

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ARTA MCLAIN SEELY  
Written in 1936

In a small redhouse on Brigham Street, Salt Lake City, Utah, on November 5, 1874, I was born, the son of Isaac Joseph Seely and Elizabeth Jane Fisher. Father's parents were William Seely and Lucy Ann Decker. My father was born August 25, 1837 in Chicago, Ill. He died Dec. 26, 1902, at his home in East Mill Creek, Salt Lake County, Utah. My mother, a daughter of Joseph Fisher and Evaline McLain, was born February 9, 1839, in Madison, Co. Ill., died 16 Oct, 1885 at East Mill Creek. My Grandfather, William Seely, was born 27 January, 1816, in County of Columbia Ohio, and died 20 May, 1851. My grandmother, Lucy Ann Decker, was born May 17, 1822 in Phelps, Ontario Co., N. Y.; died January 24, 1890, at Salt Lake City. My father and mother were married in the old Endowment House at Salt Lake City on May 17, 1862. ( Sealing date listed on Endowment House Record as December 20, 1862 by H. C. Kimball, witnesses G. A. Smith and W. Woodruff )

When the gospel message was brought to my grandparents, William and Lucy Seely, it caused a separation between them. Grandmother accepted it but grandfather did not. On June 15, 1842, Grandmother Seely was married and sealed to Brigham Young by the Prophet Joseph Smith at the Nauvoo temple. My father and his only sister, Harriet, came west to Salt Lake City with their Mother, Lucy, in 1848. My father was raised by his mother and step-father, President Brigham Young, from the age of five years to manhood.

I moved with my parents while still a child to East Mill Creek, Salt Lake County, Utah, where we lived on a farm.. At the age of seven years, while gathering stones near the house to flip in an elastic flipper, I came across a very pretty and peculiar stone about an inch and one half thick at one end, and tapering for about two and one half inches to almost a point. It was of dark crystal or glass on two sides with a sort of limestone formation on the other sides. This stone proved to be a seer stone with which I was permitted to see many things, including articles that had been lost or stolen. I saw relatives in other cities, strange things and places, located many lost or stolen articles for people from all over the nation.

For five years this wonderful gift was allowed me. I was taken out of school many times to my home to look into my stone for some lost article, or for information on various subjects and things. This was very detrimental to my school work, as I was taken out as many as three times a day by different anxious persons. My mother would never allow any charge to be made for my information, as she said my gift was not for the purpose of making money, and the Lord would withhold it if a charge were made. Many came back with gifts, after finding their lost property.

This stone was placed in the hands of Apostle James E. Talmage by Patriarch John Smith, for analysis. Brother Talmage's report showed that it was neither rock nor glass, but he could not determine exactly its composition.

My mother took charge of the stone at all times until her death, which occurred when I was eleven years of age. About one year after Mother's death, the stone was lost.

After completing two years of seminary work, I was called on a mission to the Southern states, June 15, 1897. In company with sixteen other elders, including C. O. Christensen of Brigham City, I boarded the train for Chatanooga, Tenn. I was now twenty-two years old. My labors in the South Alabama Conference were under President Elias S. Kimball. I baptized five persons into the Church, including twin boys. After eleven months, I was honorably released to return home because of illness.

On the third day of May, 1899, I married Alfaretta Neff, daughter of Franklin Neff, in the Salt Lake temple, John R. Winder officiating. Five children were born to bless our home. They are: Arta Elwyn, Francis Leland, Verna Kay, Leola, and Grant McLain.

For eight years I was clerk of the 122nd Quorum of Seventy in East Mill Creek. I was appointed administrator of Mother's estate in 1903. The fruit business was my occupation until June 1, 1905, on which date the U. S. government appointed me RFD mail carrier on the first rural route out of Salt Lake City, the first also in Utah. I held this position until February 28, 1910, when I resigned to return to the fruit business.

On August 13, 1912, I bought a 480-acre cattle ranch in western Box Elder County. On the first day of October, 1912, I moved my family and a car of machinery from East Mill Creek to the ranch in Rosette, in the Park Valley district.

I was made ward clerk of Rosette Ward soon after arriving. Jacob Kunzler was Bishop. Francis M. Lyman ordained me a High priest and Bishop of the Rosette Ward August 31, 1913, with Fred J. Hirschi and Loiver Atherly as counselors. I held the office of Bishop of the Rosette Ward, Box Elder Stake, later the Curlew Stake, for fourteen years. Fred Hirschi remained first counselor for the entire period. During this time, we built a new meeting house.

I was elected a member of the Board of Education of Box Elder County school district in December of 1913, for a four year term; was reelected for two terms, making twelve years of service on the board.

I served as secretary-treasurer of the Park Valley National Farm Loan Association from 1914 to 1928, during which time I loaned through the association \$92,000 to the members of the Park Valley District. When I had carried on the business for five years, an auditor came from New York to audit my books. They balanced to the cent, and the auditor was generous in his praise.

I was secretary and treasurer of the Park Valley Telephone company and for the Rosen Valley Irrigation Company, as for the Park Valley Live Stock company while living in the Park Valley District.

We moved to Brigham City in Box Elder County on the fourth day of March, 1928. We purchased a home from Roslin A. Lee. From 1928 to 1932 I was manager of the Utah Hatchery Company of Brigham City. I operated a fruit and produce store in Blackfoot, Idaho, for the year 1933, and during 1935 I operated a fruit store at Cold Springs, twelve miles south of Brigham.

I was called as a member of the Box Elder Stake High Council in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, for whom I write this brief sketch of my activities to this date.

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*A M Seely*

The following article is written by Verna Seely Carter, daughter of Arta M. and Alfaretta Seely, taken from notes she wrote as she talked with her father.

