

April 29, 2005

Brother Bevan:

Here are the biographies my Aunt Juana set to me a few years ago. I had not read through them until recently. I have a cousin who requested a copy. The documents my Aunt Juana prepared had a few discrepancies and so I retyped them.

I took a few liberties and made a few assumptions such as; When the original document said James Bevan helped build the Old Fort in Salt Lake. I added that Brigham Young assigned him to work on the Fort. I also assumed Brigham Young set him back to Council Bluffs to help with organizing wagon and handcart trains leaving the area for Salt Lake.

I think that a second wife in a family was often referred to as "Aunt". When the original document reported that Mary's oldest daughter and "Aunt Bell" raised Mary's family after her death, I assumed that "Aunt Bell" was Jame's second wife Isabel.

Kindest regards

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History of James Bevan Pioneer of 1847

In almost every city or village there are outstanding citizens that are remembered for their work and achievements long after their deaths. James Bevan was such a man. He was the son of John Bevan and Ann Burford of Herefordshire, England. He was born October 16, 1821 in Herefordshire.

He was in his early twenties when he heard the Mormon Missionaries preach the gospel in his home town. Like other young men in those days he longed for adventure and a chance to make a start in life for himself. He believed the doctrine the Missionaries taught and was baptized a member of the Mormon Church. Answering the call to gather in Zion he acquired the funds needed and bidding a sad farewell to family and friends in England he started the long voyage across the ocean to America. He was accompanied in the crossing by many other converts to the Church.

When he and the other converts arrived in Nauvoo they found the city in turmoil and the exodus west in full swing. Hundreds of families had already left their homes, crossed the Mississippi River and were heading west to the Great Basin with Brigham Young. There was a group of 500 wagons ready to depart Nauvoo. James Bevan joined this wagon train and started his trek west with the Mormons.

While the Saints waited out the winter of 1846 and 47 in Winter Quarters, Iowa Brigham young had sent an Emissary to Washington to petition the government for funds to assist the Church in their move west. In response the Government sent Captain James Allen of the US Army to make a special request of Brigham Young. His request was for 500 recruits to form a Battalion to march to California and aid the Government in securing land in Texas and California from Mexico.

Brigham Young saw this as an opportunity to gain future favor with Washington and also a means of obtaining some needed financial assistance for the exodus. In the face of heavy opposition Brigham Young's views prevailed and young men and some families were ask to volunteer for this recruitment.

The group that James Bevan was with had crossed Iowa and were in the

settlements of Mount Pisgah and Winter Quarters waiting to continue their trek to Utah. When the leadership of the Church ask for volunteers to join the Mormon Battalion James Bevan responded. On July 26, 1846 he, along with 540 other new recruits and 35 women and 42 children, began the march of 200 miles to Fort Leavenworth in Kansas. There they were outfitted with supplies, guns and given a clothing allowance. Arrangements were made that a portion of the clothing allowance was sent back to Winter quarters.

The Battalion stayed in Leavenworth for two weeks before starting the march to Santa Fe. Lt. A. J. Smith was put in charge of the Battalion. He set up a relentless pace that began to take its toll. The march was over rough terrain. Obstacles had to be removed and roads built. Sickness and fatigue started to mount and took a number of lives but the march was not allowed to stop for sick men or women. Those that died were buried by the wayside as the Battalion pressed on. The Battalion that was made up of the families of volunteers suffered a great deal of sickness and death.

It was finally decided that the Battalion had to be divided. One detachment made up of the able body men and another of the sick and weak. This detachment consisted of some 90 men. James Bevan was a member of this detachment having been chosen to help care for the sick. This group left for Pueblo October 18, 1846 under the command of Captain James Brown.

