

History of Cornelius McReavy and his family

Retold by Edna Garner McReavy

Cornelius McCreavy was born 26 November 1845 on Coldcoats Street, in Holy Trinity Parish, Carlisle, Cumberland, England. The following story states he was born in Dumfries, Scotland. In my research I cannot find him in Scotland but pick him up with good proof in England.

Some of the first settlers in the southern part of Utah were from the southern United States. They had brought cottonseeds with them, planted them in "Utah's Dixie" and found they grew very well. Brigham Young said to plant cotton and build the factories to make cotton material in order to make Zion more independent and self-sustaining. The area became known as the Cotton Mission.

On January 13, 1873 the dyer at the Washington Cotton Factory quit. Secretary Whitehead reported this emergency to President Erastus Snow. Whitehead suggested that they advertise in the Philadelphia newspaper for another dyer. On March 28, 1873 he wrote to Lorenzo W. Roundy that "the Factory is doing well with one exception...we have no dyer and it bothers us considerably." On April 23, 1873 he wrote as instructed by the board of directors, to Birch, who was in the East, "to use your influence in encouraging such hands as you know we need to emigrate...specifically the Factory needs a dyer, more weavers and a good finisher."

It appears from correspondence dated April 21, 1874 that a professional dyer had at last been found. When the dyer arrived in Washington is not clear, but a letter indicates that he arrived as a rather unhappy and disillusioned man. He was a Scotchman named Cornelius McCreavy. Along with his wife Mary, who was a weaver, McCreavy had received his training in Scotland. He proved to be a competent technician.

It seems that in order to persuade McCreavy to come to Washington, Erastus Snow had promised him "cash and cash supplies"-a drastic overstatement, as it turned out-for his pay. The following excerpt from Whitehead's letter tells the story

"Brother McCreavy feels rather bad as he is owing a hundred dollars in the East and does not know how to get it. He says you promised him cash and cash supplies for his payment, or he would not have contracted the debt. He says he must have it, if he has to leave and go somewhere else to earn it. I named this in my report to the Board, but there was so many questions brought up that it was overlooked, and I told Bro. McCreavy our circumstances, and told him I would get him twenty dollars and probably after a while we could raise the balance and he could pay his debt. He is careful and has not received one dollar in cash since he arrived."

Follow is the copy of the Memorandum of Agreement between Cornelius McCreavy and Erastus Snow:

Memorandum of Agreement

Providence, Rhode Island, August 18, 1873

It is agreed between Cornelius McCreavy, a native of Scotland, in his own behalf and Erastus snow of St. George, Utah, on behalf of the Rio Virgin Manufacturing Company, first that said Cornelius McCreavy is an experienced first class dyer of both wool and cotton and mixed goods and capable of taking charge of the said company's Dye House and dyeing either the

staple, yarn, or cloth, whether cotton, wool, or mixed, in a good workmanlike manner, and he agrees to go to Washington, Utah and work for said Zion's Cooperative Rio Manufacturing Company at their Dye House for one year, if said company require it, at the rate of three dollars and twenty-five cents a day, payable in cash and supplies at cash rates, from and after his arrival at Washington or commencing work.

Provided that from any cause the company's works stop his wages shall cease during such stoppage, and he further agrees to instruct an assistant in the arts of Dyeing if the Company desire it. It is agreed that Erastus Snow on behalf of Zion's Cooperative Rio Virgin Manufacturing Company shall pay the passage for said C. McCreavy and his wife from New York to Salt Lake City and forward them thence to Washington, the amount paid by said Company (or said E. Snow in their behalf) for passage and expenses to Washington shall be retained by said Company out of the wages paid McCreavy (provided at least two dollars a day shall be paid on wages, to subsist them) until the Company is reimbursed for their passage and expenses. And it is further agreed that if from any cause said C. McCreavy shall fail to work for said Company until such passage money and expenses are thus repaid, it shall remain a debt against him and any balance shall be paid to said Company with lawful interest
(signed)

Cornelius McCreavy

Erastus Snow, President Z.C. Rio Virgin Manuf. Company

Whether he got the hundred or not, Cornelius remained in Washington for many years as a dyer at the Factory and when the institution closed it's doors, he stayed on in the town until he was an old man. A.R. Whitehead built an addition on his own home near the Factory for the use of McCreavy's family, which lived in it for a considerable time*

*Copied from the book "I WAS CALLED TO DIXIE" by Andrew Karl Larson. Mr. Larson's note- As a teenage boy I knew Cornelius McCreavy quite well. He was an avid reader of Scotch history and loved nothing better than to gather a crowd of boys around him on his street corner (he lived directly west across the street from the school house) and tell us the exploits of William Wallace and Robert Bruce in Scotland's fight to throw off English rule. A copy of the memorandum was sent to me by Mr. Larson.

