

Thomas Sanford Nicholls

Thomas “Tom” Sanford Nicholls was born 24 June 1883 in Leeds, Washington, Utah Territory.¹ He was the sixth of eight children of Arthur Nicholls and Sarah Ann Stokes, who had emigrated from England when they joined the Mormon Church. The family moved to nearby St. George and then to Silver Reef about 1894, where Tom attended school. His brother Arthur described it: “The townspeople cleaned out a saloon and hired a teacher for some of the kids”.²

As a teen, Tom worked in the silver mines with his father and brothers Charles, Arthur and William. They took many trips to the Pine Valley mountains for recreation. In 1900, Tom was living with his family in Leeds, and working at the silver mines in Silver Reef. When there was mischief in Leeds, it was usually attributed to “those long-nosed Nicholls boys from the Reef”.³

By 1903, most of the mines had closed as the price of silver had dropped. Tom and his brother Charles went looking for work. They took the stage to Milford, Utah, and then the train to Idaho Falls, Idaho. They worked the hay and grain fields in Idaho and then moved on to Billings, Montana. Finding no work, they decided to head for the Big Horn country in Wyoming. They took the train as far as Frannie, and then walked to the new town of Lovell. They tried to buy a drink of water in Cowley, but no one had water to spare, so they drank from the Shoshone River. Using their pocket knives, they opened a can of sardines and a can of pork and had their first meal in Wyoming.⁴

Tom’s first job in Wyoming was putting up hay. In the summer of 1904, he worked in Yellowstone Park.⁵ Tom was running a livery stable for Murphy and Cline when he met Ruth Durfee as a clerk in the Workman-Johnson store (they had been born and raised only 40 miles apart in southern Utah but did not meet until they had both moved to Wyoming). They courted and were married in 1908 in Lovell⁶ and had nine children. They lived in Ruth’s mother’s log home, which had a living room and kitchen downstairs and a bedroom upstairs.⁷

The next year Tom and Ruth moved to a farm homestead southwest of town. Tom farmed, worked on canals, and hauled log, poles, sawdust and firewood from Pryor Mountain. They lived for a time in Wolton, Wyoming, where Tom worked on the railroad. Then he followed the harvest fields in the Judith Basin area of Montana.⁸ In 1910, Tom was working odd jobs, living with his wife and daughter in his mother-in-law’s home in Lovell.⁹ Tom was described as tall and slender, with gray hair and blue eyes.¹⁰ Tom settled into farming the homestead, living with his wife, children and mother-in-law.¹¹ He also worked as a ditch rider, monitoring water levels and allotments.¹² They were able to visit family and friends in Leeds in 1936 and again in 1941.¹³

¹ US WWI Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918; US WWII Draft Registration Cards, 1942.

² Life story of Tom and Ruth Nicholls, *Familysearch.org*; Arthur Davies Nicholls life story, *Familysearch.org*.

³ Life story of Tom and Ruth Nicholls, *Familysearch.org*; Arthur Davies Nicholls life story, *Familysearch.org*; United States Census, 1900.

⁴ Life story of Tom and Ruth Nicholls, *Familysearch.org*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Wyoming Marriages, 1869-1923.

⁷ Life story of Tom and Ruth Nicholls, *Familysearch.org*; Life history of Lillie Nicholls Acton, *Familysearch.org*; Wyoming Marriages, 1869-1923.

⁸ Life story of Tom and Ruth Nicholls, *Familysearch.org*; Life history of Lillie Nicholls Acton, *Familysearch.org*

⁹ United States Census, 1910.

¹⁰ US WWI Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918.

¹¹ United States Census, 1920, 1930.

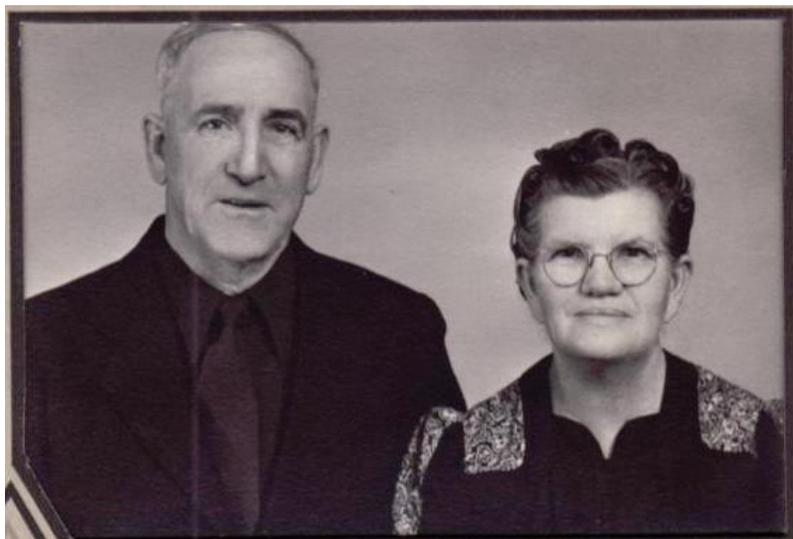
¹² United States Census, 1940.

¹³ *Iron County Record*, 10 September 1936, p. 10; 7 February 1941, p. 4.

In 1947, Tom and Ruth moved to a cattle ranch on the North Fork, but the altitude was too much for Tom and they traded their farm for a house on Shoshone Avenue in Lovell. In fall of 1955, Ruth's health started to fail. She died in 1956 and was buried in the Lovell Cemetery. Tom suffered for about five years with a heart condition, mostly bedridden, but he never lost his sense of humor and enjoyed getting downtown when he could to visit friends. He lived with his son Allan until he had to go into the hospital for 100 days. He died 25 November 1956 at age 73 and was buried in the Lovell Cemetery.¹⁴



Family photo taken about 1920 at the home of Tom's mother-in-law on the family homestead southwest of Lovell; Thomas is standing second from the right on the back row (*Familysearch.org*)



¹⁴ Life story of Tom and Ruth Nicholls, *Familysearch.org*; *Findagrave.com*

Thomas and Ruth Nicholls (*Familysearch.org*)



Thomas and Ruth Nicholls with their daughter Cassie Monk's family (*Familysearch.org*)

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