

HISTORY OF EDWIN DURFEE

There are many Durphys, Durfeys, and Durfees. Geneology teaches us that our family of Durfees originated with a young French boy who first settled in Canada then later went East to join the Mormon Battalion and came to Utah with them.

My grandfather, Myron Bushnell Durfee, born in the year 1832 left his wife, Lerona Eliza Cahoon Durfee (no birth date), in Utah with the younger children, while he took my father and my father's older brother with him and came to the Almo valley where they homesteaded 200 acres of land with the campsite being on Almo Creek, about 1/8 of a mile west of the Almo bridge.

What a beautiful sight this valley was with grass waist high as far as the eye could see, waving gaily in the summer breeze to the tune of the babbling brook.

The only other person living there then was an old hermit by the name of Jim Sage who dwelled in the mountains orth-east of Almo. He promised to look in on the boys, who were to stay behind and watch over the small band of sheep and other livestock they had driven out with them, until grandfather returned with the rest of his family.

The boys had continual nightmares about seeing a bear or a Indian. They were by this time supposed to be civilized--the Indians, that is, but one still had a lot of respect for their past performances and did one's best to satisfy they requests for food or to trade horses. They weren't above stealing a critter or two if they could see they could get away with it. The boys, so the story goes, never let their flock stray very far.

One morning their pet dog set up a terrible howl in the willows not far away. They weren't sure whether a bear had him or an Indian was scalping him alive. Scared to death, they finally took their guns and crawled up through the grass to where the noise was, only to find their dear pet caught in one of their own traps.

They were very happy at the arrival of their parents sometime later. Then they built for themselves the home where Neil Durfee now lives just east of the Almo bridge. Within the next few years, other families from Northern Utah came to this valley. They still had to freight in all their supplies and do their legal business from Brigham City, Utah, and other towns in that area.

For means of support, as well as sport, in the winter time when the meat would keep, the men would hunt deer down by the wagon load. They would take them to these same Utah towns, sell the meat door to door, and trade the hides for salt, sugar, etc.

Wonder what would happen if one tried that today?

My father, Henry Miler Durfee, born November 7, 1867, in Salt Lake City, Utah, had met my mother, Rosa Florence Nichlos, born May 31, 1872, in Willard, Utah, while trading and doing business on one of his trips to Utah. They were married on November 3, 1889 in Almo and endowed in the Salt lake Temple on October 2, 1901.

In the meantime, Nancy Lerona, July 31, 1890, Ivan Leo, March 1, 1892; myself, Edwin Ruthvan, February 28, 1896; and baby sister, Rosa Florence, August 27, 1902, were born. Our first home was approximately 1 ½ miles north and 1/4 mile east of the Almo store.

One incident I recall is the day by friends and I had a wild bronco saddled, blindfolded, and snubbed to a post. As I climbed aboard and hollered, "Turn 'er loose!" they ripped off the

blindfold accidentally, taking the bridle as well. There I sat, high and dry in the saddle. What a ride I took that day!!

Another time, brother Leo and I decided to have a horse race. We were going great guns until my horse came to a sudden halt. I kept right on going. I plowed quite a furrow with my face. For days I looked like a raw, peeled onion.

One evening about dusk, my cousin, Harold Durfee, and I were walking around on our stilts, which put us about four feet off the ground. Having nothing better to do, we walked into the barn, shut the door, and were leaning up against the side of the wall shooting the breeze. My father was making his nightly check to see that all was well for the night and opened the barn door. Upon seeing two giants leaning against the wall, he whirled around and had the door shut tight before he realized who we were. We made sure he was out of hearing distance before we gave way to our side-splitting laughter!!

I was getting to be a lad of fifteen or so when my folks decided to build this rock house we now have as our home. This rock was all cut and hauled from the "Castles". I did most of the carpenter work under instructions from an experienced hand.

Around this time, my folks took Rebecka Louise Jones, born in 1907, a motherless waif, into our home to raise and care for until her older brother, John, came for her when she was eighteen. He took her to Boise, Idaho to live with him and his foster parents. We loved her as a sister. One of her most cherished possessions was a cupboard I made for her play dishes. It was handed down to my daughter, who had it even after she was married.

After my own marriage, I was kept busy running the ranch and taking on all odd jobs that came my way. During the depression of 1931, 1934, I furnished my own team of horses and worked helping to build a new road. When offered the job as road supervisor, the county was in dire need of a new road truck. Seeing our chance for our first vacation, we called Velma home and gave her one last chance to try being "boss", donned our Sunday Best, and in April of 1939, we climbed aboard the bus to Chicago, then back to Clintenville for the truck. A salesman showed us the sights for the next few days. We then went to Minnesota for the snowplow. We got lost on our way there, so pulled up in back alley to see if someone could help us find the factory where we were to pick up the snowplow. To our utter amazement, the man said, "This is it."

