

Silas Wright West

Silas Wright West was born 10 December 1846 in Keytesville, Chariton, Missouri.¹ He was the second of five children of William Shelton West and Lucretia McGuire. His father was a doctor as well as farming and stock raising. His mother died when Silas was about nine years old, and his father remarried and had five more children. Silas lived with his family in Clark, Chariton, Missouri², until he became of age and struck out on his own.

On the 1870 census, Silas was tending saloon, living in Helena, Lewis and Clark, Montana Territory.³ He moved to Utah Territory in 1874⁴ and married Maria Antoinette Haight in 1879 in Toquerville, Washington, Utah Territory. Silas was a grocer, living with his wife in Silver Reef, Washington, Utah Territory, in 1880.⁵ They had ten children (three died young).⁶ Their seven oldest children were all born in Silver Reef. He served as selectman in Washington County and an election judge in Silver Reef in 1890.⁷ He was made a justice of the peace in Silver Reef in 1891.⁸

He was public spirited, serving as school trustee⁹ as well as secretary, clerk, and chairman of the school board over the years 1889-1892. He helped make annual official visits to the school, where they “found accommodations sufficient, and everything properly arranged for proper conduct of school” at the beginning of the year and “found the building, rooms, desks, and furniture and appliances generally in good condition” at the end of the school year.¹⁰ In one political campaign, he was the candidate of the Liberal party for county superintendent of schools.¹¹

By 1892, he had become a stockman. He shipped fifteen double-deck cars of sheep from Milford to Omaha and wool to Salt Lake from Cedar City.¹² By 1895, he was living in Salt Lake City. He constructed a new brick eight-room home on North State Street at a cost of \$3,000.¹³ On the 900 census, he was a sheep man, living with his wife, seven children, and an adult nephew in Salt Lake City.¹⁴ He continued his interest in mining, purchasing the Nast mine at Bingham with J. J. Sears and some Omaha associates.¹⁵ He became the vice president of the newly organized Kaiser Mining company, operating the Copper Boy group of claims in Emery County, and president of the West Mining Company with offices in Salt Lake City and operating in Eureka, Nevada.¹⁶

He branched out his enterprises, purchasing 376,798 acres of land in the state of Tabasco in Old Mexico. He and four other men incorporated Yextla (a land company) and the Mexican Land & Sugar

¹ Utah Death Certificates, 1904-1964.

² United States Census, 1850, 1860.

³ United States Census, 1870.

⁴ *Salt Lake Mining Review*, 1918, Vol 20, p. 7.

⁵ United States Census, 1880.

⁶ *Familysearch.org*

⁷ *Salt Lake Tribune*, 1 June 1890, p. 8; *Salt Lake Herald*, 27 August 1890, p. 5.

⁸ *Salt Lake Herald*, 21 August 1891, p. 6; *Salt Lake Tribune*, 21 August 1891, p. 6.

⁹ *Silver Reef Personalities Legends*, by Mark A. Pendleton, 1940, p. 3B.

¹⁰ Silver Reef School Board minutes.

¹¹ *Silver Reef Personalities Legends*, by Mark A. Pendleton, 1940, p. 3B.

¹² *Salt Lake Tribune*, 19 November 1892, p. 5; *Salt Lake Herald*, 22 May 1894, p. 2; 28 October 1894, p. 6.

¹³ *Salt Lake Herald*, 25 December 1895, pp. 5, 10, 25.

¹⁴ United States Census, 1900.

¹⁵ *Salt Lake Herald*, 24 April 1897, p. 3.

¹⁶ *Deseret Evening News*, 4 April 1902, p. 6; *Salt Lake Herald*, 29 August 1903, p. 6.

