

Biographies of

**GEORGE WASHINGTON GIBSON, 1800 – 1871**

and

**MARY ANN SPARKS GIBSON, 1802 - 1871**

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## INTRODUCTION

No autobiographies of George W. Gibson or Mary Ann Sparks could be found. As a result, most of the information in this document describes things related to facts that might have affected their lives. All dates and locations were taken from Reference 1 unless otherwise noted.

Most of the information contained herein was obtained from books, internet sources, and copies of photographs and documents received from my cousins (Wesley and Betty Jean Gibson, Patsy Gibson Anderson, and Tami Stibal Nelson). Much of the life of George W. is duplicated in a biography of Robert P. Gibson (Ref. 39).

Travel in the early and mid-1800s was very, very different from today. Unless you had a horse (or wagon pulled by oxen or horses), you generally had to walk since trains were few and far between (and too expensive for poor people). George W. and Mary Ann took their family in a wagon train from Mississippi to the Great Salt Lake area in 1846 and 1847, a distance of over a thousand miles including a detour to Pueblo (before Colorado was a state) for the winter. Wagon trains could travel up to 20 miles a day in good weather if the road was flat with no ruts or mud and no breakdowns of the wagons. Usually they averaged only 10 to 12 miles per day.

George W. and Mary Ann and their children were true pioneers of the West. They were among the first 400 people to settle the Salt Lake Valley. Today it is the area including Salt Lake City that is surrounded by mountains on three sides and the Great Salt Lake on the side to the west. Both George W. and Mary Ann are listed as Utah Pioneers in the Utah Pioneer Museum in Salt Lake City.

The birth and of death dates of most persons named herein are usually shown in parentheses such as (1827–1909).

## GEORGE’S EARLY YEARS

According to Reference 1, George Washington Gibson was born June 17, 1800 in Union County, South Carolina. He was the son of Robert (1778–1860) and Mary Evans Gibson (1780–1865) who were married on October 16, 1792 in Campbell, Virginia (a British Colony). Robert and Mary would have been only 14 and 12 years old respectively. Furthermore, her first child was born six years later in 1798 when she was 20 years old. It is possible that their marriage date and/or their birth dates may be incorrect.

Reference 1 shows George W. was the second child in the family with one older sister, Mary Ann. There were three children in the family before the Gibson family apparently moved from Union County to Mississippi.

Table 1. Children of Robert and Mary Evans Gibson

Children & <u>Future Spouse</u>	Birth Year Death Year <u>Marriage Year</u>	Birth Location Death Location <u>Marriage Location</u>
Mary Ann	1798	Union, South Carolina
Amon Sparks	after 1821 1814	Arizona Union, South Carolina
<b>George Washington</b>	17 June 1800	Union, South Carolina
<b>Mary Ann Sparks</b>	17 Aug 1871 15 March 1822	Duncan’s Retreat, Utah Union, South Carolina
Robert	1802	Union, South Carolina
unknown	1860 unknown	unknown unknown
William	about 1804	Monroe, Mississippi
unknown	unknown unknown	unknown unknown
Ruth	about 1806	Monroe, Mississippi
unknown	before 1877 unknown	unknown unknown
Prudence	about 1808	Monroe, Mississippi
unknown	before 1887 unknown	unknown unknown

The U.S. census of 1800 (recorded August 4, 1800) for Union, South Carolina shows two Robert Gibson families. Table 2 below shows the numbers of people in each age category for the census for both of the Robert Gibson families (shown as “a” and “b”) and for the Gibson family members shown in Reference 1.

Table 2. 1800 Census data for Union, SC, for Robert Gibson Family Members.

	1800 Census Robert (a)	1800 Census Robert (b)	Table 1 Ref. 1, Name & age
White male under 10	1	2	1 George W. 1
White male 10-15			
White male 16-25			1 Robert 22 (father)
White male 26-44	1	1	
White male 45+			
White female under 10	4	1	1 Mary Ann 2
White female 10-15	2		
White female 16-25			1 Mary 20 (mother)
White female 26-44	1	1	
White female 45+			
All others			
Slaves			
Totals	9	5	4

The 1800 census data for Robert (b) nearly match the data from Reference 1 with the following differences:

1. The census shows two males under 10. It is possible the Gibson family had another boy who is not shown in Reference 1 who may have died at an early age.
2. The census shows one male and one female between 26 and 44 years old. While Robert was 22 and Mary was only 20, it is possible that the wrong birth dates were given to the census recorder or that Robert and are older than shown in Reference 1.
3. These census data may not be for the Robert and Mary Gibson family.

The birth dates in Table 1 imply that sometime between 1802 and about 1804, the Gibson family moved to Monroe County, Mississippi, where another boy was added to the family in about 1804: William. Reference 1 shows that Robert also had two daughters born in Monroe, Ruth (1806-1877 or earlier) and Prudence (1808-1887). However, no census records could be found for any Robert Gibson family in 1810 in Mississippi. Here are several possible explanations:

1. It is possible that the Gibson family moved back to South Carolina before 1810 since there is the record of a Robert Gibson in Union in the 1810 census for that Union County.
2. It is possible that the last three children in Table 1 are not part of the Gibson family and that the Gibson family did not ever move from South Carolina.
3. It is possible that the last three children in Table 1 were actually born in South Carolina (not Mississippi).

While no 1810 census data could be found for a Robert Gibson family, the 1810 census for Union, South Carolina, shows a Robert Gibson family. Table 3 below shows the numbers of people in each age category for the Robert Gibson family and for Table 1.

Table 3. 1810 Census data for Union, SC, for Robert Gibson Family Members.

	1810 Census Union, SC	Table 1 Ref. 1	
White male under 10	1	2 (or 1)	Robert 8, William 6
White male 10-15	1	1	George W. 10
White male 16-25			
White male 26-44		1	Robert 31 (father)
White male 45+	1		
White female under 10		2 (or 0)	Ruth 4, Prudence 2
White female 10-15	1	1	Mary Ann 12
White female 16-25			
White female 26-44	1	1	Mary 30 (mother)
White female 45+			
All others			
Slaves			
Totals	5	8 (or 5)	

Regarding Table 3, there are several discrepancies:

1. The census shows only one boy under 10. Reference 1 shows William's date of death is unknown so it is possible he died before 1810. It is also possible that Table 1 is incorrect and William is not part of the Gibson family.
2. The census shows the oldest male is over 45. Robert would have been only 31 for the 1810 census (his birth date was November 11, 1778 as shown in Reference 1). This discrepancy is not easily explained. Maybe the census taker was given the wrong age (or Robert is older than shown in Reference 1).
3. The census does not show the two girls under 10. Maybe the two girls died before 1810. Per Reference 1, Ruth died before 1877 per Reference 1 and Prudence died before 1887. Another possibility is that these two girls are not part of the Robert and Mary Gibson family.
4. Another possibility is that these census data are not for the family of Robert and Mary Gibson.

