

JAMES BENNETT BRACKEN

My great-grandfather was the third child and only son of Levi Bracken and Elisabeth Clark. He was born 14 Jan 1816 at Crain City, Hamilton County, Ohio. His early childhood was spent here, where he enjoyed the companionship of his older sisters; when five years old, he moved with his parents to Rush County, Indiana. Here he enjoyed the days of his youth making many friends and learning the lessons of life taught by his affectionate parents. He learned to respect and appreciate their wisdom. His father became his ideal, and young James followed closely in his-footsteps. It was only natural when his father showed an interest in the strange Mormon Doctrine that he too was curious about the new religion. As they studied, they were convinced of its truthfulness and divine origin. As a result, both father and son were baptized the same day, 10 Mar 1832. This truly was a great day' of rejoicing for them when they were confirmed members of the restored church just two years after it was organized; busy days and weeks followed, full of labor', responsibility, and merriment.

Years vanished and young James was approaching manhood with its opportunities and expectations. He began to think seriously of the future and the selection of a companion. In September 1837 at Caldwell County, Missouri he married Betsy Ann Fawcett. His life, like his fathers, was to be seasoned with sorrow, for his lovely "wile of only five years left this earthly home on 12 Feb 1842. A year later at Nauvoo, Illinois, he married Sarah Head on 21 Apr 1843. They lived happily together and strove diligently to make a success of their new adventure. They built it firmly on a base of love, confidence and faith in a wise Heavenly Father whose direction they fully heeded. James Bennett and Sarah Head Bracken took out their own endowments in the Nauvoo Temple and gave this information themselves.

James was very faithful in his church duties and keenly felt his privileges and responsibilities connected with it. He continued to advance in the Priesthood and on 8 Oct 1844 was ordained a seventy by Andrew Moore. He was highly favored by the acquaintance of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and many times enjoyed the wonderful discourses *J* of the Prophet delivered at various places and occasions. Like the other Saints, he suffered severe hardships and persecutions at the hands of the mobs, who drove the Mormon people from place to place because of their faith in the revealed gospel doctrine as taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith. James Bracken considered it an honor to act as a body guard for him and was always willing to perform this service whenever called to do so. He was at the battle of Nauvoo, which took place 12 Sep 1846, and was prominent in the defense of our people in their trouble in Illinois and Missouri, having passed through the persecutions that the saints endured in both of these states.

One incident that he related took place at Caldwell County, Missouri. The Prophet took 80 men and stationed them on a rise about a mile from the river. He placed the men a rod apart, making a row 80 rods long. The mob crossed the river and, after advancing toward them for some distance, turned and fled. Later, grandfather talked to one of the men that was with the mob and was asked how many men there were and grandfather replied there were only 60 men. The man got angry and said that he didn't believe him, that it was just another Mormon lie as there were at least 30,000 men and that they could see lines and lines of the Mormon men.

He was living in Nauvoo when the Temple was completed and dedicated, and rejoiced and gave thanks to God with the other Saints for this marvelous accomplishment. He was also living in Nauvoo at the Martyrdom of the Prophet and his brother Hyrum. He wept with their many friends and wondered about the welfare of the Saints and the progress of the Mormon Church. He remained at Nauvoo with his family but later went to Missouri, then to Pottawattomie County, Iowa.

In 1852, with his wife and five small children, he left Iowa and traveled by ox team to the Rocky Mountains. They traveled in the same company as his parents who left the same year. After many

months of hardship through Indian Territory, they arrived in Salt Lake City, weary and sad as they had left their father buried at Mt. Pisgah, Iowa.

In September 1852 they arrived in Utah and were asked to help colonize some new land southeast of Salt Lake Valley. Willingly they promised to do so and built a new home in Payson, Utah. Here they endured the privations of pioneer life unstintingly. While at Payson, James narrowly escaped death by the Indians several times which served as testimony to the mercies of God. As his father, he always willingly helped where necessary, serving in the Militia and home-guard during the Waller Indian War of 1853 and 1854.

In Payson, new roads had to be built, irrigation ditches planned and plowed, land cleared and cultivated and a watch kept on annoying Indians. When they moved on to St. George, Utah in 1861 and two years later to Pin Valley, these same conditions had to be met, demanding whole-hearted unity. Everyone worked unceasingly to bring the land to a state of production, comfort and beauty.

Arriving in Pine Valley with his family, James became engaged in farming, stock-raising and shingle making, all new industries necessary to develop a thriving community. Time was precious and must be utilized skillfully to reap the greatest benefits. James Bracken's daylight hours were spent managing his new enterprises and, aware of the advantages of an education, spent his evenings studying. He soon became known as an authority on civic and religious facts and was called on to speak in public and to deliver his powerful gospel sermons. His funeral talks gave untold comfort and assurance to bereaved families. Although quite fluent, his speeches seldom contained words of more than three syllables, and he expressed himself simply enough for even children to understand.

Of a very religious nature, he was forever mindful of the blessings brought about by the restoration of the gospel. While active in civic affairs, he was also President of the 46th Quorum of the Seventies at Payson and Superintendent of Sunday School at Pine Valley, Utah. While still in middle age, his legs gave out and he was compelled to do much of his work such as weeding in his garden, sitting in his chair and hitching along. In spite of all this his garden was well kept and neat as was all of his surroundings. In the latter years of his life, he and his wife spent the summer months in their comfortable home in Pine Valley, where it was higher in the mountains and cooler. The winters were spent in the warmer St. George area. While in St. George they would do temple work for their kindred dead. They taught their children the right way of life by example and precept. They spent a happy complete life together filled the measure of their creation and had joy there in.

James Bennett Bracken died on 31 March 1900 while visiting at the home of a daughter, Martha Ann Bracken Hancock, at Panguitch, Garfield County, Utah. He was buried at Pine Valley, Washington County, Utah; the place he helped pioneer, and in the community he loved so dearly.

Originally recopied by a Great-granddaughter
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11 August 1964

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30 January' 1981