Company of Utah. These companies were involved in selling land, timber, corn, grazing rights, and producing mahogany, cedar, rubber, sugar, pineapples, bananas, coffee, and tobacco. It was the intention to reserve 10,000 acres for a Townsite, possibly for Mormon colonists, and to sell the remainder at \$5 an acre. Timber and other resources would be marketed to pay for the land.¹⁷ As an extension, they incorporated the Mexican Tropical Fruit company on the Obispo river, and Silas served as a director and then president of the company.¹⁸ West also was an incorporator of the Guerrero Lumber, Milling & Manufacturing company.¹⁹

With all this investment, it was upsetting to find out that one of their partners, Aquilla Nebeker, had involved them in a shell game, and he and his Mexican partner, E L Massey, had greatly exaggerated the value of the land and had secured their portions without “putting up” any investment. Silas and his partners asked for an accounting in court of the stock held by Nebeker and Massey in 1909. H R Kline, a partner, also introduced a bill in federal court to address equity in business, addressing fraud, disguises, fake telegrams, petty graft, and phony letters and communications intended to dupe people.²⁰

In 1908, Silas toured the various mining camps of Utah and Nevada, including the brand-new gold camp of Bull Valley, on the east fork of Beaver Dam wash. He served as president and treasurer of the Lower Mammoth Mining company.²¹ On the 1910 census, he was listed as a mining operator, living with his wife and five children in Salt Lake City.²² He branched out locally, becoming president of the new-found Pahvant Irrigation company of Salt Lake in 1912, and offered land in Millard County at \$40 per aces with six percent interest, and access to Deseret Irrigation company water, in 1913.²³ He was the president of Dixie Properties, with copper and silver mines.²⁴

Silas died 30 September 1918 in Salt Lake City and was buried in the city cemetery.²⁵ He was greatly beloved and respected by all who knew him, with an irreproachable character full of integrity and honesty. He had a genial nature and high regard for his friends and business associates.²⁶ Antoinette lived with three of her children in Salt Lake City in 1920 and with her son and his wife in San Francisco in 1930. She died in 1935 in San Francisco and was buried in the Salt Lake City Cemetery.

¹⁷ *Salt Lake Herald*, 18 October 1904, p. 2; 27 May 1905, p. 8; *Salt Lake Tribune*, 29 October 1904, p. 12.

¹⁸ *Deseret Evening News*, 5 September 1905, p. 2; *Salt Lake Tribune*, 6 September 1905, p. 12.

¹⁹ *Salt Lake Herald*, 27 May 1905, p. 8.

²⁰ *Ogden Standard*, 11 August 1909, p. 7; *Salt Lake Tribune*, 11 August 1909, p. 14;

²¹ *Salt Lake Herald*, 12 January 1909, p. 6; 18 May 1909, p. 9.

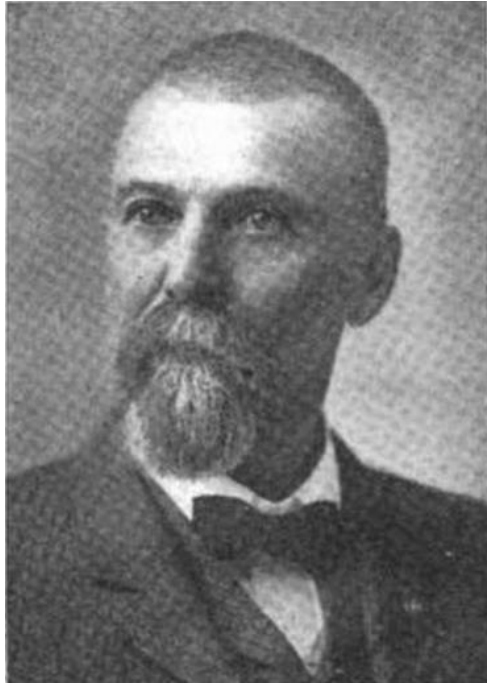
²² United States Census, 1910.

²³ *Salt Lake Tribune*, 18 June 1912, p. 5; 5 August 1913, p. 13.

²⁴ *Iron County Record*, 30 March 1917, p. 1.

²⁵ Utah Death Certificates, 1904-1964.

²⁶ *Salt Lake Mining Review*, 1918, Vol 20, p. 7.



Silas Wright West (image from the *Salt Lake Mining Review*, 1918, Vol 20, p. 7)

40 ACRES OR MORE AT \$40 PER ACRE,
10 years time. Interest 6 per cent on
deferred payments. Deseret Irrigation Co.
water. Near R. R. in Millard county.
"The home of alfalfa seed." Address S.
W. West, 112 No. State st., Salt Lake
City, Utah, or phone Wasatch 1754-M.
e504

(Image from the *Salt Lake Tribune*, 5 August 1913, p. 13)



(Image from *Findagrave.com*)