Robert was a farmer, it is likely that George W. spent his first four or five years like most children on farms; playing and having fun while growing up. After he was about six years old, he probably attended school very little (or not at all) and had farming chores to keep him busy much of the time.

The older sister of 14-year old George W., Mary Ann, married Amon Sparks (about 1790-1835) in 1814 in Union, South Carolina. Eight years later, Amon's sister, Mary Ann Sparks, would marry George W. in 1822 in Union. These marriages locations add more confidence to the possibility that the Robert and Mary Gibson family did not move from South Carolina to Mississippi.

No census data could be found for 1820 and 1830 in Union, South Carolina or in Monroe, Mississippi for Robert Gibson.



## MARY ANN SPARK'S EARLY YEARS

According to Reference 1, Mary Ann was born on June 10, 1802 in Union, South Carolina. Her parents were Josiah (1761–1852) and Lydia Tollison Sparks (1771-1859) who were married in Spartanburg, South Carolina in about 1789.

The 1800 U.S. census for Union, South Carolina shows two Josiah Sparks families as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. 1800 Census data for Josiah Sparks Family Members in Union, SC.

	1800 Census Josiah (a)	1800 Census Josiah (b)		Reference 1
White male under 10	2	3	3	Amon, Thomas, John
White male 10-15				
White male 16-25				
White male 26-44	1	1	1	Josiah (father)
White male 45+	1	1		
White female under 10		3	2	Nancy, Elizabeth
White female 10-15	1	1		
White female 16-25				
White female 26-44		1	1	Lydia (mother)
White female 45+				
All others				
Slaves				
Totals	5	10	7	

The 1800 census in Table 4 for Josiah (b) could be the family of Josiah and Lydia. However, there are three more people than shown in reference 1. The missing male over 45 could be Josiah's father or an uncle who could have been living with them. The missing two females, one under 10 and one between 10 and 15, could be relatives or could be daughters that are missing from Reference 1.

One Josiah Sparks family was found in the 1810 census for Spartanburg, South Carolina; however, it had only two family members. Another J. Sparks family was found in Greenville, South Carolina; however, it had only five family members. The family of Josiah and Lydia had about 12 members in 1810. Even if all children over 15 had moved out by 1810, there would have been eight in the family.

In 1814 in Union, South Carolina, Amon Sparks (1790–1835) married Mary Ann Gibson (1798-unknown).

Based on the birth locations of her siblings, Mary Ann Sparks grew up in Union and moved about 25 miles to Spartanburg, South Carolina some time between 1814 and 1820. Apparently, Mary Ann met George W. Gibson in Union or Spartanburg and in 1822, and she married George W. in Union.

## THEIR MARRIED YEARS

George W. was 21 when he married 20-year old Mary Ann Sparks on March 15, 1822 in Union, South Carolina (another old source in Reference 1 shows a marriage date of August 17, 1833 in Claiborne County, Mississippi). They had five children while living in Union County, South Carolina.

Table 5. Children of George W. and Mary Ann Sparks Gibson in Union, South Carolina.

<u>Children &amp; Future Spouse</u>	<u>Birth Year &amp; Location</u>	<u>Death Year &amp; Location</u>	<u>Marriage Date &amp; Location</u>
Mary Denise William New	12 Dec 1823 Union, SC	<i>after 1850*</i> Unknown	<i>1846-1847*</i> Pueblo, Colorado
Robert Malek	17 Aug 1824 Union, SC	18 Nov 1828 Union, SC	
Lydia Ardelicia Elinor Gilbert Hunt	31 July 1826 Union, SC	16 Feb 1915 Springville, UT	<i>7 Jan 1847 (not 1846)*</i> Pueblo, Colorado
<b>Robert Pulaski</b> <b>Lucinda Wakefield</b>	23 April 1827 Union, SC	21 May 1909 Menan, ID	15 Feb 1855 Millcreek, Salt Lake, UT
William Washington	3 April 1829 Union, SC	15 Dec 1831 Unknown	

Notes regarding Table 5:

1. Mary Denise and Lydia were both married in late 1846 or early 1847 since that is when the Gibson family was staying temporarily in Fort Pueblo before travelling to Utah Territory in the spring of 1847.
2. The death of Mary Denise's death was no earlier than the winter of 1846-1847 when she married in Fort Pueblo. She is listed as "Polly" in the 1850 census for the George W. Gibson in the County of Great Salt Lake, Utah Territory (see Fig. 4 and 5). Therefore, her death was after 1850.

Mary Denise's name is sometimes spelled Denisia, Densia, Danisia, Denisa, Denesia, Deniza, etc. while Robert Pulaski's name is sometimes spelled Pulasky, Palaski, Pilasky, Pilaskey, Pilaski, etc.)

The birthplace of the above children is sometimes shown as being in Union Station, Union County. There was no village or town by that name but there was a railroad station in the town of Unionville (now named Union) so it is possible the local area was called Union Station because of the railroad station.

There is no record of the Gibson family in the 1830 U.S. census for Union County.

Reference 8 states the Gibson family moved about 30 miles south to Newberry, South Carolina. This move is probably based on the fact there is a George Gibson family recorded in the 1830 census for Newberry County, South Carolina which was about 30 miles to the south of Union County. That census shows five people in the family: two males under five years of age, one male of 20 to 30, one female of 20 to 30, and one male slave under 10 years old. However, the George W. Gibson family also had two girls less than ten years of age in the family. Because of the missing two girls in the census, it is likely that this census record is not for the family of George W. Gibson. It is possible that the Gibson family was in the process of moving during the time the census was recorded and they were not counted.

Based on the birth locations of their children, the Gibson family moved about 500 miles west between the years 1829 and 1832 to Monroe County in the northeastern part of Mississippi, another cotton-growing area. This would not have been a simple move and would have taken 25 to 50 days since they had to walk or ride in a wagon pulled by horses or oxen at about ten to twenty miles a day.

A review of all 1830 U.S. census data for Mississippi found only one George Gibson family; however, it is for a George P. Gibson and does not match the George W. family.

As shown in Table 6, six children of the Gibson family were born in Mississippi.

Table 6. Children of George W. and Mary Ann Sparks Gibson born in Mississippi.

