

"MY HISTORY"

I, Luella Johnston Swalberg, was born March 25th, 1893, at Green River, Utah to Reed Peck and Florinda Dunn Johnston. There were nine children born to my parents. Frank, who died at 2 years old, Harry Thomas, Roy Peck, Albert who died in infancy, Ida May, Charles who died very young, Oliver Frank, all born in Oakley, Idaho. Luella M., and Russell who died in infancy, were both born in Green River.

My father worked for the Denver, Rio Grande Railroad as a section foreman. My mother was the manager of the railroad restaurant for a few years, then they bought a house and mother ran a boarding house there.

My sister was so happy when I was born. She then had a little sister. When she brought some friends over to see me they thought I was an Indian papoose as I had coal black hair, and dark brown eyes and dark skin. My sister began to cry, and mother assured her that I was not a papoose. Green River was always very cold and it seemed like I was sick alot when I was young. I caught cold easy, and had the croup quite often. Our nearest doctor was Dr. Masser, in Fruita, Colorado. Most of our doctoring was done by telegraph. About every three weeks to a month he would come over to Green River if there was much illness. My mother was a practical nurse as well as a Mrs. Gammage, so they took care of most of the ill. At one time there was an epidemic of diphtheria which was very bad. None of our family had it. My mother and Mrs. Gammage were both kept very busy. They also brought many babies in to the world, and I don't think they lost any.

In those days Green River was a good size railroad town and there were lots of Chinaman who worked on the railroad as section hands. My mother hired a Chinese cook who was very good. She had to fire him though as he would spit on the skillet to see if it was hot enough. Most of the Chinese lived in dug-outs. I can remember seeing them smoking opium in their long pipes, but I never heard anyone ever say that the local people picked up the habit. On their New Year they always gave us Chinese candy which was very good.

Butch Cassidy, the famous outlaw and his gang stopped at our boarding house for a meal. They sat facing the door with their guns along side of them. Naturally my mother was very frightened, but they assured her no harm would come to any of us. They paid her very well for the meal. Matt Warner, another famous outlaw was there also. Butch Cassidy has a sister living in Circleville, and Matt Warner has a daughter living in Price.

My brother Ollie and I use to take a large pot of coffee and sandwiches down to the railroad tracks as the passenger trains came in. We hauled them in an express wagon and we always sold out. They paid us well, and a few of them would give us extra money for being such good children. Ollie was 11, and I was about 6 years old.

Along about this time when I was six years old my father was hit by a switch engine. It hurt his back seriously and he never did get over it. He never walked straight after that happened. He had his accident on July 4th, 1900, and as a result of it he died nearly a year later on June 20, 1901. My brother Harry was away working on the railroad in another town at the time.

With Harry's income, and the rest of us helping Mother with the boarders we had enough to eat. Mother made most of our clothes.

Later on they built a new railroad bridge across the river. This construction brought in many new workers so Mother had plenty for us to do in taking care of the boarders. They even set up tents in the yard. On Saturday night they would all celebrate so most of the local people stayed in their homes. No one ever bothered us however.

A little later, while living in Green River a man that boarded at our home, and another man who boarded at Mrs. Gammage's, had a bad argument. I believe it was over some business deal that they had. A shooting took place and the man who was our boarder was killed, right in our own front yard. My mother saw the whole thing, and so was called as a witness at the court house in Provo. She received a threatening note, so she was guarded during the trial. The man who did the shooting was sentenced to life in prison. I do not know whether he was ever released or not.

After the new railroad bridge was built my mother for some reason decided to buy a ranch in Elgin which was just across the river from Green River. It was a real nice ranch. We raised water melons, cantaloupe, and everything in the garden vegetable line. We also had milk cows, a team of horses, a buggy, and a buckboard wagon, which we used to get our supplies from Green River.

We had to cross the river where the water was shallow, and sometimes when the river was high the horses would have to swim and the water would be up to the top of the wagon. All the ranches would ship their melons by rail to the eastern market. The Green River area is world famous for its good juicy water melon, and they always celebrated a special "Melon Day" in August.