The march from Pueblo to California was one of extreme hardship and suffering from lack of food, water and proper equipment. Although James bevan was a strong young man he succumbed to the rigors of the march and became ill and was left by the side of the road as dead. One can only imagine his plight, a young man of 25 years being left in that desolate desert to die all alone as his comrades marched away. James Bevan relates that as he lay there a man rode up on a horse, dismounted, administered to him, giving him something to drink and some medicine. He then rode away disappearing from view as quickly as he had arrived. James Bevan began feeling better. Getting his strength back he started on his way again. He found the camp of the Battalion and was greeted with surprise and wonder. Hearing his story they believed a messenger from God had been sent to save his life. The messenger was believed to be one of the three Nephites.

The only battle the Battalion encountered was the battle of the bulls. This

happened when a herd of wild bulls, left by Spanish and Mexican ranchers, stampeded into the line of march sending soldiers rushing for safety. The battle lasted but a few minutes but 10 to 15 bulls were killed, two of the Battalions mules gored to death and three soldiers wounded.

The Battalion finally reached San Luis Rey and caught their first sight of the Pacific Ocean. They had just completed the longest military march in history, over 2,000 miles arriving in San Diego January 27, 1847. They then marched north to Los Angeles where they were ordered to build a fort on a hill near Los Angeles. The Battalion was then disbanded and honorable discharges issued July 16, 1847. The men were allowed to keep all their equipment including rifles and ammunition. 81 Battalion members reenlisted for an additional six months of service.

James Bevan heard that the Saints had settled in the Salt Lake valley and decide to join them there. It is reported that he came to Utah July 28, 1847. This would be just a few days after the first group of Saints arrived in the valley. This date has to be questioned given the Battalion was discharged just 12 days earlier in California. On his arrival in Utah, Brigham Young assigned him to assist with the building of the old fort, which was located on the site where Pioneer Square is today.

In 1850, at the age of 29 years, James Bevan returned to Council Bluffs, Iowa. His assignment was to help with organizing the many wagon trains of emigrants traveling through on their way to the Salt Lake valley. While there he became acquainted with Mary Shields, an attractive Scottish lass and the daughter of John Shields and Primrose Cunningham. She was born October 29, 1827 in Scotland. James and Mary were married May 9, 1851. James brought his new bride back to Utah in 1852 and settled in Tooele, Utah. The children born to James and Mary were John A., Mary, Primrose, James, Heber, Joseph, Margaret, Eliza, Archibald and Violet. Mary's parents also came to Utah and settled in Tooele where the Shields family became one of the great pioneer families of the area.

In those days, men of good standing in the Church were admonished to take additional wives and start families with them. A childhood friend of Mary's from Scotland, Isabel, MacPherson, came to Utah only to find that a pre arranged marriage that had brought her to Utah was not to be. When the Church suggested James take another wife Mary encouraged James to seek the Hand of Isabel. He

married Isabel November 3, 1859. The children from this union were, Isabel, George, Anna, Hugh, two twin girls, Martha and Mary, Charles, Sarah, Alexander, Mariah, Jane and Amos.

In spite of the early pioneer hardships they were a happy family. Their home was made of logs with a thatched roof. Candles were used for light and wood for heating and cooking. The home of James' son Amos now stands where the original log cabin home once stood, on South Main between First and Second South.

In those early days of pioneer life farming was the chief occupation. A man acquired a tract of land outside the village, planted fruit trees, berries, had a vegetable garden, raised grain for bread, had bees to supply honey, raised flax for weaving, raised cattle, sheep and hogs for meat, leather, soap and clothing. Many families had chickens and eggs for their own use and to market.

Sometimes James earned extra money by hauling logs from the Oquirrh Mountains to build new homes in the village. One time while loading logs he paused in his work to stir up a batch of pancakes and cook them for his lunch. He was just cooling a cake and getting ready to eat it when he heard a noise behind him. Turning he found himself face to face with Weiber Tom, a large fearsome Indian that all the settlers feared. The Indian looked mean and threatening. He raised his tomahawk and said "I kill you". James was no coward but he was unarmed and knew he was no match for so large an Indian. Offering a silent prayer he picked up the cooked pancake and said "you eat". To his surprise Weiber Tom took the cake and ate it. James baked more pancakes until the Indian was full. Weiber Tom then walked over to the wagon James had been loading and helped him with the rest of the logs. They rode out of the hills together. James brought Weiber Tom to his home where he met the family and was given more food. From then on Weiber Tom was James Bevan's friend. It was a common sight to see the Indian at the Bevan home. He would ask if Captain Bevan was home. If not he would wait. When he saw James coming with his wagon and team, he would run to meet him like a child.

