

WILLIAM HENRY ELKINGTON

1860 - 1933

A biographical sketch by a grandson,  
Glen H. Elkington

William Henry Elkington was born on 8 February 1860 at West Bromwich, Staffordshire, England, the second child and eldest son of Isaac Jones and Sarah French Elkington. There were a total of thirteen children born of this marriage. Two of the children died and were buried at Kings Norton, Worcestershire, England, before the family immigrated to the United States.

The family left England and settled in Williamsburg, Kings County, New York in 1867, where they lived until coming to Utah in 1875. Four of their children were born in Williamsburg and three of the four died and were buried there.

Upon arriving in Tooele, Isaac built a home for the family that still stands and is located at 330 South 1st West Street.

William Henry's formal education was very brief, amounting to three days. His father enrolled him in the public school at Williamsburg when he was seven years old. On the third day of school, William (who was large for his age), did something that incurred the wrath of the teacher. To punish him for his wrong doing, she had him hold out his hands, palms up, and she whacked him across the palms with a ruler. When she swung to hit him a second time, he grabbed the ruler away from her. She immediately headed for the principals office and he went out the window and headed for home.

At home, he explained to his father what had happened, who said , rather sarcastically, "Well, anyone as smart as you doesn't need to go to school!" He was then apprenticed out as a tradesman, completing his apprenticeship as a brick mason.

Soon after their arrival in Tooele, William met a young Tooele girl, Miss Isabel Bevan, who he thought was the prettiest and nicest girl that he had ever known. They dated until their marriage on 11 January 1883 at the Salt Lake City Endowment House. There were nine children born to this marriage, William Henry Jr. Elmer James, Isaac Jones, Stella Isabelle, Howard, Annie Mae, Vaughn, Ruby, and Sarah. At this writing (1989), all of the children except Sarah, have passed away.

Immediately after their marriage, William and Isabelle, bought a lot on the corner of Third South and First West Street, and a city block located on the south side of Third South Street and west of the alley between First and Second West Streets from Benjamin Howell, They immediately proceeded to build a small log cabin on the lot. The cabin, 11 X 12 feet was built over a basement that William rocked up for the foundation for the cabin. The basement was used for fruit and vegetable storage. Their first child, William Henry Jr. was born in this cabin. The cabin still stands, and the basement is still used for its intended purpose.

Upon completion of the cabin, William started construction of their permanent home. The home was constructed in three stages, and of course it was to be brick. The first stage consisted of four rooms, two on the ground floor with two bedrooms upstairs. The foundation was of rock obtained from the hills adjacent to Tooele City, This part of the home was completed before the birth of Elmer James,

who was born in the brick home. The remaining seven children were also born in the brick home. The present kitchen and pantry were the last construction on the home.

When the family arrived in Tooele, William immediately started to ply his trade. There was no brick mason in Tooele at the time, so his skill was soon in demand. He built many of the older masonry homes in the community, and most of which still stand and are occupied. Some of the homes that he built include the Ray England home, the Albert England home, and the Loami England home on south First West Street, the three brick homes immediately west of the Kirk Hotel, fronting on Vine Street, the William Isgreen home, the Sidney Isgreen home, on south Main Street, the Doctor F. M. Davis home, and the George Brown home on Utah Avenue, are a few of the homes that he laid the brick for during their construction.

He also laid the brick for many commercial buildings in the community. Some of the buildings that he helped construct are, the Tate building, The Archibald Bevan drug store building, the old county courthouse and the Tooele Library building.

During the construction of the Tooele Smelter, William was one of the masons who constructed the shops, reverberatory furnaces, steam boilers, and other brick buildings on the smelter site. His skill as a mason was recognized by the management of the smelter as evidenced by their calling him to come and assist with masonry work requiring more than average skill on many occasions.

Combined Metals Reduction Company, located at Bauer (four miles south of Tooele,), also recognized his proficiency as a mason. On one occasion Mr William Kelsey, the plant engineer, called and asked him to come over and repair a brick arch located in the firebox of one of the plants steam boilers. He (Mr. Kelsey) informed William Elkington that the boiler had been shut down for several days to let it cool off so that the masonry arch could be worked on. William E. hadn't been feeling too well, his hip was giving him problems, he was getting along in years, and he just didn't feel up to doing the work. He thought that he could scare Kelsey off by asking for union wages, which he did. He also told Kelsey that a younger man could do the work faster than he could, so maybe it would be better to get some one else. Kelsey's reply was; "The union scale is \$12 per day, which we will pay you, also, we want quality on this job not quantity. See you in the morning!" At that time common labor wages at the smelter was \$3 per day.

William was an amateur horticulturist. On the land that he owned here in town, besides a vegetable garden, he grew grapes, raspberries, apples, peaches, apricots, cherries and pears, There were several varieties of peaches, cherries, and apples. Varieties of apples included jonathans, winter bananas, black twig, astrakhans, red delicious, crab apples, and wolf river. He had an apple orchard of about one and a half or two acres, comprised of about 75 to 100 trees. He sold lots of apples each fall that were grown on his trees.

William had ordered four red delicious apples from Stark Brothers Nursery that he planted in the orchard, but when they started to bare fruit, he found

that they were not Red Delicious. He inquired of Stark's about their variety, but they insisted that they had not erred in the variety sent. For want of a better name, William called them Giant Delicious. The apples were huge, several that he weighed ran four and a half to five pounds in weight. I remember counting a bushel that he had sold, weighing forty seven pounds, and found that there were seventeen apples in the box.

Mrs Bessie Reese used to buy some of these apples each fall for cooking. She said that she had made an apple pie on several occasions out of half an apple.

