

INTERESTING INCIDENTS FROM THE LIFE
OF
WILLIAM WILCOCK

As related by Simon A. Matheson of Parowan
And as Sarsael R. Wilcock remembers his father

William Wilcock was the son of Edward Wilcock II of New Church, Lancashire, England; and Elizabeth Partington of St. Ellens. He is remembered as speaking of three sisters Ann, Martha, and Mary. If he had any brothers, it is not a known fact and he may have had more than three sisters. The only known relatives he spoke of was Thomas and Israel Knowles.

He was born in a little town of Ince, near Wigan, Lancashire, England, on Oct. 10, 1830. There is very little known of his childhood surroundings and home conditions.

He was the first Wilcock to join the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, that we have record of. Being baptized Sept. 22, 1857 at the age of twenty seven.

William had a strong testimony of the truthfulness of the Gospel. But being no preacher he did his worshipping in song and prayer. The food prepared in his home was blessed and thanks returned to the giver of all good. No doubt family prayers as well as secret ones were uttered daily. He stopped smoking his pipe, which he always used while working, which proves he believed in the Word of Wisdom.

He was a member of the Parowan Choir and for many years served as its leader. When conference time arrived the choir members would make themselves as comfortable as possible in up-holstered seats in air-conditioned wagons behind a team of horses with floating power engines and they would journey to Salt Lake City. One time while they were camped near American Fork, people from the joined them, and a jolly time ensued. A comic song contest was sponsored. Wilcock and a man by the name of Laycock were the singers. First one then the other would make his contribution. Finally Laycock sang a song that set the whole crowd roaring with laughter. Wilcock followed with the song; "I Couldn't Help Laughing, It Ticked Me So," It was such a fitting climax that all agreed Wilcock won the contest.

William Wilcock loved music and was a good singer. He sang many old English comic songs. Among them were these songs; "Tin Finnigan"; "The Cross Eyed Cook and the Jolly Drummer"; "The English Country Chap's Wedding" and "I Couldn't Help Laughing, It Ticked Me So".

He was an expert ice skater and introduced the sport in Parowan. He made many pairs of skates for the younger people and taught them the art.

Due to his heavy work on the turning lathes and large machines in the machine shops, William leaned to one side as he walked. However, as a young man his five feet and eleven inches was admired by the young girls. While living in England an old maid occupied a room in the same boarding house as he. She was terribly afraid of electrical storms. One night as the lightning flashed and thunder roared, terrified screams of a maiden in danger were heard coming from her room, William rushed to the scene and consoled the maid. She screamed no more.

He must have liked the name "Elizabeth." Any way he loved women by that name. At Warsborough, Yorkshire, England on Nov. 5, 1851 he married Elizabeth Sharp. Joseph Sharp performed the ceremony. She was born Dec. 16, 1826 at Newark, Nottingham England. To this union were born five sons. They are: Edward, born Jan. 31, 1852 at Warsborough, Yorkshire, England; Christopher, June 9, 1854 at Newton, Le Willows, Lancashire, England; Henry, June 25, 1856 at St. Ellens, Lancashire, England; William Sharp, Feb. 22, 1861 at Salt Lake City, Utah; and John Joseph, Aug. 14, 1864 at Parowan, Utah. The mission of this good woman ended on this earth Feb. 26, 1887

at Parowan, Iron County, Utah.

On March 4, 1833 at Bolton Lancashire England, Elizabeth Brown was born. William chose her for his next help-meet. They were married June, 16, 1867 at Parowa Utah. Four sons came to bless their happy home. They are Ebenezer, born Feb. 25, 1869; Samuel Richard, Jan. 19, 1871; Thomas Isreal, April 17, 1873, and Ralph James, June 21, 1876. All were born in Parowan, Utah.

Elizabeth Brown was a good mother as well as a womanly woman. Friends who knew her say she was very kind and considerate to the children of Elizabeth Sharp as well as those of her own. She died in Parowan on May 9, 1893.

William Wilcock was Endowed and had his wives and children sealed to him in the old Endowment House at Salt Lake City, Utah.

By trade he was a machinest and mechanic. He served seven years in England as an apprentice to learn the trade. He was a very effecient workman and was exception ally useful in the early settlement of Utah. He worked in the first sugar factory that was built in Utah. This factory was located in the Sugar House Ward in Salt Lake City, Utah. He worked under a man by the name of Nathan Davis. As tools were scarce at that time and shafting had to be imported, William was in great demand. If he didn't have the tool or machinery he needed, he molted cast and made it from raw material.

Soon after his arriving in Salt Lake City, and because factories were so badly needed, and shafting so hard to get he received permission from Davis and Hoewll Foundry Co. to make a steel turning lathe in their plant. He made the wooden forms exactly as the piece of machinery he needed; then firm sand was tamped around the form. After the form was carefully removed molten metal was run into the impression and the castings were thus made. His lathe was made in this manner. On this lathe he turned out the shafting that was so badly in need, and many other pieces of machinery that could be turned out on the lathe. He also made and tempered the cutting points that were used in turning wrought iron.

He was called by President Brigham Young to go to Iron County with Ebenezer Hanks and take charge of the Iron Foundry there. Their first attempt was a poor grade of iron, the attempt was unsuccessful. Later, however, the foundry at Iron Springs was successful.

He next worked in a small foundry at Enoch, run by some English people by the name of Jones. They cast wheels, grates for stoves and other small articles. After this he moved to Parowan, about 1863, and there resided the remainder of his life.

