

**WILLIAM FRANKLIN BUTLER, SR.**

*Written by: Margaret Butler Shelley, Granddaughter*  
*Read by: Beulah Shelley Spencer, Great-granddaughter*

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, in the beautiful state of Indiana, in Spencer County, there lived a large family with sixteen children. The father of this family, Abel Butler, had taken up now land and bought land until he was the largest land-owner in the state of Indiana. He owned timber, farming and pasture land until he was owner of 2,200 acres of land. He was a hard working man and was raising his family to be industrious. He had prospered and done very well; in fact, he owned a large saw mill and flour mill. At one time, he owned the land where Tell City, Indiana now stands.

My grand-father, William Franklin Butler, was the fifth child in this family, his parents being Abel and Milburn Leitherland Butler, and he was born Feb. 1, 18214. They were of the Baptist faith. This was a very loving and united family. They- all worked together and for the interest of each other. William Franklin, who was called Bill, grew up with his brothers and sisters, learning the value of work in tilling the soil, as one could see in his later life. The family raised all of the fruits and vegetables and flour, but sometimes they were short of cash to take care of other necessities, so the father would send one of the grown boys to the city to get a job for the winter months, thus helping the family out with necessities that could not be raised on the farm. During the winter of 1845-46, his son, George Washington Butler, was given this task, so he went to the city and got a good job, sending his wages home for the family. After being there for a while, he met some Mormon missionaries. He wrote to his father and told him of his experience and his father wrote back and told him to leave those dad-blasted Mormons alone. But George had heard their message and was very impressed with what they had to say. He continued to go to their meetings and was soon baptized. He felt that the Gospel was so wonderful that his father would surely have a change of heart when he would explain it to him. He wrote and told his parents what he had done. His father called his son Bill (My grand-father) and told him to go to Tell City, and bring George home away from those horrid Mormons. Bill went the distance of 200 miles with a team and wagon. When he told George of his father's wishes, he said, "If that is what Father wants, I will go, But I want you to attend one of their meetings before we go back. This he did, and Bill was very impressed with their message and sat up until the wee hours of the morning discussing and learning more about this religion that was despised by the majority of the people of the world at that time. He was baptized Jan. 5, 1846 and went back to his father, feeling that his father was so broad minded that when he heard the true gospel, his attitude would change, but it was entirely different from what he had hoped for. When he broke the shocking news, his father flew into a rage and told Bill that if he didn't denounce Mormonism, he would have to leave his home and never darken his door again. Bill tried to explain, but to no avail. He was turned from his childhood home, never to return. He tried to live around where he was raised, but it was heard to endure the treatment he received. His brothers and sisters and friends turned against him. He could have given up his religion and been with his friends once more, but the gospel meant so much to him, he left his home town and loved ones and joined a body of Saints. We don't know much about his thereabouts for the next few years, but we know he was married to Sarah Ann DeWitt on Sept. 20, 1846. She was of Troy, Perry Co., Indiana. This was just five months after he accepted the gospel. Sarah Ann was born Mar. 10, 1827 in Troy, Perry Co., Indiana. We also find a record that their oldest son,

John Thomas, was born in Perry Co., Indiana May 15, 1848 and their third child and second son was born in Council Bluffs, Iowa. The only regret William Franklin had was that his, parents, brothers and sisters, couldn't see the light as it was so very plain to him.

Being left alone in the world, receiving only ridicules and sneers, he often thought of the words of the Savior, "They that are not willing to forsake father, mother, brothers and sisters, land and home for my sake, are not worthy of me." Sarah Ann was baptized in January 1851. They went to Nauvoo, where Bill joined the Nauvoo Legion. The main body of Saints were preparing to go west. He tried to keep in touch with his loved ones but it was hard. Mail service was slow, and his parents didn't care about writing. His mother died Oct. 17, 1852, but he didn't get the word until the spring of 1853. He wanted to return to his father to comfort him, but he knew if he did he would have to give up his religion. He left Iowa June 9, 1853 with the Daniel Miller Company and arrived in Salt Lake City Sept. 9, 1853 and immediately went to Spanish Fork to live. They thought they would have peace getting so far from nowhere, but they were mistaken, for in 1857 Johnson's Army came to pit down the rebellion that was supposed to exist there. So he, a member of the Nauvoo Legion, was called to guard Echo Canyon. Clothes were scarce and hard to get and they needed to be warm. His wife took the cover that protected their possessions while crossing the plains and made him a pair of pants and a shirt and took the hide from one of their oxen that had died and cut it in strips to wrap his feet to protect them from the cold. He said he had to smile when he thought of the way they fooled Johnson's Arm. They were only a handful of the Nauvoo Legion. They chose a place on a hill in view of the camp and for days they kept a steady march around the hill to impress them with the size of their army, although few in number. Nay Father, William Franklin Butler II, was born on Dec. 5, 1856 while they were living in Spanish Fork.