William entered his Giant Delicious apple in the state fair on several occasions, and in each instance they won the blue ribbon for the largest apples on display.

One spring, a professor Hogansen from Utah State University came to Tooele at pruning time and gathered up every limb and twig that had been cut from the Giant Delicious trees and took them to Logan for budding and grafting to try to make more of them available on the market. William never did learn how the experiments turned out.

In addition to his fruit and vegetables, he always kept a family cow to provide milk for the family. He was very fussy with the milk. He always washed the cows udder before he milked, then either he or I would take the milk directly to the house while the other finished the feeding and bedding of the animals.

He always kept a few chickens for eggs for the house. His favorite variety of chickens were Black Minorcas, but on at least one occasion he ordered some Barred Plymouth Rocks. They seemed to do well, but he never liked them, and when they had quit laying, he replaced them with Minorcas again. Another time he tried Rhode Island Reds. He liked them reasonably well but some of the neighbors who bought eggs from Isabelle didn't like brown eggs, so again he went back to the Minorcas,

He kept an incubator, and used to save the Minorca eggs and hatch them for the family chickens. Sometimes the neighbors who had chickens would bring eggs to be placed in the incubator to hatch. He enjoyed his chickens!

William served as city marshall for several years, a job that he didn't like, but one that he was talked into accepting by the mayor and one of the city counselors. It paid a whole \$20 per month. His tenure of office was before prohibition and automobiles, so his primary responsibility was to get drunks off the streets in the evenings. Tooele was a small town, and he was the police force.

An incident happened during his marshall years that the family thought was very funny, but he never did see the humor in it. A traveling comedian came to Town and was putting on his act at the local show house. He chose, as the butt of his gags, the town officials, primarily the city marshall. According to the comedian, he was taking a morning walk up the canyon to enjoy the pleasant morning coolness and to just relax. He said that he got up Settlement Canyon about a mile when he met old Bill Elkington coming down the canyon running as fast as he could

and back of him about a hundred feet was a bear trying to catch up. The comedian said he grabbed some rocks and threw at the bear, where upon the bear gave up the chase and ran back up the canyon. The comedian said;" Hey Bill, how come you were running from that bear?" , and Bill answered;" I wasn't running from him, I was bringing him home alive!"

While building a home here in town, the scaffold that he was standing on broke and dumped him and the brick that were on it to the ground, a fall of about twelve feet. It resulted in a broken hip for him, that , when it had mended left him with a rather stiff right leg. So that he could get around on the leg he had to use a cane, but it left him with a permanent limp.

To help him get to town or visit friends, he bought a 1926 Chevrolet roadster. He took the cover and rumble seat out of the turtle back and installed a small truck body in its place. He used the truck body to haul apples in when harvest time came, so it was a very useful tool for him. One of the problems in driving the truck lay in the stiffness of his leg. He would floor board the gas feed, then regulate the speed with slipping the clutch. This kind of driving cost him two or three clutches per year, but he was glad to pay it because he could come and go as he pleased.

Williams lack of formal education did not leave him illiterate. He learned to read and write by careful observation until he became proficient at reading and writing. In his adult years he would figure estimates on buildings from blue print drawings to determine what a bid for construction should be. He subscribed to a daily paper, that he read every day to keep up with world events. He would read an occasional book, history preferred, but rarely fiction. I recall when we came to Tooele from Hinckley in 1922 at christmas time that the fourth grade here was a ways ahead of the same grade in Hinckley in arithmetic. The teacher gave the class some practice problems in long division to solve in class. I told her that I didn't know how to work long division, and she told me that I didn't belong in that class. That really upset me, and when I got home after school, grandpa noticed that something was wrong, and wanted to know what the problem was. I explained what had happened, and he said;"Pull up a chair to the table and I'll show you how to work it!" After a crash course of an hour or two, I could work long division as well as any other kid in the class.

William Henry Elkington was dark complexioned, with wavy black hair that was very thick. He never lost any of his hair, although it turned to a steel gray before his death. He was a little over six feet tall, and of a heavy bone construction. He had very broad shoulders, and weighed , when working hard, around two hundred and fifty pounds. His weight was muscle, not fat. While working on the old county courthouse construction, he bet one of the hod carriers that he could carry all of the brick that they could stack on a hod up the steps into the courthouse. The bet was made, and he demonstrated that he could do what he said he could. They later weighed the brick that he had carried into the building, and found it weighed about four hundred and fifty pounds. He had a mechanical aptitude that was used by him all his life, In addition to masonry and plastering, he could do rough carpentry, and cut rafters and roof work for the buildings that

he constructed on his lot at home.

He seemed to be ambidextrous, for when using a brick hammer or a claw hammer it didn't seem to matter which hand he picked the tool up with to do the work that he was working on. He would solder buckets, milk pans, or most any other kind of household utensil that needed fixed. I've seen him take a padlock that he had lost the keys for, blacken a blank key with a match, then carefully get the imprint of the tumblers on the key, and file the key to fit,

William Henry Elkington was stern with his family of children as they were growing up. I have never heard one of his children say that their father had either spanked or slapped them. When my brother, Lynn and I lived with our grandparents, he never threatened to paddle or use physical force on us at any time, yet we always had chores to do, and we knew that we had better do them on time if we didn't want to get in bad wit grandpa.

Death came to William Henry Elkington on 15 February 1933 at Tooele, Utah. He was buried in the Tooele cemetery beside his wife, who preceded him in death by about six and a half years. Isabelle Bevan Elkington had died on 30 July 1928 in Tooele, Utah when nearly sixty eight years of age.