<u>Children &amp; Future Spouse</u>	<u>Birth Year &amp; Location</u>	<u>Death Year &amp; Location</u>	<u>Marriage Date &amp; Location</u>
Frances Abigail Alvin "General" Green	15 May 1832 Monroe, MS	23 Oct 1913 S Cottonwood, UT	27 Nov 1850 Salt Lake City, UT
William Gilbert "Frits" Cynthia Purlee Lockhart	1 Sep 1834 MS	2 Nov 1908 Tombstone AZ	18 Feb 1859 Salt Lake City, UT
Laura Altha James Andrus	27 June 1837 Monroe, MS	4 July 1905 St George, UT	11 Mar 1857 Big Cottonwood, UT
Moses Washington Electra Ann Badger	21 Jan 1740 Monroe, MS	14 Feb 1912 St Thomas, NV	30 Jan 1871 Salt Lake City, UT
Manomas "Nome" Lovina James Andrus	10 Mar 1842 Monroe, MS	31 May 1940 St George, UT	20 Sep 1862 Salt Lake City, UT
Joseph Smith Ann Maria Poll	24 Oct 1844 Parkersburg, MS	22 July 1892 Globe, AZ	about 1864 U.S.A.

Education of the children was probably very limited in Mississippi. In rural areas of the South in the early 1800s before the Civil War, most children were educated at home to ready them for their future. Most often for boys and young men, their future consisted of working to help support the family.

The U.S. 1840 census for Monroe, Mississippi (Table 7) shows a George W. Gibson. Contrary to what is written in Reference 2, the census shows that the Gibson family did not have any slaves.

Table 7. U.S. Census for Monroe, Mississippi for George W. Gibson Family Members, June 1, 1840

	1840 Census	Tables 1 & 2 (Ref. 1)	George W. Gibson Family Members & age (Ref. 1)
White male under 5	1	1	William G 5, Moses 5 mo.
White male 5-9	1		
White male 10-14	1	1	Robert P 13, (William W 11, died 1831) (Robert M died 1828)
White male 15-19			
White male 20-29			
White male 30-39	1	1	George W 39 (father)
White male 40-49			
White male 50-59			
White male 60-69			
White male 70-79			
White male 80-89			
White male 90-99			
White male 100+			
White female under 5	1	1	Laura 2
White female 5-9	1	1	Frances 8
White female 10-14	1	1	Lydia 13
White female 15-19	1	1	Mary D. 16
White female 20-29	1		
White female 30-39		1	Mary Ann 32 (mother)
White female 40-49			
White female 50-59			
White female 60-69			
White female 70-79			
White female 80-89			
White female 90-99			
White female 100+			
Free Colored			
Slaves			
Total	9	8	
Employed: Agriculture	2		

The census in Table 7 shows one boy between five and nine years old while the data from Reference 1 does not show any males of that age. This discrepancy is unresolved since data from the 1850

census are consistent with the data from Reference 1. One explanation is that William W. died between 1840 and 1850 and could have been counted as under 10 years of age during the census.

In February 1841, George W. received a land patent for 40 acres in Monroe County (see arrow in Figure 1). Land obtained by land patent and the U.S. Cash Act could be purchased for \$1.25 per acre with no conditions or restrictions. On today's map, it would have been located about ten miles east of the town of Aberdeen near Guin Road and Grubb Springs Road. In this relatively unpopulated area, George W. and the older children probably spent most of their time building a cabin or house, clearing the land of trees and other plants, plowing, planting, harvesting cotton or other crops, and caring for their animals (e.g., cows, chickens, etc.).

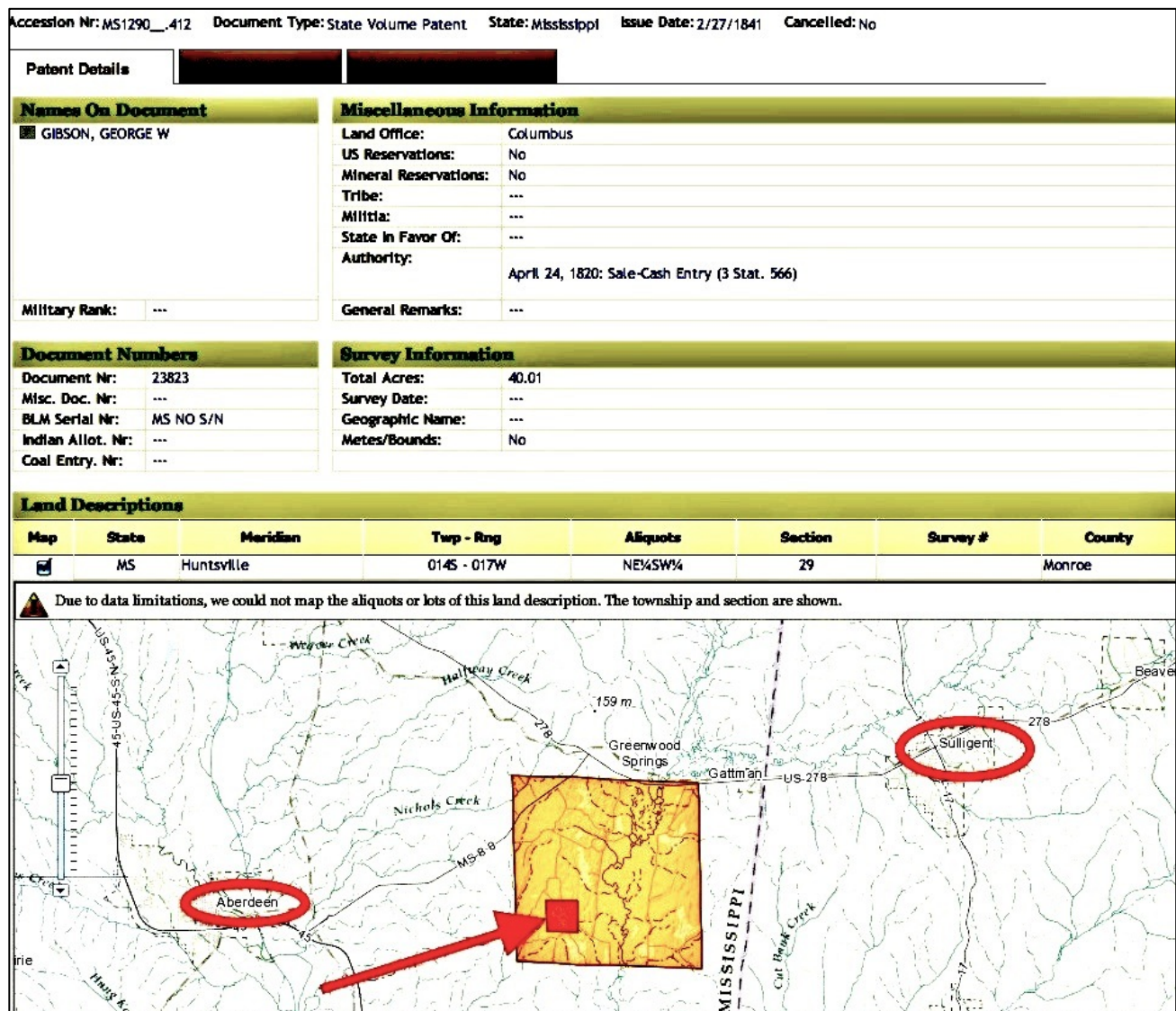


Figure 1. Location of land patent purchased in 1841 by Robert's father in Mississippi (Ref. 16).