They were getting pretty well fixed in Spanish Fork, when at the October conference in Salt Lake City in 1861, he was greatly surprised to hear his name called to go to Dixie to help raise the corn and cotton. He was set apart as a counselor in the Bishopric of Dixie before leaving. They soon left Spanish Fork and arrived in Dixie early in December. For a long time they lived at the camp grounds in a wagon until better housing was available. Here his small son, George Washington Butler, died and was the first to be buried in the St. George cemetery. They endured the many hardships of pioneer life. Dams washed out following heavy rains and as a result, crops would fail. Not too many years after moving to St. George, he received word that his father had passed away and in a few months and in a few months he received \$400 as an inheritance. That was a lot of money in those days. The people were desirous of build a building for recreation and a Temple. They called a meeting of the people to discuss the finances. William Franklin arose and offered the first contribution of \$40. He and his two boys, Jacob Noah and William Franklin worked and helped build the St. George Temple, using a cannon for a pile driver. After its completion, he and his wife, Sarah Ann, received their endowments and were sealed. He also had the temple work done for his parents and his wife's parents. He took another wife by the name of Katherine Fuches. She was a widow and had two children, a boy and a, girl. The little girl had died. The lady had accepted the gospel and her husband had left her. Her son's name was Julius. She and grandfather had two children, Abel and Emma. She and her children were sealed to him. His wife, Sarah Ann, died Nov. 19, 1801. On Sept. 12, 1883, his second wife died. Both wives are buried in St. George. He and his sons went back to Spanish Fork, leaving his daughter, Emma, with a family by the name of Atkins, the mother being Belle Atkins. They

were in Spanish Fork about three years, then they went on to Vernal for a while. Here his son, John Thomas, was married and had a home. About this time, they heard about a rich farming country along the Gila River in Arizona, and they decided they would go down there and take up some farming land. When they got as far as Taylor, Frank and Jake decided they would remain there, so he and Julius and Abel went on down to the Gila Valley and settled at Pima. He got a piece of land and planted a large vineyard. He also had a garden spot where he raised watermelon, cantaloupe and sweet potatoes.

In a few years, Frank moved down to the Gila Valley with his wife and four children. They settled across the river from Pima. The children were thrown in close contact with their grandfather. They loved him very much. He was always so patient and kind to them.

When his son Julius (Uncle Uley) was married, he and his wife, Martha Ann (Aunt Annie) moved in his home and cared for him for years up until the time of his death. During this time, his son, Abel (Uncle Abe) married a Carter girl from Glenbar and moved away.

He loved the Gospel and lived up to its teachings to the best of his ability and taught his children to do the same. He filled many important positions in the Church and for several years he was a Patriarch in the St. Joseph Stake. He has a great posterity and nearly all are faithful members of the Church, most of them filling important positions in Church as well as civic affairs. Many of them filled honorable missions and more of them served their country in World Wars I and II. Some of them fought during the Korean War and some of them are in the service at the present time.

His descendants honor and revere the name of William Franklin Butler, who gave up his parents, brothers, and sisters, home and friends for the sake of the Gospel and came West that he might be able to live the Gospel and raise his family in it. He died June 5, 1909 in Pima and is buried in that cemetery. When William Franklin Butler accepted the gospel and was turned from his home, it was the last time he saw his loved ones, so he never saw his sister, Cynthia Savannah, who was born after he left home. Later his granddaughter, Effie Butler Wiltbank, got in touch with the relatives in Indiana and obtained a picture of the sister, taken a 94.