

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 in 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 managed the local hotel. While rollerskating 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 playhouse, 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 known my husband, Edwin Ruthvan Durfee, all my life. For our first date, he walked me 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 snowstorm. My 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 is 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 every time 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 measles, 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.