

# Ashton Nebeker

(29 September 2018)

Ashton Nebeker was born 23 September 1843 in Dansville, Vermilion, Illinois. He was the fourth of fourteen children of John Nebeker and Lurena Fitzgerald. When Ashton was four years old, his family came west along with three uncles and all their families in the Abraham O Smoot company. They left 18 June 1847 arrived in the Great Salt Lake Valley on 29 September 1847, among the first pioneers. They spent that first winter in South Fort (adjunct to the Old Fort).<sup>1</sup>

In the spring of 1849, they moved to city lot 4 on block 116 in the northwest part of Salt Lake City. Ashton's father was said to be the first to raise wheat and plant fruit trees in Utah Territory, and served as a US deputy marshal to the United States prior to the organization of the State of Deseret. It was said that he kept criminals at his home, where he fed them and lodged them encumbered with ball and chain in the same rooms as his family, for want of accommodation.<sup>2</sup>

On the 1850 census, the family with their six children lived in Salt Lake City.<sup>3</sup> In 1853, Ashton's father was called to superintend the of building Fort Supply, about twelve miles southwest Fort Bridger (now in Wyoming). With the approach of Johnston's Army in 1857, both forts were abandoned and burned. Fort Bridger was rebuilt by the US government later.<sup>4</sup> On the 1860 census, the family was now raising nine children and living in Salt Lake City.<sup>5</sup>

In the summer of 1861, Ashton and his father were called to the cotton mission. They settled in Toquerville, where his father raised cotton and built and operated a cotton gin and a water-powered mill in a rock building (still standing).<sup>6</sup> Ashton was released from this calling a few years later and returned to Salt Lake City, where he married Lucy Adelia Bishop Pratt, daughter of Apostle Orson Pratt and niece of Apostle Parley P. Pratt, in 1865.<sup>7</sup>

In 1867, Ashton was called back to the Dixie Mission where he served in the Utah Territorial Militia. He led expeditions to subdue troublesome Indians in southern Utah, Nevada and Arizona. He was with Major Powell and his band of Indian scouts when Powell negotiated a peace treaty with the Navajos at Fort Defiance, New Mexico, in 1870. He was said to have been one of the few men who successfully went over the Colorado River rapids during his exploratory expedition in that region.<sup>8</sup>

Ashton served as Kane County assessor and collector and acted as sheriff from 1873-1877. He took Elizabeth Theobald as a second wife in polygamy in 1878 in St. George, Washington, Utah Territory.<sup>9</sup> They had four children. In 1879, he moved part of his family to Tuba City, Coconino, Arizona Territory. His eleven children by two wives were variously born in Salt Lake City, Toquerville, and Tuba City, as they moved back and forth.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Washington County News*, 4 September 1911, p. 2; *Pioche Record*, 9 September 1911, p. 8; LDS Biographical Encyclopedia, Vol. 3, p. 180; Utah Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel Database, 1847-1868.

<sup>2</sup> *Pioche Record*, 9 September 1911, p. 8; *Familysearch.org*

<sup>3</sup> United States Census, 1850.

<sup>4</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 4 July 1897, p. 2; *mormonhistoricsites.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/FortSupply.pdf*

<sup>5</sup> United States Census, 1860.

<sup>6</sup> History of John Nebeker, at *Familysearch.org*; LDS Biographical Encyclopedia, Vol. 3, p. 180; *Washington County News*, 4 September 1911, p. 2; *toquerville.org/history*

<sup>7</sup> *Washington County News*, 4 September 1911, p. 2; LDS Biographical Encyclopedia, Vol. 3, p. 180; *Pioche Record*, 9 September 1911, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> *Pioche Record*, 9 September 1911, p. 8; LDS Biographical Encyclopedia, Vol. 3, p. 180.

<sup>9</sup> LDS Biographical Encyclopedia, Vol. 3, p. 180.

On the 1880 census, he was a stock dealer, living with his two wives, five children, and his youngest brother, in Springdale, Kane, Utah Territory.<sup>10</sup> He was a conspicuous figure in Silver Reef about this time,<sup>11</sup> and served as a witness of another miner's claim history three times in the Silver Reef Miner newspaper.<sup>12</sup> Ashton and John Absalom owned a lot on Main Street in Silver Reef, but it is unknown what business they shared there.<sup>13</sup> However, Absalom had a business two doors above the post office that advertised books, papers, sewing machine articles, optical goods and eye glasses.<sup>14</sup>

In 1886, he moved his family to Arizona for six years, where he served as a missionary to the Moqui Indians until 1890. In 1892, they moved to Tuba City where he acted as Deputy Sheriff of Coconino County. On the 1900 census, Ashton was a farmer, living with his wife Lucy, three children, and son-in-law, on the Navajo Indian Reservation, Apaches, Arizona Territory. In 1903, he moved his family to Alamo, Lincoln, Nevada.<sup>15</sup>

Ashton was active politically, serving as an election judge, an inspector of elections, and as a delegate for the Republican party in Alamo.<sup>16</sup> In 1910, he was farming with his wife and daughter in Alamo.<sup>17</sup> He received an Indian War Service Medal in 1910.<sup>18</sup> He suffered from dropsy but was serving as postmaster when he died on 29 August 1911 at his home in Pahrnagat (near Alamo). He was buried in the Alamo Cemetery.<sup>19</sup> He was known as one of the stalwart residents of Pahrnagat Valley, a "generous citizen and trustworthy friend", and "a grand old man".<sup>20</sup>

His wife Lucy lived with her daughter in Provo, Utah, Utah, and then her son in Pleasant Grove, until she died in 1916 and was buried in the Pleasant Grove Cemetery.<sup>21</sup> His wife Elizabeth remarried and had another son, living in Randolph, Rich, Utah in 1920.<sup>22</sup> She died in 1926 in Randolph and was buried in the city cemetery.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> United States Census, 1880.

<sup>11</sup> LDS Biographical Encyclopedia, Vol. 3, p. 180.

<sup>12</sup> *Silver Reef Miner*, 3 September 1881, p. 4; 5 November 1881, p. 2; 29 July 1882, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Silver Reef original plat map, J M Macfarlane, 1879; names added later.

<sup>14</sup> *Silver Reef Miner*, 21 January 1883, p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> LDS Biographical Encyclopedia, Vol. 3, p. 180; *Pioche Record*, 9 September 1911, p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> *Pioche Record*, 8 August 1908, p. 4; 19 September 1908, p. 1; 8 October 1910, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> United States Census, 1910.

<sup>18</sup> Utah Applications Indian War Service Medals, 1905-1912.

<sup>19</sup> *Pioche Record*, 9 September 1911, p. 8; *Washington County News*, 4 September 1911, p. 2; *Findagrave.com*

<sup>20</sup> *Coconino Sun*, 15 September 1911, p. 1; *Pioche Record*, 8 April 1911, p. 8; *Washington County News*, 4 September 1911, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> *American Fork Citizen*, 25 November 1916.

<sup>22</sup> United States Census, 1920.

<sup>23</sup> *Findagrave.com*



Ashton Nebeker (Image from *Familysearch.org*)



Home of the Nebekers on 2<sup>nd</sup> North in Salt Lake City; built by father John in 1856; photo taken about 1890 with various family members (image from *Familysearch.org*)



(Images from *Findagrave.com*)

Research by Elaine Young, Silver Reef Foundation historian, 2018  
Please email [eyoung@youngzones.org](mailto:eyoung@youngzones.org) for additions and corrections