

Rarer Than Air

The Autobiography of William Lewis Elphinstone

“Rarer The Air”

The Autobiography of Wilma Lorine Higbee Kemp

*Age is the top of the mountain high,
Rarer the air and blue.
A long, hard climb, a bit of fatigue,
But oh! what a wonderful view!*

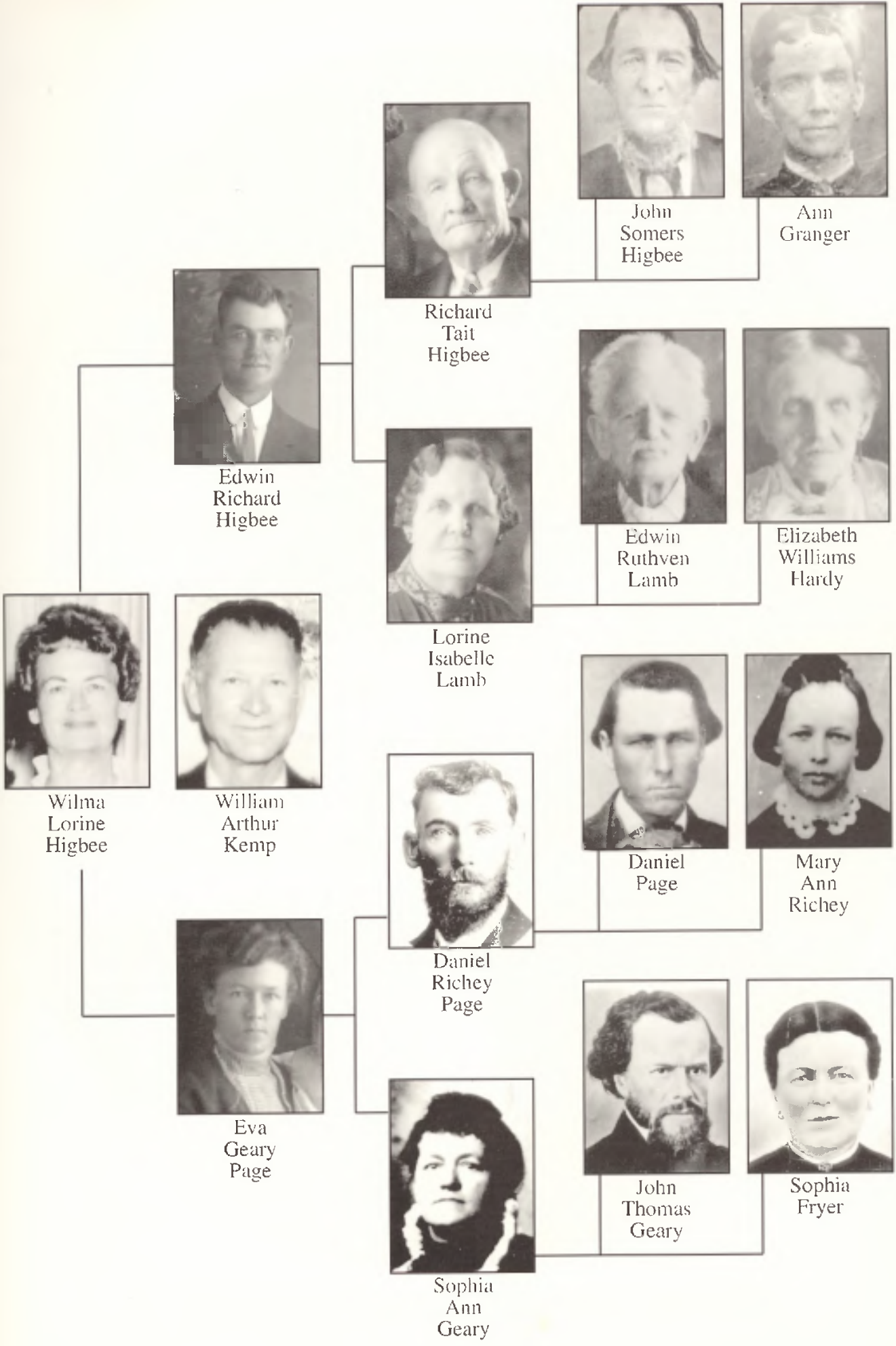
Author Unknown

Dedication...

To the people who made this book possible: William Arthur Kemp, my dearest husband, my sweetheart, my best friend. To my children, Gwendolyn, Carol, Karma, Ellen, and Gloria who were the light and delight of my life. To my parents Eva Page Higbee and Edwin R. Higbee who reared me in love. To my ancestors whose faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ brought them to southern Utah which allowed me to be born in this beautiful place.