George W., Mary Ann, and their children joined the Church of the Latter Day Saints and were baptized at various times between 1843 and 1845. They were in the Tombigbee Branch of the LDS, which was named after the nearby Tombigbee River (Ref. 7).

Sometime before April 1846, George W. applied for another land grant for \$100 for 80 acres to add to his existing 40 acres. His total investment was \$150 for both properties; however, he did not farm the last 80 acres because the Gibson family moved out of the area before he received the title dated September 1, 1846.

In the early 1840s, there was a great deal of discrimination against members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and the LDS founder, Joseph Smith, was murdered in 1844. LDS Leader Brigham Young urged church members to leave the United States and migrate west to the almost uninhabited northern part of the Republic of Mexico (Ref. 31). The Gibson family answered the call and decided to make the long trip to the area, which was sparsely populated almost entirely by Indians.

John Brown was sent by Brigham Young to organize the group in Mississippi. In later years, the group became known by several names: the John Brown Company, the Mississippi Saints, and the Mississippi Company.

During the trip, William Crosby was selected to be the group travel leader and the Gibson family travelled with 13 other LDS families (Ref. 7 and page 426 of Ref. 5). One of Robert's cousins, George Washington Sparks (1819-1906), his wife (Luanna Roberds), and two children (Mary Ann and Thomas William) were also in the Mississippi Saints group (Ref. 24).

Besides Crosby, Brown, Sparks, and Gibson, the last names of the other families were Crow, Dowdle, Harmon, Holladay, Kartchner, Little, Mathews, Myers, Ritter, Roberds, Smithson, and Threlkel (Ref. 1). Two of the single people were Chesney and Terrill.

In 1845, an LDS publication, *Nauvoo Neighbor*, printed an extensive list of suggested provisions each family should take on the long journey (Ref. 31). "The provisions included 2 to 3 yoke of oxen, 2 milk cows, other livestock, arms and ammunition, 15 lb of iron, pulleys and ropes, fishing gear, farming and mechanical equipment, cooking equipment and at least 1000 pounds of flour plus assorted other foodstuffs."

The Gibson family left their farm on April 8, 1846, when Robert was almost 19 years old, and started the long trip in the wagon train. They had one wagon drawn by two pair of oxen and one cow but they did not have much money to assist them during their months-long journey. According to Reference 3, the Gibson children rode in the wagon. This implies that the others generally had to walk.

Their original plan was to travel about 1300 miles to Fort Laramie (Wyoming Territory) where they would join a much larger group call the Pioneers, led by President Brigham Young (Ref. 6, p. 31 and p. 32). Then the combined group would cross the Rocky Mountains to get to the Salt Lake Valley. At that time, the state of Utah did not exist and was part of a huge area owned by Mexico that was called either Upper California or New California. The Salt Lake Valley was in the northeastern corner of that area.

They travelled about 250 miles north to the Iron Banks bluffs where they crossed the Mississippi River (near present-day Columbus, Kentucky). From there, they cut west across Missouri and travelled about 400 miles to Independence, Missouri where they arrived on May 26. In seven weeks,

they averaged only about 12 miles per day. Oxen do not walk at a fast rate while pulling a heavy wagon and they stopped frequently for repairs to the wagons and equipment.

Another wagon train, which later became known as the Donner Party (the subject of books and a movie), departed Independence on May 12, two weeks before the Mississippi Company arrived. Apparently, the Mississippi Company caught up with the Donner Party during the next few weeks (Ref, 19).

They followed the Oregon Trail about 300 miles to Grand Island, Nebraska and another 350 miles to Fort Bernard, a trading post about eight miles east of Fort Laramie (near the locations of Fort William and Fort John) in Wyoming Territory (Ref. 3 and Ref. 5, p. 426). While on their way, they had many problems with Indians. In one case, Indians stole one pair of oxen belonging to George Threlkel (Ref. 8). The group saw their first sighting of buffalo where “the whole country was covered with them” (Ref. 5, p. 426).

Finding no sign of the Pioneers in Independence, they continued on to the Fort Laramie area near the Platte River and again found no sign of the Brigham Young Company. Reference 7 describes the actions taken next by the Mississippi Company:

“Arriving on the Platte River, the Mississippians were disappointed not to see the curling smoke of Brigham Young’s campfires. No word awaited them. The non-Mormons [*the Donner Party*] left with another group going to Oregon; and after a lonely night and day on the riverbank, the men hunkered in a circle to discuss their situation. Although some objected strongly, the majority concluded that the Saints must surely be traveling ahead of them up the north side of the river. They packed up their pans and unburned buffalo chips and pressed the oxen for speed. The exhausting days that followed were punctuated by frightening events—the threat of a Pawnee raid, stampeding horses and cattle, the first buffalo hunt, a midnight gale that uprooted tents and overturned small wagons, and a nighttime visit by Indians that left the travelers missing a mare and two colts before the Mississippians discovered the shadowy thieves. Worst of all was the news from returning California travelers that there were no Mormons on the trail ahead of them.”

As noted above, the Donner Party did not want to wait for winter to end before crossing the mountains and they continued on their journey. They made a number of poor decisions and it is well known that the Donner Party became snowbound in the Sierra Nevada Mountains in November 1846 after crossing the Rocky Mountains and the Great Salt Lake Desert. Only 48 of their 87 people survived to reach California in January 1847.

The Mississippi Company learned that the Brigham Young Company was detained at their “Winter Quarters” in Florence near what today is called Omaha, Nebraska. They would not proceed until after the winter months.

Apparently, the Fort Laramie area was not a suitable place to spend the winter of 1846-1847 and the Mississippi Company decided to travel several hundred miles south to the small Spanish fort of Pueblo near the Arkansas River. The Mississippi Company left the Fort Laramie area on July 10, 1846 and according to Reference 7, the following happened during their journey:

“Mr. Richards [their local leader] introduced them to friendly Indians in the next few days, one of whom fancied a young married woman in the company. He offered her husband five horses and was quite insulted when the offer was refused. He insisted. He would treat her well; he was not poor. Other Indians began to gather around and nod in agreement, and Richards sensed an imminent fight. So he explained to them that the Americans, like Indians, did not like to sell their squaws to strangers. He himself had been among other Indians for five years before they suggested selling him a wife. With a few grumbles, the Indians conceded and walked away.”