Later in life, James Bevan had a contract to haul ore from Stockton, Utah to Salt Lake by wagon and team. One day, in the location where Eagle Gate is today his team was spooked by something and caused the load of ore to turn over on top of

him. When they picked him up they thought he must be dead because every rib in his body was broken. He was taken home to die. There the Elders administered to him and blessed him with the promise that he would be spared because he had work yet to do here on the earth, and God would spare him for a purpose.

The thatch roof on the Bevan house did not always protect them from the rain. Often the roof leaked and beds became too wet to sleep in. In time James Bevan replaced his thatch roof with a tight secure one made of wood. This was a great comfort to the family especially Mary and the children who had to deal with the leaking water and wet bedding.

The Bevan children were kept very busy in the fall of the year peeling and slicing up peaches, apples, pears and prunes for drying. Racks were built to dry the fruit. When it dried it was sacked up and sometimes taken to Salt Lake City to sell. It was a thrilling time when the family had lots of dried fruit to sell. They could then exchange it for sewing material, sugar and other necessities that were scarce in those days.

James Bevan was a kind, but stern father. When he made up his mind it was hard to change it. One time when the fruit was dried and packaged and ready for market he told the family he would take them all with him to Salt Lake to sell the fruit. At daybreak the horses were hitched to the wagon, the baskets of fruit loaded and the family found places to sit. The thirty miles to Salt Lake was a long tiresome trip. However, the children were thrilled with the changing scenery along the way. They arrived in Salt Lake in the late afternoon. The fruit was exchanged for other needed articles. The children looked forward to camping for the night as other traders in town would do. To the disappointment of all James Bevan decided they should return home that same day. The trip back was long and very tiresome. Most travelers would camp for the night in a large cave located in some low hills along the road to Garfield. Even though it was nightfall James did not stop at the cave but traveled on. They arrived home in Tootle the following morning. Neighbors were surprised to see them and could not believe they were back from Salt Lake so soon. They had to be shown the things that were bought in Salt Lake to prove they had made the trip.

James Bevan was used to hardships. When Col. Albert Sidney Johnston and his U. S. Army of 2800 men were camped in Wyoming in the winter of 1857 and 1858

waiting to enter Salt Lake City, James was called , along with 1100 other men from the Nauvoo Legion to set up fortifications in Echo Canyon. He was made captain over 10 men. They spent the winter in Echo canyon and experienced many hardships and discomforts. Many of the men, for lack of proper boots, had to march through the snow with their feet wrapped in burlap sacks. In June of 1858 the Johnston army passed through Salt Lake City and set up permanent barracks and established Camp Floyd in Cedar Valley just west of Utah Lake.

James Bevan was the father of 23 children and helped raise two others. The Bevan family grew to be one of the most prominent pioneer families of Tooele. A historic landmark in Tooele is the Bevan Drug Store. Archibald Bevan, the ninth child of James Bevan, opened the Drug Store and ran it his entire life.

Death came to James Bevan October 26, 1894 at the age of 73. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Mary Shields who died August 7, 1874 giving birth to her eleventh child, which also died. James was loved and respected throughout his life by his family and all who knew him. It was his practice to give each of his grandchildren a blessing. He lived the Word of Wisdom and never tasted tea, coffee, tobacco or liquor in his life. He was the Senior President of the 43rd Quorum of Seventies for many years. He expected his children to attend Church, live their religion and obey the principles of the Gospel. At his death he had a large posterity of some 800 people. It has compounded into a posterity of thousands by this date.