**One of the most trying times ever experienced by members of the Church came during the late 1880's and the year 1890. During that period the United States Government undertook an intensive campaign to convict and punish violators of the Edmunds-Tucker Act- that is the practice of plural marriage. Quite a number of the brethren at Washington were caught and found guilty of unlawful cohabitation in the Second District Court sitting at Beaver, Utah. Among these were Cornelius McCreavy. The punishment meted out to these men was uniform-six months imprisonment in the Territorial Penitentiary and a \$300 fine. Both fine and imprisonment were particularly hard on these men coming when the economic resources of the community were at very low ebb.

Cornelius served as counselor to Bishop Andrew Sproul Sr. from Sept 1896 to 1903 in the Washington Ward. He was at one time mayor of Washington before 1909, the records have been destroyed or lost. He was Supervisor of Roads Report- (poll tax) paid the cash of \$3.00 instead of labor, 1885. He was on the board of Marcus Funk (bishop) as a director of the Mercantile and Manufacturing Association, he is named as a bandsman, 3 Oct 1879.

**The above information taken from the book "THE RED HILLS OF NOVEMBER" written by Andrew Karl Larson of St. George, Utah.

In the summer of 1964 we visited St. George and met Mr. Andrew Karl Larson. Mr. Larson had known Cornelius McCreavy and related some of his memories of Cornelius to us: Cornelius was a short chunky man with a ruddy complexion. He spoke with a Scottish burr, and hm hm-clearing his throat often as he talked. When he prayed in Church he got on his knees, with his arms outstretched in the air, the fingers extended. As he prayed his fingers moved apart and together, the kids would watch his fingers and laugh.

He had dark hair and a large mustache. In later years his hair was white and he wore a full beard and mustache. He owned one half block of property where his house stood. The jailhouse stood on his property He arrived in Washington Oct 1873. He always wore black broad cloth suits.

After the factory closed, Cornelius grew grapes and made wine. The Church used the unfermented wine in sacrament services- the excess wine he let ferment and sold to the gentiles (and some members). He was in the bishopric. The church leaders told him to quit selling the wine- he didn't and was dropped from the bishopric. He was fined several times for selling wine. The people had no hard feelings toward him as the economic times were so hard and it was his way of making a living.

In 1913 Cornelius and family moved to Provo, Utah to live with his son Joseph. Joseph was married in 1922 and later moved to Salt Lake City. Cornelius and first wife Mary-his second wife Carline died 23 Dec 1913 lived with Joseph and Jennie in Salt Lake City until a year or so before his death. For that year or so he was in the Old Folks Home in Salt Lake City. He and his first wife were married in England. He and Carline were married in St. George.

Cornelius McCreavy died 26 January 1929 in Salt Lake City of labor pneumonia and cardiac failure at age 83. He is buried in Provo.

There is a 5x7 picture of Cornelius and several other men including Erastus Snow in their striped Federal Prison suits. A copy of it hangs in the main hall leading to the dining room in the St. George Hilton Hotel. Also same picture in History of Church book in St. George. Also same picture in Grandma Jennie's possession. This is the time they were in Federal Prison for the Edmunds-Tucker Act.

In 1982 I submitted an 8x10 picture of Cornelius McReavy holding his grandson Melvin to the new City Administration Building Committee for their display of all the former mayors of Washington. The committee had a head and chest picture made from this picture to use instead.

The information in this article was gathered and compiled for the enjoyment and enrichment of my children and lineage that they may know one of their ancestors.

Edna Garner McReavy
1982

Family History

In 1964, we went as a family on a vacation to southern Utah. When we got to St. George, I said to my husband that I'd like to take time to see if we could find any stories about his grandfather Cornelius McReavy as he had come from the east and settled in the little town of Washington close to the town of St. George area. Well dear husband not being too interested in genealogy declined and said "some other time". We continued sight seeing and enjoying ourselves. We made plans to go through Dixie State Park, which is an extinct volcano area. The roads were graded and unpaved. We were driving a 1957 Buick. We went over a cattle guard a mite too fast and hit a low place in the road on the other side of the crossing and punched a hole in the gas tank, unbeknownst to us.

We drove on through the park and according to plan went back into St. George to buy groceries and continue on our trip. When we came out of the grocery store we could see a stream of gasoline running from the tank. We drove to a garage and yes they could fix it. It would take several hours as the tank had to drain and the fumes had to evaporate. I told dear husband, Melvin, fine, "I'm going hunting genealogy". So, Pauline, Carl and Melvin stayed at the garage and Pat, Keith and I took off.

We went into a men's clothing store and talked to the owner. Now this is a small town where the owner is the only one working there. I asked him if he knew of any one in the area that had any information on the history of the early settlers in the area. Lo and Behold! He did!

He called a Mr. Larson on the phone and told him we were in the store and what we were looking for. Mr. Larson invited us right over and told me how to get to his place.