Wilma Lorine Higbee 1928



John Somers Higbee

Ann Granger



Richard Tait Higbee



Edwin Richard Higbee



Edwin Ruthven Lamb



Elizabeth Williams Hardy



Lorine Isabelle Lamb



Wilma Lorine Higbee



William Arthur Kemp



Daniel Richey Page



Mary Ann Richey



Daniel Richey Page



Eva Geary Page



John Thomas Geary



Sophia Fryer



Sophia Ann Geary



Eva P. Higbee holding Wilma Lorine Higbee 18 months old. 1911

In Appreciation...

With out my daughter, Karma, this book would never have been published. I appreciate her time, expertise, caring, and her true interest in my life. And if the computer makes mistakes, I told her, "And if you make mistakes in spelling, Karma dear, said she, remember it's the pen that's wrong. Don't blame the blame on me." I appreciate my son Jack for his help with suggestions, faxing, and giving Karma the time away from him that was necessary for this project to be completed.

I thank my grandchildren Sandra and Paul Criddle for their time and talent in setting the songs to music. Karma and I sang the songs over the telephone to them, and they put the music to the words and faxed them back to us. Without the music, the songs wouldn't have meant what I wanted them to.

I thank my granddaughter Pat Frei for her expertise in making the drawing of the chickens. I explained to her what I wanted, and when I saw it, it brought tears to my eyes because it was almost to a "T" an exact replica of the drawing Arthur had made for me many years before.

I thank all my daughters for their time and willingness to look up dates and find photographs.

I appreciate Gwendolyn Frei, Jack Wasden, and Gracia Jones more than I can say for their time, effort, and eye for detail which gave me a sense of comfort in my first literary effort.

I appreciate Michelle Thomas, the daughter of my dear friend Irma, for her careful final reading, which helped make this a much more correct text.

And last but not least, I thank Tom Backman of Red Desert Graphics for his kind, considerate, and patient help.

I thank my grandson Brian Bowler for the hours he spent measuring the lot size of our home in Toquerville and for drawing it to scale. See page 6.



*This is the fence in front of
my schoolhouse .
(Also on pages 28 and 32)*

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Chapter 1

Childhood

In a small, rented, adobe house on the lower street in Toquerville, Washington County, Utah, 29 October 1909, a baby girl was born, the second daughter and second child of Edwin and Eva Page Higbee. No fancy outrageous \$500 to \$1000 confinement was this--just good hard labor, and the help of a midwife, Sister Susan Bringhurst.

As most babies, I must not have been too hard to look at, for Mother said that when I was about three months old, she dressed me for going out in January. I had on a little red velvet hood with white eiderdown

around the face, and when Grandpa Richard Higbee saw me he said, "Oh what a pretty baby; she is sweet." Of course, he might have been looking at the hood.

Our family eventually consisted of Eleen Rosalia, born 29 June 1906; Wilma Lorine; Magnola, born 24 February 1913; Lamond Page, born 18 July 1919; Maree, born 8 December 1921; and Gena, born 12 October 1923. All of us were born in Toquerville, Washington County, Utah except Gena who was born in St. George, Washington County, Utah. We are of English descent on both our father's and mother's sides.

Edwin Richard Higbee was the son and first child of Richard Tait Higbee and Lorine Isabelle Lamb. Eva Geary Page was the fourth child and second daughter of Daniel Richey Page and Sophia Ann Geary. My parents were married 28 August 1905 in Parowan, Iron County, Utah, and sealed in the St. George Temple 22 November 1905.

My great-grandparents on my father's father's side were John Somers Higbee and Ann Granger Higbee; they helped settle Provo. John Somers became the first



Line drawing by Eva P. Higbee. Wilma at seven months. Because my parents had no means of taking my picture, Mama drew this. (Magnola's hand was drawn later.)

mayor of Provo. My great grandparents on my father's mother's side were Edwin Ruthven Lamb and Elizabeth Hardy Lamb, who came across the plains. He came with the Thomas Johnson company, and she came with the Wilford Woodruff company. They helped settle Toquerville.

My great-grandparents on my mother's father's side were Daniel Page and Mary Ann Richey Page from England. They settled in Mount Pleasant, Utah and later moved to Parowan. My great grandparents on my mother's mother's side were John Thomas Geary and Sophia Fryer Geary. He was well educated, spoke seven languages, and according to family tradition was an interpreter or speaker in the House of Lords.