On our ranch it was my job to milk the cows and then turn them out to pasture. I would get our horse "Gentle Clyde" and go get them in the evening. Sometimes the water in the river would get so low that the stream which fed our water wheel for irrigation would not turn. I would climb up on the paddles and then ride the wheel down so the low water would at least move along to our garden. It was alot of fun doing this and I really liked to do it. It was a very happy time of my life while we all worked on the farm. Even my brother Harry eventually quit the railroad to help us and for a few years we were all together again.

We had moved to Elgin just before school had let out for the summer. I was about eight then and we still had to walk across the railroad bridge morning and night to get to school. A Captain Yokey ran the pump house by the bridge on the Green River side, and he would always signal to us by flag when it was safe to cross, as he always knew when a train was due. On our way home we would just stop at his pump house and check on the trains. One day I got out of school earlier than usual. Ida and Oliver were still in school so I walked to the pump house and Capt. Yokey wasn't there. I couldn't see or hear a train so I decided to start across the bridge for home. I got about half way on the last span of the bridge when a train whistled as it came around a curve. I decided to run it out so I started to run as fast as I could, I got to the end and rolled down the embankment just as the engine went by. I was very scared. Billy Reese was the engineer, and he knew us very well. That was one time I gave both him and my family a big scare. Billy Reese would always send me a \$1.00 green back on pay day, and he would say, "The ghost walked today, and I saved a skin plaster for you."

Ida and Ollie still continued school in Green River, but the next year I went to the elementary school in Elgin until we moved out of that area some years later. I would ride our old horse Clyde about a mile to school. During the winters, Harry would work on the railroad. A year after Ollie graduated from school he decided to go on the railroad too. During part of this time Ida got a job in Green River and would come home on weekends.

The boys finally dedided that they like the railroad better than farming so my mother hired a man to help with the farm work. The boys still worked part time when they would get home and when they had time off. The farm still seemed to do very well.

An experience I will always remember happened to me while we lived in Elgin. A Mrs. Sorrels and her son Bert came to visit us from Green River, it was in the spring of the year. The river was still frozen over. Bert and I was playing on the ice, and like most kids we dedided to walk on the ice over to where part of the old bridge was about half way across the river. We got almost to the bridge when we stepped on very thin ice and started falling. Bert was able to reach solid ice and he grabbed my hand and pulled me on to the solid ice. Believe me we were very careful going back. Bert had actually saved my life.

After we had lived in Elgin about two and a half or so years the boys railroad job transferred them to Helper, and Ida decided to leave and keep house for them, as they all wanted to get away and sort of see what the world looked like. About this same time my Uncle Frank, father's brother died in Iowa. He left each of us children \$500.00. This was really a lot of money in those days. I bought a piano with part of my money. Ida saved hers and put it to very good use when she married. The boys gave their money to Mother, which she used later to purchase a home in Salt Lake City. I kept my piano for sixty years, and I was very proud of it.

At this time mother decided to sell the ranch and move in to Salt Lake City. She bought a home on 6th South between 1st and 2nd West. The boys continued working for the railroad and

mother went back to nursing. She would take confinement cases for a doctor. Ida worked in a dry goods store, and I continued on in school. I went to Fremont school part of the time. I would baby sit after school and do house work and ironing. One of my dearest friends while growing up in Salt Lake was Lita Spry. Her father was an attorney and later became governor of Utah. They had a lovely home and they always treated me like one of their own family.

Later on mother's parents came to live with us from California. We all loved them as they were really wonderful people to be around. Grandpa Dunn had a small pension which he gave to mother every month. We didn't have to much money and mother was making payments on our home. She was very good at managing a home and we got along despite times being rather hard. My grandparents lived with us for about fourteen years. At this time my Aunt Eva moved up from California and she took them to live with her. Grandpa died at age 89 in 1910. Then Grandma came back and lived with us. She died at age 73 in 1913.

My sister Ida met a fine man by name of Edwin L. Murphy. They were married in 1906. They had six lovely children. Three boys and three girls. Their third child Everett was born three weeks after Grandma died.

When I was sixteen years old I went to work for the Woolworth store in the lace & ribbon dept. We worked from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., and to 9 p.m. on Saturday. I worked at Woolworths for four years. Then I went to work for the Sears Realty Co. I also answered the telephone and took messages for an attorney who had an office in the same space.