I don't remember if I called Melvin at the garage or if we went back to tell him where we were going but anyway, I gave him the address. Pat, Keith and I started walking to Mr. Larson's. This was in the hot summer months and the temperature was 110. It was ten blocks to Mr. Larson's and we could sure feel the hot cement sidewalk through our shoes. At Mr. Larson's, I'd ask the questions and Pat would take notes. It was really enjoyable and interesting. Mr. Larson had known Cornelius McReavy.

We had been there maybe half an hour when there was a knock at the door. When Mr. Larson answered it, there stood Melvin. He had decided he was interested in genealogy that day. Mr. Larson said Melvin had the same ruddy complexion that Cornelius had.

Karl Larson had written and published two books, "I WAS CALLED to DIXIE" and "THE RED HILLS of NOVEMBER". He had decided to write the history of the area many years ago while working on his thesis study. Needless to say, we bought a copy of these books. I will attempt to copy from these books the information about Cornelius McReavy, and also write what information I've been told.

Through the years when I've thought of that interesting day spent with Mr. Larson, and read these books, I wonder if maybe we were meant to have been in St. George area longer that trip so that we were able to get these histories. At any rate I really am happy we hit the cattle guard crossing too hard. Cornelius McReavy is my husband, Melvin's grandfather.

The St. George area is called "Utah's Dixie" as it has very little snow, is a nice climate in the winter and hot in the summer. When the pioneers settled in the area, they were told to plant

and grow cotton. They built a cotton factory. It was called the Cotton Mission. TO have a dyer was important. There was need of a dyer at the cotton factory. A Mr. Whitehead wrote a letter to Bishop Thomas J. Jones of Panaca. What follows was taken from the book "I WAS CALLED to DIXIE" p216-217.

We would like you to use your influence with Brother Ronnow to come and dye for us a little while as we have no dyer at present. It would be a great help in he could for one month. We expect Bros. Snow and Birch to send one from the East if they can obtain one. It will be almost an impossibility to cash our cloth unless we can get good colors, and black and brown is about all the color we are able to color successfully ourselves. We are going a good business otherwise

This appeal, pyramided on the others, must have been successful. At any rate the Washington Ward Tithing Record for the period shows C.P. Ronnow's name on the record of tithe payers for 1873 and the first part of 1874.

It appears from correspondence dated April 21, 1874, that a professional dyer had at last been found. Just when he arrived is not clear, but this letter indicates that he was in Washington when the letter was written, a rather unhappy and disillusioned man. He was a Scotchman named Cornelius McReavy. He had his training as a dyer in his native Scotland and proved to be a competent technician. It seems that in order to persuade McReavy to come to Washington, Erastus Snow had promised him cash and cash supplies—a drastic overstatement, as it turned out—for his pay. The following excerpt from Whitehead's letter tells the story.

Brother McReavy feels rather bad as he owes a hundred dollars in the East and does not know how to get it. He says you promised him cash and cash supplies for his pay or he would not have contracted the debt. HE must have it if he leaves and goes somewhere else to earn it. I named this in my report to the Board, but there was so many questions brought up that it was overlooked, and I told Bro McReavy our circumstances and told him I would get him twenty dollars and probably after a while could raise the balance and he could pay his debt. He is careful and has not received one dollar in cash since he arrived.

McReavy had not reported his case mistakenly in any respect. The agreement he signed stipulated that he was to be paid in cash and cash supplies at three dollars and twenty-five cents per day. Whether he got the hundred dollars he needed or not, Cornelius McReavy remained in Washington many years as a dyer at the factory, and when that institution finally closed its doors, he stayed on in the town until he was an old man. His wife was a good weaver, so when this couple came to Washington, the Factory received two well trained hands.

Also I have a copy of the letter agreement between McReavy and Erastus Snow, that Mr. Larson sent me.

From the book "The Red Hills of November" p229, at one time C. McReavy served as a counselor to Bishop Andrew Sproul Sr. from Sept. 1896 to 1903 when he was released. On p246 Cornelius was one of the brethren caught and found guilty of unlawful cohabitation in the Second District Court sitting at Beaver, Utah. The punishment meted out to these men was uniform-six months imprisonment in the Territorial Penitentiary and \$300 fine. Both fines and imprisonment were severe. Cornelius had two wives

He was at one time mayor of Washington, the dates were destroyed in a fire.

At this time wine was still used in the sacrament and grapes grew well in "Dixie". It seems some of the wine makers were letting the wine ferment, so it was discontinued for sacrament. Cornelius grew grapes and made wine. It must have been pretty good brew. Seems he had been selling wine without a license or for some violation of the law concerning the sale of wine. This little verse was written about Cornelius and old lady Larson.

If you want a drink of wine
You mustn't go to Mac
Nor to Old Lady Larson, for they'll
Say to you, "Go back!" Forty dollars it too
Much to pay for every little fine
For selling boys on wedding days, a little keg of wine!

Cornelius lived to be 84 years old. He and his wife, Mary, lived in Salt Lake City with a son Joseph and daughter-in-law, Jennie the last several years of his life. He had to be put in a rest home. He died in Salt Lake City and was buried in Provo, Utah.