They arrived at Fort Pueblo in less than one month on August 7 (Ref. 7 and Ref. 6, p. 30). The fort housed only six or eight mountaineers and their families (Ref. 5, p. 428). The mountaineers gave them food in exchange for labor. The Mississippi Company immediately began building log huts along the river about a half-mile from Fort Pueblo and preparing food for the winter (Ref. 3). Reference 7 gives a description of the activity:

“Francis Parkman, famous western traveler and writer, recorded in his *The Oregon Trail*: “After half an hour’s riding we saw the white wagons of the Mormons drawn up among the trees [in the wide and well-timbered bottom of the Arkansas]. Axes were sounding, trees were falling, and log huts going up along the edge of the woods and upon the adjoining meadow.” He adds a familiar note: “As we came up the Mormons left their work and seated themselves on the timber around us, when they began earnestly to discuss points of theology.” George Ruxton, whose *Life in the Far West* is a basic source on the West in the early 1840s, said that the Mississippians were “a far better class than the generality of Mormons, and comprised many wealthy and respectable farmers.” In addition to their hunting, they planted a turnip patch and also some pumpkins, beans, and melons, and worked for the trappers, who paid them in corn. The near-year they spent in Pueblo made them the first group to establish a religious colony in the West since Father Junipero Serra and his associates founded Catholic missions in 1769. They also thus founded the first of more than five hundred Latter-day Saint communities in the Far West in the years that followed. The first white births in Colorado were to these Mississippi women at Pueblo.”

“They also built a log church house for meetings, preaching, and socials. Ruxton notes that the mountain men joined these festivities, attracted by the “many really beautiful [Mississippi] girls who sported their tall, graceful figures at the frequent fandangoes.” He notes, slyly, that “a party of mountaineers,” arriving “at the temple” for a dance, were rather taken aback by finding themselves in for a sermon, which one of the elders delivered preparatory to the “physical exercises.”

The above description of the “beautiful Missourian [Mississippian] girls” must have included the two older Gibson girls: Mary and Lydia, who were 23 and 20 years of age.

The Mormon Battalion (formed for one-year for Mexican War duty) heard about the Mississippi Company being in Pueblo for the winter. Women, children, and sick soldiers who accompanied the Battalion were slowing them down. To make things easier for the Battalion, they sent many of those slower people to Pueblo in October, November, and December 1846. This greatly enlarged the Pueblo population by 159 men, 29 women, and 43 children. The new people of Pueblo needed clothing and they started using deerskins, which they purchased from mountain hunters (Ref. 8).



While in Fort Pueblo, the two oldest sisters were married: Mary to a wealthy older man, William New (1802–1850), and Lydia to a Mormon Battalion soldier, Gilbert Hunt (1825–1858) (Ref. 5).

The winter was very harsh and many in the group became sick. George W. was fortunate that the people of Pueblo were very generous. They helped him with food and shelter when he was sick in bed for 30 days during the spring of 1847 with what was probably typhoid fever. Because of his lack of money, he and his family had to depend on the generosity and kindness of the people living in the fort to provide food during the time he was ill. Daughter Manomas provided some information regarding the situation (Ref. 5, p. 437-438):

“My father, mother and eight children [*there were nine children counting Manomas*] were on their way to Utah with the company of Saints from Mississippi where father developed a severe case of what they thought was malaria fever, though it was most likely typhoid fever. Fearing that he would die before we ever reached our destination the leaders advised mother to stay in Pueblo until he was better, or until his death so he could receive a proper burial. Of course, I didn’t understand all this at the time as I was only about five years old. I do remember well though, the kindness of the Spanish women living in Pueblo and their immaculate cleanliness. Though their homes were logs as I remember them, the floors were scrubbed snowy white and everything seemed spotless to me.”

“Father being too sick to work, we were dependent upon the kindness of the people for our food and well I remember having these kind women take me and my baby brother to their homes and give us our dinner. And such good dinners they were, too. Most of the homes had their flowers and gardens, so the people seemed very well fixed to our childish eyes. The Indians were troublesome though as they were in all settlements, and I can plainly remember seeing some of the sitting on the floor as mother was stringing green beans for dinner. As a bean would fall they would grab it, chew it up, then spit it at her. But she didn’t pay any attention, just went on with here work, for we had to try to avoid trouble with them at all costs. Most of the people living in Pueblo were Spanish, thought a few were English, American and other nationalities, but the kindness of the Spanish mothers made a lasting impression upon my mind.”

In the spring of 1847, the Mississippi Company was notified that Brigham Young’s Pioneers would be continuing their trip to the Salt Lake Valley (Ref. 19). While some of the Mississippi Company (the Crow family per Ref. 5, p. 430) departed such that they arrived at the Fort Laramie area on June 1, another group with some members of the Mormon Battalion planned to leave Pueblo a short time later and follow the trail of the earlier group. Amasa Lyman was sent on June 3 to help guide the second group (Ref. 23, p. 293-294).

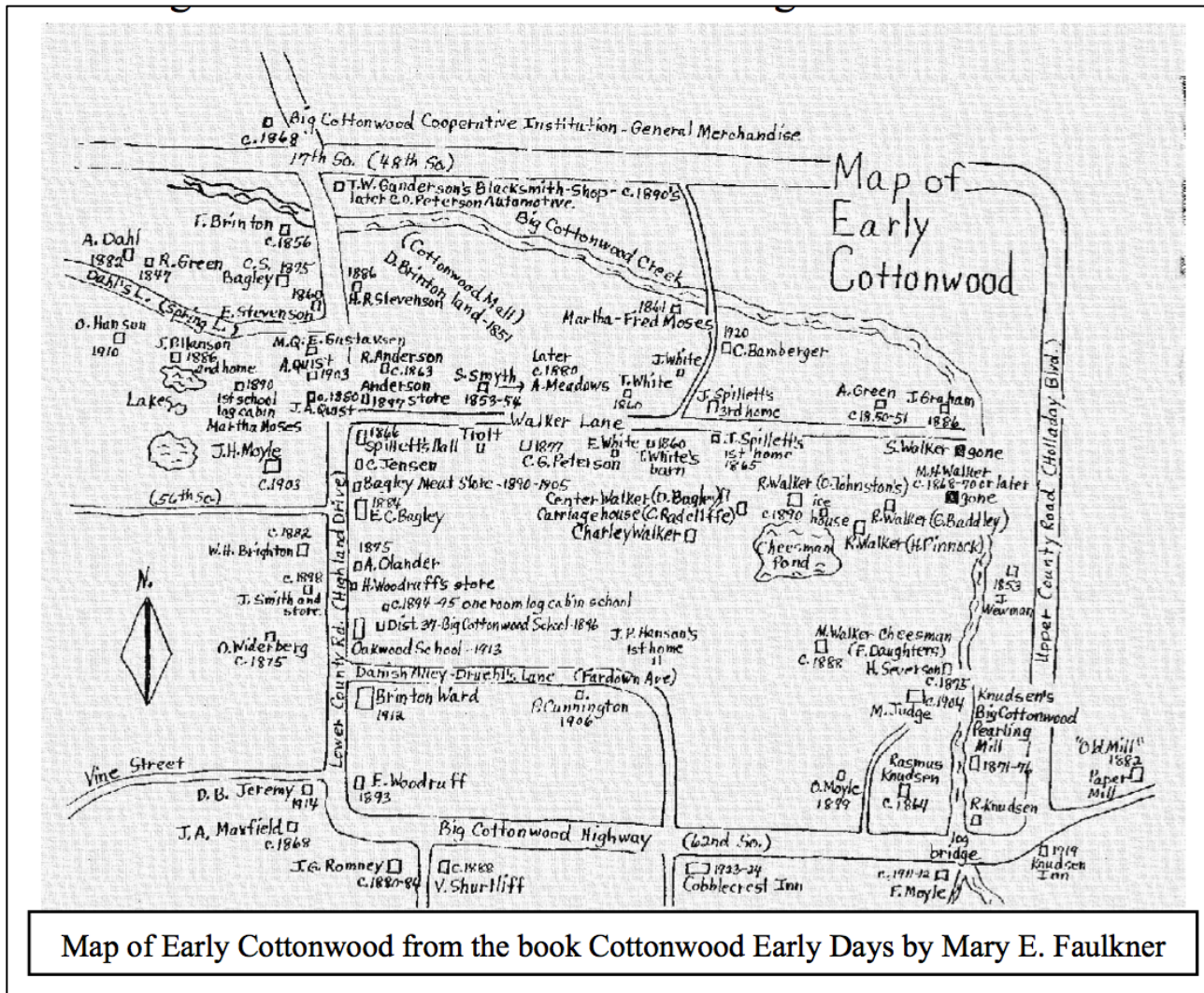
Robert’s father had recovered from his serious illness and the family was again ready to travel. The second group included the Gibson family along with many of the Battalion soldiers and the remaining Mississippi Company. They departed on May 24, 1847 and apparently, met their appointed guide, Amasa Lyman, while on the trail (Ref. 19).