Johnson's army had been sent to Salt Lake City to settle the Mormon Question. When the army was called back and disbanded they threw their cannon balls and large government wagons into some old wells at Fort Douglas. The iron in Iron County being of poor grade and a turning lathe to turn articles from steel was needed at Parowan; William went to Fort Douglas, hoisted the cannon ball and other iron casting on the wagons, from the wells and freighted them to Parowan by oxen teams. Here he made another but smaller turning lathe for turning steel, from this iron. This lathe is still in existence today and is in perfect mechanical condition. It is owned by Simon A. Matheson of Parowan. The only cannon ball that can be told of what it once was, is a cannon ball used as a weight to hold a lever in gear. He made and used a chaser guide to turn threads on shafting and bolts. He could turn any given number of threads per inch, by guiding the chaser guide by hand and sight. A feature, it is safe in saying no one can do to-day. He also made and tempered steel tools that would polish metal to mirror brightness. He made several other turning lathes for different companies; two of which were made for turning wood.

William remodeled the wooden tub and bucket factory in Parowan and built a

complete cotton factory, duplicating every part of it from raw material, molding all castings, turning all shafting and tempered all steel used in the factory. In this factory was used a water wheel of center vent type, to furnish the power. It is not known whether or not he designed this wheel, but he was the first to introduce it to this country. It was set verticle instead of horizontal, and water under pressure was let in from an opening in the side striking the blades whirl-pool like; when the power of the water was spent, it released from the bottom around the center of the container. This type of wheel produced more speed and about the same power as did the over and under shot wheels.

The cotton factory was finally made over into a cabinet shop. Simon Matheson worked and was in charge of it for years. He has a chair in his home he made in this factory, on Williams' wood lathe.

William Wilcock, just for his own amusement made an all brass locomotive, so small it would set in the palm of your hand. It was a perfect model of locomotives used on railways at that time and would run around on the floor by its own power. It generated its own steam and used a cylinder. This locomotive is in the museum at St. Louis Mo. He also made a tiny up and down cylinder, stationary steam engine, so small it would set on a 50¢ piece, but it would still produce power.

Around 1880, William bought a steam sawmill from his son Edward and a man by the name of Johnson. It was a 25 horse power stationary steam engine. He located it in Parowan's second left hand canyon, in such a steep place that he had to build a shoot down the mountain side, a mile or more, to convey the lumber down. He placed breaks in the shoot to slow the lumber up while descending the mountain, so that it would not be broken to bits at the bottom. He worked at sawmills in the lumber business a great deal of the time from then on. He took Mr. Matheson when he was but a boy of sixteen years old and taught him the trade. Simon was his constant companoin, help mate, and student from then on. A very quick and efficient student, he must have been too, for the help he gave William in his later years.

In the boilers of that time if the water got below the crown sheet, the crown sheet would get red hot and generate steam so fast that the boiler would explode. William had one mill blow up this way and a man was killed, so for the safety of his mill and non he invented a safety plug for the boiler. This safety plug was made of lead run into a hole in the crown sheet; when the water got below the crown sheet the lead would melt out releasing the pressure in the boiler and the steam and water would put the fire out. William made this plug only for the protection of his own mills and didn't get a patent for it. However, an Easterner saw it and took out the patent for which he received a large sum of money. Now all boilers are equipped with this same safety plug.

In Parowan's old Church Building, now used as the Daughters of the Pioneers Building, William saved and turned out the nine wooden posts supporting the roof. This work is as beautiful as any turned out on modern machinery of to-day.

William was a very efficient and accurate person. There wasn't anything in his trades he couldn't do; he made a way and did it. This was proven many times by things many others had tried to do but failed and finally brought to him. He did the jobs very satisfactory. A knife that was used to cut shingles, was burned and lost the temper. Many tried to temper it but failed. It was, in the end, brought to William. He tempered it and today it is still cutting shingles. He also tempered steel drills that would drill through circular saw steel as if it were soft metal.

To make a long story short, we can truly say that William Wilcock was the best and most complete machinest and mechanic who crossed the Atlantic Ocean.

While working in England a minute piece of metal flying from the cutting point of a turning lathe, claimed the sight of one of William's eyes. A small triangle of wood thrown by the saw, while sawing tickets robbed him of his other eye, leaving

him totally blind. Now Simon Matheson was no doubt, appreciated more than ever as he was William's eyes. And as Mr Matheson adds, "Wilcock was the brains." William did much work even in his blind condition and could tell by the sound of machinery what the trouble was.

Ashton and Whitney got the idea of perpetual motion. William laughed at them but after he was blind, he got to thinking about it and even had a plan. He went so far as to have a small model made but his ideas never materialized.

Honesty was the policy of this good man, which is proved by the fact that when the Bank at Pioche, Nevada, over-paid him, he returned their money. He was not wealthy in a material sense, but he did provide his family a comfortable living.

One time he and his blind friend, William Morris were walking along and came upon a ditch, Mr. Morris asked, "William, can you see the reflection of the sun on the water?" "No", was the reply. They turned to cross the bridge and Wilcock hit his shin on the rail. Splash! He was in the ditch, water up around his waist. Believe it or not he never even lost his hat and blind Mr. Morris fished him out with a cane.

Children loved him and called him the candy man, for in his pockets were always peppermints, which he gave them to lead him across the streets. To day, in Parowan peppermints are called "Wilcock Candy."

William was active up to a short time before he passed away. Horace Thornton ordained him a Seventy Feb. 22, 1865. Thirty-one years later, June 22, 1896, he was ordained to the office of High Priest by Apostle F. M. Lyman.

His earth's work being completed, William was called home on Sept. 5, 1906. Burial was made in Parowan Sept. 7.

Those who knew him best say he was never too busy to impart freely of his knowledge to others. He was, indeed, very helpful. We can truthfully say the world is better for his having lived. To the "Wilcock" Family: What a wonderful heritage is ours! May our Father in Heaven help us carry the Torch of Progress forward."