Papa Edwin Higbee and Mama Eva P. Higbee. Photograph taken in Cedar City at the home of Papa's uncle. Note the old grindstone Papa is leaning against.

You can see that I came from devout, hardy, pioneer stock

The incident that caused my first conscious memory occurred when I was 18 months old. I can remember the circus coming to town. I know how old I was because Mama and I figured it out one time while she was visiting with Arthur and me in Las Vegas. My mother would come and stay with us for three to four months during the winter. While she was there, she would come in where I was making drapes and recite a poem, then I would recite one back to her, then she would go into her bedroom and come out with another one, and I would say one right back.

While we were in this routine, I said "How old was I, Mama, when the circus came to town?"

And she said, "Wilma, you can't remember that."

And I said, "Yes, I think I can."

"What do you remember?" she asked.

I said, "I remember people were lined down both sides of the street in Toquerville, and a circus parade came down the street. What impressed me so about it was the elephants' feet. They were so big that when ever they put their feet down I thought they were going to crush me. I remember putting both my arms around your leg and holding on to your skirt. I have a feeling that you picked me up. But I know I was frightened.

"And that night, I don't know where, but we went into a big tent, and a man came out onto the stage dressed all in black. He had black pants and a black shirt with white buttons. He put

his hands up above his head then brought them down, unbuttoned his shirt down to his waist, and put his hands out on either side of his body. A big snake came out from his shirt and started slithering onto one arm. As it did, he raised his arms above his head until his fingers were fairly close over his head. The snake continued to travel up his arm, then crossed from one hand to another, and down his other arm. As the snake went down, the man lowered his arms and the snake went back into his shirt and around his waist. The man then buttoned his shirt back up again."

"Wilma," my mother said, "I don't ever remember discussing this with you, and I wouldn't have believed that you could remember it except you've told it exactly as it happened and I have a picture to prove it."

The next time she came to Las Vegas, she brought the picture that was taken in the circus tent over at Hurricane the night we all attended.

You can see this life history is going to be fairly long because I was blessed or cursed with a very good memory.

Mine was a happy, carefree childhood. I had a feeling of being wanted and well taken care of by my parents and loved by my grandparents on both sides.

I know we lived at La Verkin a short while. I also remember Eleen's birthday when she set two pieces of cake on the sand behind the willows where we played with her imaginary friends, Glorie and Pracklus. She

had picked these names up from hearing Grandma Higbee's sister Aunt Caddie (Caroline Almira Lamb Slack) say to Grandma, "Come Lori, lets go practice." They sang in the ward choir.

The thing that impressed me was that the next day the pieces of cake we put on the sand behind the willows for "Glorie and Pracklus" were covered with black and red ants.

I was a rather venturesome child. Our home in Toquerville on the main street in the center of town (katty-corner from the original church building) was a two story brick, painted yellow. My parents bought it, then had it remodeled and repaired. Often our mother would take Eleen, baby sister Magnola, and me along with her to check the progress on the house. When she was ready to leave, she would call, and we would go with her. On one such occasion, I had other ideas. I thought if she couldn't catch me, I could stay and play. The stair steps of the very narrow staircase hadn't been put in, but the boards the steps were to be nailed to (stringers) were in place on the walls. Quick as a flash, I ran up those boards, my legs stretching as far as possible to reach from side to side. At the top, I ran straight to the south window; out I went, and I hung onto the window sill. I can still remember how I felt dangling two stories up, when one of the workman reached out the window and firmly took hold of both my wrists.

We moved into this house in Toquerville when I was about four years old. I must have had wily ways, for when Eleen and I would decide to leave our yard and Mama would call us to come back, we didn't always mind. But we'd commence to run away, and sure enough, she would come running after us. When I could see she was gaining on us, I would drop to my knees, cross my hands on my chest, rock back and forth and say, "Oh, bless my poor little heart. Oh, bless my poor little heart," over and over. Eleen kept running until Mama over-



This picture was taken at the Circus in Hurricane. Back row, from left: Papa's two brothers Clair Higbee and Lorin Higbee. Middle row, from left. Eleen Higbee, Wilma Higbee, Lila Higbee. Front row: Lillian Wakeling (baby) Alma Wakeling. I am in the center standing on a chair, and my cousin Lillian is in a doll buggy. She is six months old, and I am one year older than she is, so I am 18 months old.

Our home in Toquerville. Mama was very fussy about the yards around our house. She planted these trees and kept them trimmed as topiaries.