They arrived at Fort Laramie three days after the Pioneer group (Ref. 19) had left and continued their wagon train to the Salt Lake Valley behind the Pioneers. This part of the trip by the Pioneers is documented in References 7, 19, 20, and 21.

They crossed the South Pass of the Rocky Mountains (Ref. 6, p. 33) and arrived in the Salt Lake Valley on July 29, 1847, five days after the Pioneer group. With their arrival, the number of immigrants in the Salt Lake Valley was about 400 (Ref. 6, p. 34).

The Gibson family first lived in Mill Creek (about 6 miles southeast of where Salt Lake City is located today) but soon moved to Big Cottonwood in the spring of 1848 where they built a shelter of “willows” (Ref. 8). The following was stated by Manomas, the daughter of George W.: “When the Gibson’s arrived in Salt Lake City they were almost destitute but the father soon built a log cabin in Cottonwood in which to house his family” (Ref. 4).

Big Cottonwood was located about 6 miles southeast of Mill Creek, near the mouth of Cottonwood Canyon. Soon they built a log cabin to provide a more permanent shelter (Ref. 13). According to Reference 38, George W. “built the first house on the South side of Big Cottonwood Creek.” Reference 13 has a map showing the location of the Gibson cabin. It is in the northeast corner with the name “A. Green c1850-51.” The cabin is on the North side of Walker Lane next to Big Cottonwood Creek (Fig. 2). A photo taken in 1910 of the cabin (Ref. 13) is shown in Figure 3.



Map of Early Cottonwood from the book Cottonwood Early Days by Mary E. Faulkner

Figure 2. Early Map of Cottonwood (Ref. 13).

The Gibson family depended on farm crops to survive. However, in June of 1848, the Salt Lake Valley was invaded by crickets that started to destroy the fields of grain and corn. “The grain, however, was mostly saved by the arrival of immense flocks of sea gulls, which devoured the crickets” (Ref. 9, p. 35).

In 1850, a nephew, George Washington Sparks, and his family left for California where they opened a boarding house about three miles south of Placerville in the area now called Diamond Springs (Ref. 24).