Around this time all the railroad workers went on strike. This meant Harry and Ollie were unable to work and receive pay except a little railroad unemployment. They were on strike for almost a year. My mother couldn't keep up the payments on our home, so we let it go and moved to a larger home where mother started a rooming house and took in boarders. At this time I remember I was making \$50.00 a month on my job.

Ollie married around this time and they eventually had four children. He married a very wonderful woman named Hazel E. Cox, on Sept. 15, 1915.

I was married June 17, 1916 to John H. Sorensen. We had one son, Wayne Douglas, who was born Aug. 7, 1917. We later separated and divorced. My former husband moved to Elko, Nev. My little son Wayne and I lived with mother who at this time had acquired a large house keeping apartment. I helped her with the apartment.

On Oct. 6, 1923 I was married to John Wilford Swalberg. We had met several years earlier, but had not known each other very well. We both had mutual friends, and some way or other we began seeing each other more often, and after several months we fell in love and John asked me to be his wife. He was a handsome young salesman, and our future looked quite bright. We had one son born to us and we named him Glen Wilford. He was born on Sept. 4, 1927. There is quite a story about how he happened to be born, as I had taken a very bumpy ride in our car just the day before while trying to get to the airport in time to see Charles Lindberg, who was on a tour of the U. S., after his famous flight across the ocean. It was a very exciting time, and Glenn showed up the next day.

My brother Harry did not marry until later in his life, and he never had children of his own, but did have several lovely step children. My brother Roy, was never in very good health and he was never married.

My husband who we always called Wilford until we moved to Delta, was a salesman for the Salt Lake Hardware Co. He was their first salesman to go on the road with their automotive line of merchandise. We lived in mother's apartment at 535 South Main, which was sold later to the Fred. A. Carleson Co. who became a famous automobile dealer. It was fun living in mother's place as Wilford was gone sometimes as long as two weeks on some trips, and one week on others. His career started with the Salt Lake Hardware when he was 15 yrs. old as a stock boy. He worked up to one of their top salesman. He was with them for 14 years. He then went to work for the Karl Winter Co. as an auto parts salesman. Later on he worked for the Felt Auto Parts Co.

My mother died May 19, 1926 at the age of 64. She was really a wonderful woman. We then moved to 550 East 3rd South to a very nice apartment, and lived there for nine years.

The time is now the winter of 1934. I was growing tired of living alone so much of the time, and John wanted to be home more. He had also been thinking very seriously about going into business for himself. After a lot of talking and praying we made the big decision and decided to try our luck at business in Delta, Utah. Wayne was going to the U of U at the time, but he was all for moving too. John had made arrangements to get a small space in a former service station building, and he came down and started his auto parts store in January of 1935. The boys and I followed him down in April. We had to live in a three room apartment with no running water and a public bath, until we could find a home, which we did not do until August of that year.

I began to regret that we had made the move to Delta. Our business was so small, and we had such a small space. It actually took all the money we had to our name to get enough parts and to pay the rent to stay in business. We really had to economize and Wayne was very good to work without pay. He was 18 years old, when most boys like to have some money and go out with their friends. Glen was 8 years old and settled in elementary school which he liked very well. He would come and work at the store after school when we could get him to leave his constant flow of friends.

We finally moved into our house which we rented and had our furniture delivered which had been in storage at Redman. This really helped and we were a much happier family after that. We began to get better acquainted with the people, and would sometimes go to church. Business started to improve, and we were gradually able to get more stock, and get more room in the building, and we even began giving Wayne a small wage.

As the years went by the store progressed very well, and had to be expanded several times. We bought a cute little red bricked home of our own, with a nice front porch and railing. All of us worked on it and made it into a very comfortable place with a beautiful yard with flowers, roses, and two of the biggest green hedges I have ever seen. We had many nice trees and a white picket fence, a small garden, and a garage shop in the back. We were a proud family and loved to work on our home together.

Later on World War II broke out and Wayne enlisted in the Air Force April 7, 1941. A place called Topaz was built just west of Delta. It was a Japanese relocation camp and the government brought in thousands of Japanese from California to live there. This of course increased our store business as we were one of the main suppliers to this camp. John would go to the store shortly after 7:00 a.m. and put in 12 hours a day. I would take him a hot meal at noon. I would also take care of the store books and office work. Glen did alot more work after school and on Saturdays. Our stock of hardware and bicycles and bike parts was really built up at this time. Glen and a school friend of his did all of the bike work. Glen and his Dad were very close working in the store.