We stayed at the Dome Hotel in Minnesota for four days and were again shown the sights by some friends. We were gone from home fifteen days. We didn't think home could look so good! The boys must have learned their lesson well in earlier years, for they had given their sister nothing but the best in cooperation.

Then along came World War II. Virgil left first; then Howard, now married; then Harold. We farmers got along the best we could without our sons. When necessary at haying time, branding time, and the like, we would get together and get the job done.

After they were all back home again, we left Harold (now married) to look after things while we, along with Bud, Velma, and Doyle, took a sight-seeing trip to California. We had two new pickups and we put bows across the beds, covered them with canvass, threw in our camping gear, and set our course for Los Angeles. We stopped off in Utah to see the Zion and Bryce canyons, in Nevada to see the gambling casinos, and in Arizona to see the Roosevelt Dam.

So delightful was this trip, the following year we asked Doyle's Grandma and Grandpa Cahoon to join us. We headed for Oregon and Washington and Northern Idaho this time. The country sides again beautiful. We landed in Portland a day after an earthquake had shaken them up. We also witnessed the damage done to homes and a million dollar race track at Davenport on the outskirts of Portland.

On arriving in Seattle, Sis, Bud, and Doyle, having more adventure spirit than Grandpa Cahoon and I, headed by ferry from Port Angelese for the island of Vancouver, British Columbia. We waved them on voyage, then headed back home. They followed some days later.

Mother and I also made a trip by bus to see Howard and family, who have always lived in Oregon and Washington surrounded by pine trees.

Another time, Mother and I with Virgil, LaVerne, Max, and Jeannie, drove to Howard's home for Thanksgiving.

With Velma and Red in Oakley, and Virgin and LaVerne in American Falls, we confine our trips of later years to a weekend visits to see them and while away the evening hours with a game of Pinochle. (Which Sis can never beat unless she cheats.) In turn, they spend many a weekend with us here on the ranch.

Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home! And that is where we are at this writing and on the eve of our FIFTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY.

HISTORY OF JEANETTE BRACKENBURY DURFEE

My ancestors on both sides were English converts. My grandfather Henry Beecroft, born January 28, 1815, and wife Isabella Fraiser Beecroft, born in the year of 1816, and a goodly number of other converts, wanted most of all to come to America and dwell in the land of Zion with their American brothers. Upon arriving here, Grandfather settled in Council Bluffs, Ohio. Here he worked for a few years to reimburse himself for the trip West.

When they finally did get to Utah, they stayed but a few years. During this time, my mother was born at Bountiful, Utah, March 8, 1856. So disillusioned were they with the way a number of the Mormons were abusing their Religion, mainly polygamy, that my grandfather finally washed their hands of the Mormons and their way of life and took their family back to Council Bluffs. Thus my mother, Matilda Ann Beecroft, and her brothers and sisters were not raised up to be Mormons.

After attaining young womanhood, my mother again journeyed to Utah to visit her relatives. During this time, she met and married my father, Edwin Devalson Brackenbury, born July 17, 1855, and on January 20, 1875, they were married. He was L.D.S. in name only.

They went back to Ohio for a visit then back to Utah where three children, Edwin Devalson--February 20, 1876, Tillah--August 9, 1878, and Katherine--September 21, 1879, were born. Upon moving to Almo, Idaho, they built the home now owned by Bishop Asel Ward. Theodore--October 31, 1881, George--January 4, 1884, Henry--February 2, 1886, Isabella--May 8, 1888, myself, Jeanette--March 22, 1894 and the two other only surviving members of my family were born, Howard--March 29, 1896 and Clarence--December 8, 1899.

My mother being educated in the East, could never really get used to all of the ways of the West and especially the way the people slaughtered the King's English. This is illustrated by a story they tell of her brother-in-law who came dashing in one day to tell of a good old honest-to-goodness fist fight he had just witnessed. While giving this blow by blow description, he used the word "fit", "and they just 'fit' and 'fit'". My mother said, "Ben, Mr. Webster says the word is fought not 'fit'." She was somewhat startled to hear him say, "To hell with Webster, I still say they wuz a 'fitin'."