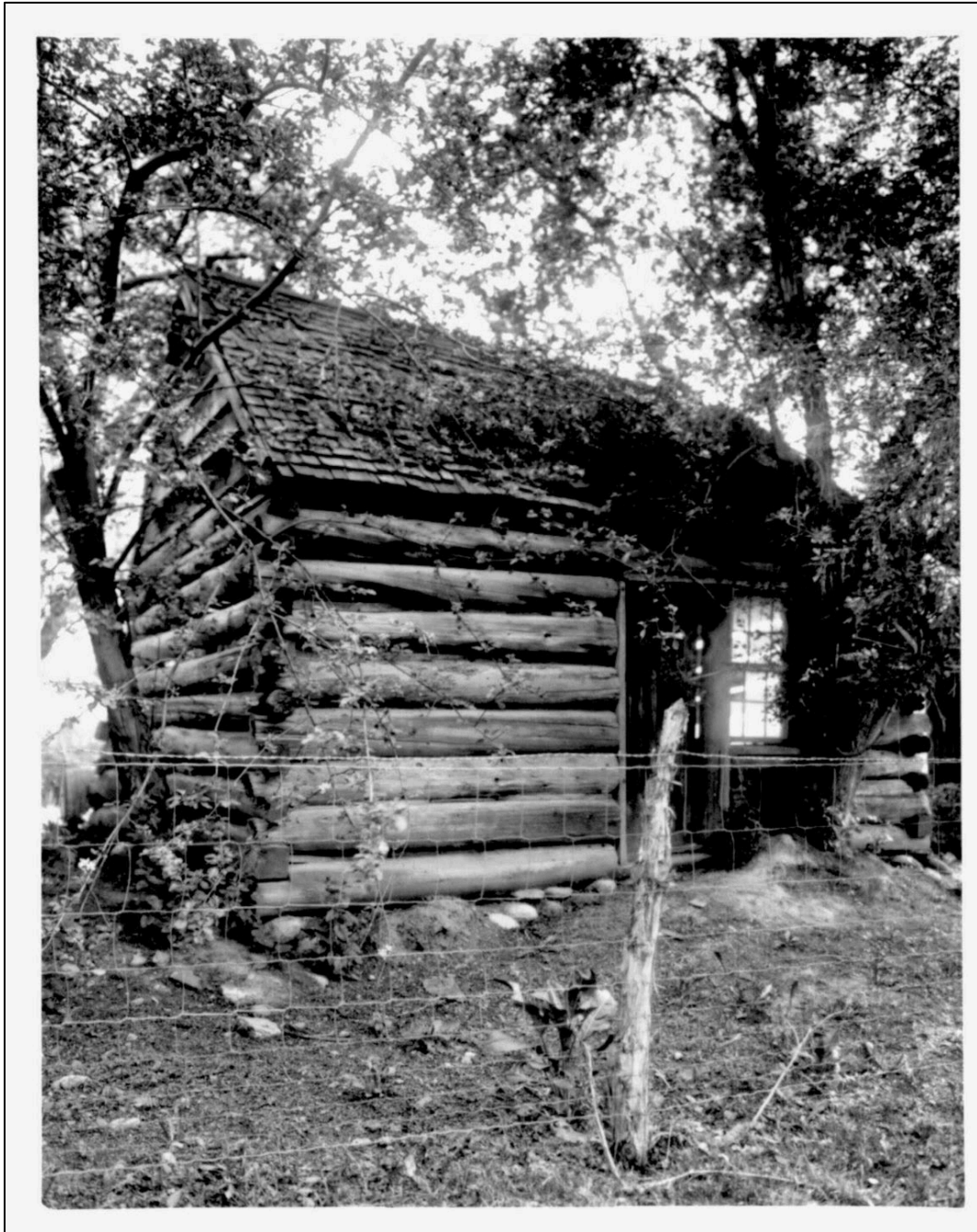


Figure 3. Gibson cabin on Cottonwood Lane, 1910 (Ref. 13).

The U.S. census of 1850 for Great Salt Lake county, Utah Territory, shown in Figure 4 (may actually have been taken in 1851 according to Reference 8) shows a George W. Sisson. This is an obvious mistake since all the names correspond to the family of George W. Gibson. Apparently, George W., Mary Ann, and all nine offspring were living in South Cottonwood in what was then sometimes called the State of Deseret (Utah was not admitted to the United States until January 4, 1896).

United States Census, 1850 ▾ Utah Territory ▸ Great Salt Lake ▸ Great Salt Lake county ▸

Name	Event Year	Gender	Age	Race	Birth Year (Estimated)	Birthplace	House Number
George W Sisson	1850	Male	50	White	1800	South Carolina	8
Mary Sisson	1850	Female	50	White	1800	South Carolina	8
Polly Sisson	1850	Female	28	White	1822	South Carolina	8
Lydia Sisson	1850	Female	26	White	1824	South Carolina	8
Pulaski Sisson	1850	Male	22	White	1828	South Carolina	8
Frances Sisson	1850	Female	18	White	1832	Mississippi	8
Guilford Sisson	1850	Male	16	White	1834	Mississippi	8
Moses Sisson	1850	Male	12	White	1838	Mississippi	8
Lory Sisson	1850	Female	14	White	1836	Mississippi	8
Ammon Sisson	1850	Male	10	White	1840	Mississippi	8
Joseph Sisson	1850	Male	7	White	1843	Mississippi	8

Figure 4. 1850 U.S Census for Great Salt Lake for the Sisson (s/b Gibson) family (Ref. 1).

The census shows their married daughter, Mary (Gibson New), was with them (Note: other sources state she died in 1846 or 1847 in either Pueblo or in Taos and did not travel to the Utah Territory. Reference 8 states that Indians killed her husband, William New, on June 26, 1850 in New Mexico Territory). A corrected version of the 1850 census is shown in Figure 5.



U.S. Census data for June 1, 1850  
(data may have been recorded in 1851)  
for the County of Great Salt Lake, Deseret, Utah Territory

Written names look like "Sission\_" but are Gibson.  
House No. 8

Name	Sex	Birth Year	Birth State	Trade	Value of R.E.	Attended School
George W Gibson	Male	1800	SC	Farmer	\$150	
Mary [Ann] Gibson	Female	<del>1800</del> [1802]	SC			
*Polly Gibson	Female	<del>1822</del> [1823]	SC			
*Lydia Gibson	Female	<del>1824</del> [1826]	SC			
*Pulaski Gibson	Male	<del>1828</del> [1827]	SC	Farmer		
Frances Gibson	Female	1832	Miss			
*Guilford Gibson	Male	1834	Miss	Farmer		
*Lory Gibson	Female	<del>1836</del> [1837]	Miss			Y
Moses Gibson	Male	<del>1838</del> [1840]	Miss			Y
*Ammon Gibson	<del>Male</del> [Fem.]	<del>1840</del> [1842]	Miss			Y
Joseph Gibson	Male	<del>1843</del> [1844]	Miss			Y

Corrections are shown in brackets [ ].

\*Polly is Mrs. Mary Denista Gibson New  
(husband died 6/26/1850).

\*Pulaski is Robert Pulaski Gibson.

\*Lydia is Mrs. Lydia Ardelicia Elinor Gibson Hunt  
(husband may have been traveling with the Mormon Battalion).

\*Guilford is William Gilbert Gibson.

\*Lory is Laura Altha Gibson.

\*Ammon is Manomas Lovina Gibson and is Female.

Figure 5. 1850 census data with corrections made by the author.

At some point in time, Mary Ann became an invalid (Ref. 41) and her daughter, Manomas, cared for her until she was fifteen years old at which time she left home for a while to work (washing, ironing, and sewing) outside the Gibson home to earn money (Ref. 4).

The Gibson's married sister, Lydia Gibson Hunt, was probably living with them because her husband was travelling with the militia. The census shows that George W., Robert, and 16-year old William Gilbert, worked as farmers. It also shows that the four youngest children attended school "within the year."

Frances, married Alvin Green on November 27, 1850. Brigham Young performed the wedding ceremony in his home in Salt Lake City. After George W. and his family moved to Grafton in 1863,

Alvin and Frances moved into the Gibson home in Big Cottonwood. As noted above, this is why the map in Figure 3 shows the name “A. Green.” Later it would become known as the “Stanger Home” (Ref. 8, p. 11–12). Alvin was also called “General” Green because he was a member of the Mormon Battalion which existed for one year from July 1846 to July 1847 during the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848.

The following is written in Reference 25 regarding the Wakefield family:

“When Lucinda was seventeen years old, a man named Robert Palaski Gibson caught her eye. She had known the Gibson family who lived in Mill Creek, right near Big Cottonwood, where Lucinda's family lived. Robert was ten years her senior, but they still courted and were married on Thursday, the 15<sup>th</sup> of Feruary, 1855 in the Endowment House. Robert was 27 when they married and Lucinda was 17 years old”

On March 15, 1855 George W. married his plural wife, 16-year old Ann Elizabeth Newman (June 29, 1840 - February 8, 1875), in Salt Lake City. She lived in the same house in Big Cottonwood with wife Mary Ann and the rest of the Gibson family. She had the children shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Children of George W. and Ann Elizabeth Newman Gibson.