When Glen graduated from high school he decided he wanted to enlist and he went into the Merchant Marine. John hired a young boy to help in the store and we carried on without the boys for awhile. Both of the boys were overseas when the war ended. Wayne had been in the service 5 years. He had married a local girl named Donna Warnick. After he was discharged he came back home to work in the store. He and Donna settled in Delta and they had three lovely children, Christine, John and Suzanne. Donna passed away in April 1949, which saddened us all. In the later years Wayne was remarried to Beryl Gillen of Oasis. She had four children. Paul, Lois, DeRay, and Wayne Brush. Wayne and Beryl have two more children named Craig and Kurt.

Glen returned from the service. He worked at the store, and tried a little college in St. George. He decided to go in the business with his Dad and Wayne. Glen married a local girl named Helen Pratt. They now have three sons, Paul, Dean and Todd.

I was very active in civic circles being chairman of the USO, and active in the Band Mothers, Red Cross, Cancer Society, American Legion Auxillary, Daughters of the Pioneers. John and I both held many offices in the Lions Club. I also held several church positions.

After the boys came back into the business it continued to grow and expand. They decided to build a new building of their own. They managed to get a good lot right next to the building the store was in and they put up a large nice building. It is still the nicest and best stocked store this side of Salt Lake City.

As the years have gone by the store business has continued to grow and expand and today it is about 10 times bigger than it originally started, and they have added to the new building that was originally built until it is twice as large as it started. John and I along with the boys put up another building next to the store. It was a separate double story type with two apartments on the top story. We sold our home and moved into the front apartment, and rented the other one. The ground floor was used for various rental business firms, and just in the last year or so the boys connected the two buildings with a passage way and expanded it into an appliance and television store.

After the boys worked at the store for several years, John started taking it a little easier. We took some well deserved trips and really enjoyed traveling around to various parts of the county. We even took a nice trip to Hawaii which we enjoyed very much.

Both of the boys became very active in the church along with their families. John also got very active and we were married in the Manti Temple on Feb. 10, 1965, which was a very happy day for all of us. We have visited several temples on our trips, and also went very regularly to the Manti Temple. John was really interested in the church. He studied alot and was very faithful in attending meetings, home teaching and bearing his testimony.

On November 22, 1970 John took suddenly ill. He was in our local hospital for a week, and he had suffered a stroke. He seemed to recover from this fairly well, but while he was in the hospital they discovered through x-ray that the main artery from his heart was weak and in danger of rupturing. On December 1, 1970 we took him to the LDS hospital in Salt Lake City. They took more x-rays and tests, and said they would have to operate. After a week of observation in Salt Lake, they sent him home to gain some strength and build him back up for his operation as he was down to 129 lbs. from his usual 150 lbs. After some very enjoyable Christmas holidays and some good progress he was returned to the hospital on Feb. 1, 1971 and was operated on two days later on the 3rd. He got along real well even though he did have a heart attack some 15 years earlier, but he seemed to have no ill effects. He recovered quite well and we brought him home on Feb. 13, 1971. He was really feeling good but on Feb. 22nd, he suddenly became ill again and within 1½ hours he died in Delta's Hospital. He had a peaceful death for which we are all grateful. Our boys and wives have been so good and helpful. They were right with me during John's illness and death. I am indeed blessed to have them.

The boys completely took over the management of the business in the early 60's, and have done a very good job of running it. John more or less retired in 1965, and in 1968 the boys built us a lovely new home located right across the street from the Delta 2nd Ward Chapel. We really enjoyed the home very much. I still live in it, and although being a widow is hard I still love my nice home. The boys have both been married in the temple and they both work very hard in the church.

I have twelve grandchildren and I am proud of every one of them. They have all been very good to Grandpa and I. I also have eight great grandchildren.

Today is March 23, 1973 and on March 25th I will be 80 years old. I hope this history will be enjoyed by all of my family. May our Father in Heaven's choicest blessings be with you always is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

Luella Maxine Johnston Swalberg