Her pride and joy was a parrot that talked. While she was away from tending her many community duties, her two eldest sons taught it to swear, something they were never allowed to do in her presence. So good did it become at using its newly learned vocabulary at the most embarrassing of moments, mother was forced to get rid of it.

Dad worked at farming, mining, other ranchers', and also served as Sheriff of Cassia County. For this, we moved to Albion, Idaho for a term, Albion being the county seat at that time. During their stay in Albion, my parents manage the local hotel. While roller skating one day, I fell but hard. My friend went running into the hotel and told Mother there had just been a terrible earthquake, Nettie fell down, she screams!!

I remember playing "horse" in Almo with brother Howard and his friend. They were the horse, me the driver. I accidently drove them into my play house, where the friend accidently knocked over my cupboard and broke all my dishes. This made brother Howard just as furious as I. We both turned on him in our fury. He lost no time in taking his leave. Poor boy!

We children were let to do as we pleased about religion. I was baptized on November 24, 1906. My brother, Clarence, was the only other member of our family who was baptized.

I have know my husband, Edwin Ruthvan Durfee, all my life. For our first date, he walked my to Mutual. We dated each other as well as others for a few years. Then finally went steady for four years.

Due to the fact that Henry Ford was still playing with the idea of a horseless carriage, our courting days were done the good old fashioned way, horse and buggy. I recall on one occasion, Edwin and I got lost while traveling to Elba, Idaho to a play, during a snow storm. By brother, George, and many of our friends came looking for us. We set out a lighted lantern by which the search party could find us. With this done, we just sat down, wrapped up in blankets, and waited for someone to come along and find us.

We were married on May 1, 1916, at Albion, Idaho. Our first home was a little log house on the north side of where the cow barn in now located. The spot is still marked by lilac bushes, that bloom every spring, and by the still visible but rotting foundation of our small, but comfortable home. We have many fond memories of our first home and everytime we pass it on our way to town, we are reminded of them. It was here that we were blessed with four thoughtful, loving, sweet, and wonderful children. They were named as follows: Velma B.--April 23, 1917, Virgil--August 11, 1921, and a very pleasing surprise of twins, Harold and Howard--April 21, 1924.

During my spare moments (which were few), I worked in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints and held the following positions: Secretary of the Primary, Visiting Teacher in Relief Society, taught Sunday School, worked on the Stake Board as Magazine Agent, plus all of the many community organizations that came along.

My husband played on the community baseball teams, took active parts in our dramas (which were directed by my mother), sang in the Church Choir and Barber Shop Quartet, took charge of our home evenings, was Road Over Supervision for years, and drove the school bus from Almo to Malta for twelve years. He was a respected and tactful rancher and spent his few spare moments hunting with which he became noted as an excellent shot.

Our children gave us many hours of pleasure and a few of anxiety, seeing them through their measels, mumps, and later growing up through their "teenage".

As we watched our children grow and develop, many different talents, we formed ideas as to what they would become. We thought Velma would grow up to be an actress--always showing off.

Virgil showed a great deal of interest in being a Chef. He was into my cupboards, mixing milk, eggs, jellies, or anything he could find then he would stir them all together and sample his newest creation. This kept up until one day he happened to spice one of his creations with cayenne pepper. All of a sudden, he seemed to lose his desire to become a chef.

Harold spent time in the Hawaiian Islands but saw nothing so beautiful as the old milk cows plus that rich aroma of a cow barn. Well, anyway, we knew he would be our farmer.

Howard was to have been a fire chief. His love for setting the barns and fields on fire was great fun until his father firmly and gently discouraged the passion. So he had to settle for a job with the newspaper and at this writing, is the Editor-in-Chief of a newspaper in Washington.

Dad and I were sadly in need of an errand and chore boy when Doyle came to live with us. He filled these positions very adequately, and soon won the hearts of all the towns people as he had ours.

We had our “ups and downs” as do all parents and children, for he does seem like “our boy.”

If Doyle wanted fried potatoes, his grandfather wanted hash browns, If grandfather wanted cream style corn, grandson wanted whole kernel. I had to be careful and see that one got his likes one day and the other, the next day. Remember your liking for cinnamon toast, Doyle, and grandpa making such a fuss over the smell of it?

He was a good dependable worker and helped his Uncle Harold all he could with the work on the ranch. They loved being together, mostly to playfully argue. Then again a few of those arguments got a little serious.

I can think of scores of memories; if I were to write them all, it would fill a book and might even sound like bragging a bit.

So I’ll just say, we did all indeed miss him when he went once more to live with his mother.

All in all, we’ve had a good life. Our children are all married and have given us, up to date of this writing, eleven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.