<u>Children &amp; Future Spouse</u>	<u>Birth Year &amp; Location</u>	<u>Death Year &amp; Location</u>	<u>Marriage Date &amp; Location</u>
Ann Elizabeth Charles Harvey Ballard	22 Aug 1858 Cottonwood, UT	1 May 1891 Salt Lake City, UT	17 Feb 1874 Salt Lake City, UT
George Andrew Emily Wood	12 Jan 1861 Big Cottonwood, UT	12 Dec 1952 Hurricane, UT	31 Dec 1883 Virgin, UT
Sarah Jane John Wood, Jr.	24 May 1863 Grafton, UT	1 Jan 1936 Salt Lake City, UT	9 Mar 1882 Big Cottonwood, UT
Mary Ardella John Logan Lowder	10 Dec 1865 Duncan’s Retreat, UT	31 Dec 1946 Cedar City, UT	28 Feb 1934 Washington, UT
Joshua Newman	8 Mar 1868 Duncan’s Retreat, UT	9 Mar 1878 Grafton, UT	
James William Florence Pearl Cross	18 Dec 1870 Duncan’s Retreat, UT	5 Jul 1947 Vancouver, WA	25 Feb 1892 Snowflake, AZ

By 1857, there was the threat of violence when U.S. troops were ordered to go to Utah to put down the Mormons by U.S. James Buchanan (sometimes called “Buchanan’s Blunder”). In an effort to avoid war, LDS President Brigham Young directed his followers to move out of the Salt Lake City and areas north. It was almost completely evacuated by June 1858 (Ref. 5, p. 4). Fortunately, a truce was agreed upon and those who departed started to return in July 1858 (Ref. 5, p. 27).

Apparently, the Gibson family in Big Cottonwood did not move out of their home as did those in Salt Lake City. On Mary 11, 1857, Laura married James Andrus in Big Cottonwood. He became a captain in the militia.

Details from the 1860 census for Salt Lake County, Utah Territory are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. 1860 Census data for Salt Lake County for George W. Gibson.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Value of Real Estate</u>	<u>Value of Personal Estate</u>	<u>Attended School</u>
George W	60	M	Farmer	\$600	\$600	
Mary	55	F				
Moses	22	M	Common Laborer			
Joseph	15	M				Yes
Leomus	18	M				
Ann E.	1	F				
Ann	19	F				

The following comments apply to the census information in Table 9:

1. Mary, the first wife of George W., was born in June 1802, and was 58 year old (not 55).
2. Moses was born in January 1740 and was 20 years old (not 22).
3. Leomus should be spelled “Manomas” and was a female daughter (not a male).
4. Ann E. was the daughter of George W. and Ann Elizabeth Newman Gibson.
5. Ann was the plural wife of George W. She was born in 1840 in Stafford England.

The American Civil War was fought from April 1861 to May 1865 and Moses, the son of George W., enlisted in the Union Army during that time. However, he was injured in an accident and discharged after only a few months.

Because of their knowledge of growing cotton in their younger years in Mississippi, George W. and Robert P. Gibson were asked by LDS leaders to go to the Grafton settlement (now a ghost town) of the southern Utah Territory to help farm that area. The situation is described in Reference 25:

“In the winter of 1862, Robert Palaski Gibson’s father, George Washington Gibson, and his two families, had been [*requested*] by Brigham Young, to go to Southern Utah to help settle that area. It was known as the “Dixie Mission” or the “Cotton Mission.” Since the Gibson’s had immigrated to the Salt Lake Valley from Mississippi, it was hoped that the Gibson’s could help with the producing of cotton down in southern Utah. Lucinda and Robert Palaski Gibson decided to follow Elder Gibson and his two families down to Southern Utah to help out with the settlement. Lucinda was pregnant when they left the Salt Lake Valley and traveled down to Southern Utah taking their three children with them ... Mary Lucinda, Robert and George.”



Figure 6. Ann E. Newman Gibson, baby James William, and Ann Elizabeth, about 1861 (Ref. 1).

With his two families, George W. moved from Big Cottonwood to Grafton in April 1863.

Grafton was a new settlement next to the Virgin River and the prime farm crop was cotton. Unfortunately, the area was subject to periodic flooding. There were 28 families living there in 1864 with each family farming about an acre of land (Ref. 8). In addition to flooding, they had trouble with Indians, causing many of the settlers to move to the nearby settlements of Rockville and Duncan's Retreat (now a ghost town).

In June 1863, two months after George W. and his families moved to the small settlement of Grafton, his son, Robert P., moved his family 400 miles south from Smithfield to Grafton as requested by Brigham Young. But in 1865, after two years of living in Grafton, the Robert P. Gibson family decided the living conditions were too difficult and they moved back to Smithfield.

On September 12, 1863, 21-yr old Manomas married James Andrus as his plural wife. His first wife was Laura Gibson, the sister of Manomas, whom he had married five years earlier in 1857.



In about 1864, George W's youngest son, Joseph Smith Gibson, was about 20 years old when he married Ann Maria Poll (1846-1866) who also lived in Grafton. They had two children before she died at a very young age of 20 in 1866 in Grafton (Ref. 40).

As the civil war was nearing an end, President Abraham Lincoln was shot and killed on Good Friday, April 14, 1865, in Washington D.C.

Sometime between 1863 and 1865, George W. moved his families to the nearby settlement of Duncan's Retreat. The 1870 census shows Duncan's Retreat had a relatively small population of only 32 people. While his first wife, Mary, continued to live in the Gibson home, all of Mary's children had moved on and none lived with them in 1870. All of Ann's children lived with them except her last child who was born after the census was taken (Table 10). The census also shows that none of the children attended school.

On August 17, 1871, Indians attacked the people in Duncan's Retreat. George Washington Gibson was killed and his wife, Mary Ann, was critically injured and died three weeks later on September 6. Both were buried in Grafton cemetery.

Table 10. 1870 Census data for Duncan's Retreat for George W. Gibson.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Occupation</u>	<u>Value of Real Estate</u>	<u>Value of Personal Estate</u>	<u>Attended School</u>
George W	70	M	Farmer	\$100	\$1000	
Mary	68	F	Keeping house			
Annie	11	F	At home			
George A	9	M	At home			
Sarah J	7	F	At home			
Mary A	4	F				
Joshua	2	M	Keeping house			
Annie	30	F				

Ann Elizabeth Newman Gibson and her children moved back to Big Cottonwood from Duncan's Retreat. She died on February 8, 1875 at the very early age of 35 and was buried in Holliday Memorial Park, Utah Territory.

To recognize their historic lives, both George W. and Mary Ann are listed as Utah Pioneers in the Pioneer Memorial Museum in Salt Lake City, Utah.



Figure 7. Mary Ann Sparks Gibson photo in the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers Museum, St. George, Utah.





Figure 8. Headstones for George Washington Gibson and Mary Ann Sparks Gibson, Grafton Cemetery, Utah (photos from cousin Patsy Anderson).



Figure 9. Marker for Ann Ellizabeth Newman Gibson, Holliday Memorial Park, Utah (death date should be 1875).

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