin Porter Rockwell joined them.

They "followed the thieves to Rush Valley Station 21 1/2 miles west of Camp Floyd on the mail route" arriving on the mail coach at 4 a.m., Thursday, January 16. "They lay in ambush until 10 a.m.," John Bennion states, adding that "about 10 a.m. Lot Huntington tried to run away with my mare and was shot dead. (The



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other two thieves, Moroni Clawson and John Smith, give themselves up and were, with Lot's body, brought to the city of Salt Lake, where they tried to escape and were both shot." S.R. Bennion returned home with Brown Sal Friday morn-

ing, January 17, at 9 a.m. had apparently been pre when the latter two yo outlaws had been gun down, shot in the back, ing a snowstorm as they being escorted to confinen