He (my father) was baptized June 17, 1883 by John D. Fagg and confirmed by Julian Moses. We have the date August 31, 1913 as his having been ordained a High Priest by Francis Lyman as he has stated in his autobiography.

My father told us children about the loss of his sear stone. After his mother's death, Amos Neff a suitor for his sister Lucy, and a man who enjoyed teasing sometimes without mercy, used his teasing on the young boy Arta. He would tell him that he made up the things he said he could see in the stone. He teased until the boy would cry and become rebellious. One day after such a session the boy while sitting on the steps of his home, lifted his hand and threw the stone out into the raspberry patch. A short time later he felt he shouldn't have thrown it away and searched and searched the ground all around- not once but a number of times and never found it. That old raspberry and later weed patch was still there when father told us his children about it, and my brothers Elwyn and F. Leland and I search and searched that piece of ground, but to my knowledge no one ever found it.

Father didn't speak to us often about his experience with the sear stone, it seemed too personal a thing with him. One time Elwyn asked him what may have happened if he had kept the stone until he had grown up and he said " I don't know, it was a powerful tool- perhaps it's good the gift was taken from me, for without the loving and wise guidance of my mother during my growing up years I may have used it unwisely".

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My father was a wise man and he had the gift of healing. I saw this happen a number of times while he was Bishop and I was growing up. One time I was very sick and hadn't been able to take any food. My father gave me a blessing and then he said "What would you like to eat?" I said a sandwich with sliced, sweet onions. He turned to mother and said, "give Bonnie one". (Bonnie was his pet name for me) Mother was shocked but gave me one! and I enjoyed every bite and started to get well.

The one healing event that has stayed in my mind all these years, making me more aware of the power of the Priesthood and special gifts that come through it, I now relate.

The people of the Rosette, Utah Ward where father presided as Bishop loved him and respected him. At this particular time a messenger came to our house and said a young child, Roy Kunzler, had been run over by a wagon, the wheels crushing his head and the family feared he was dying and would father please hurry and come. He went, he took his hands and shaped the child's head back to normal state, gave him a blessing and told him he would live by the mercy of God, through the power of the Priesthood he and the brethren assisting with the administration, held. The boy's parents and witnesses said it was a miracle. The boy regained consciousness and started to improve from that time on. He is a grown man, as I write this; normal, alert and with no facial impairment. *At Isaac Seely's funeral I met this man. He came all the way from Park Valley etc.*

In the days of his youth father, his brother Ike and Charley Skidmore played for dances and entertainment in various town and mining camps in Utah. He played second violin, his brother Ike played first violin and Charley played the flute. Some of the places they played were Mercer, Camp Floyd, Touella, Fish Springs, Skull Valley and Deep Creek. Much of this area was ranching, sheep and cattle and mining. There were as many as 13 saloons in some places. Dances and celebrations were often held in tents. Many times these entertainments were broken up by gun happy inebriated men. Elizabeth Bonnemort known as Utah's sheep queen hired father's little band to play of ten for her dances and as the sheep men and the cattle men were feeding in those days, the cowboys would ride their horses into the tents where the dances were held, shooting their guns, and father and company would take shelter under tables or crawl under the tent for shelter in the rocks where their horses were tied. Two of the tunes they played were "Over the Waves" and "The Irish Washer Woman", and father was still playing those tunes after he married and I was big enough to be put on the organ stool and while someone pumped the pedals ~~the~~ "corded" for him as he played those two tunes for ward dances.

The illness he suffered in the missionfield was malaria and he was so ill in the mission that the President gave him an honorable release and sent him home. He was a long time recovering, in fact he had re occurrence of it during his life. When mother married him she said he was a sorry sight for a bridegroom having fever sores all over his face. That even the heavens wept, their wedding day on the 3rd of May saw the flowering branches of the fruit trees bending down to the ground under the weight of snow.

Father and mother had an "understanding" before he went into the missionfield. They corresponded, and while they weren't exactly love letters they did express how much they missed each other and father composed a lovely poem about her and sent it to her which she kept and we have it in the family to-day. He liked the color red and mother wore shades of the color to please him, though she never felt comfortable about it because her hair was a shade of red in her younger days.

My father spoke often of the beautiful black hair of his mother and how he would gather wild flowers, as a boy, and she would let him twine them in her hair. He sat at her feet and listened to her counsel and teachings and although she died while he was a young boy he never forgot her teachings or her love for him. She died Oct. 14, 1885 and he had his eleventh birthday the next month on Nov. 3rd. He said his mother told him she was born in Iowa. She heard the gospel and joined the church. She had such faith that she wished to be baptized even though it was necessary to break the ice in the Missouri river to perform the baptism. She came to Utah with her parents as a young girl. He also, spoke with affection for his father and respect for that hardy individual who raised his family of children after his wife died, sending two sons on missions. He never remarried and lived his last years with my father and mother. Father said his father Isaac was "two months shy of five years of age" when his mother Lucy married Brigham Young. She was separated from William Seely and became Pres. Young's first plural wife in Nauvoo, Ill. Isaac came to Utah with his mother and Brigham Young and lived with them until in his late teens when he joined a company of gold seekers and went to California for awhile. Father said his father Isaac told him that Lucy said William was a handsome man that during their days of marriage the saints and non saints were harassed by mobs, that William though a non member of the L. D. S church was threatened with bodily harm and at one time put on her (Lucy's) bed cap and got into bed to escape the mob. He laughed and told Lucy when she returned home that the mob thought he was her and left. This is all father can remember his father telling him about William and he searched for information on this progenitor. One day he went to Clarissa Young Spencer to ask if Lucy left any information about William or their marriage. Clarissa who was fiercely devoted to her father Brigham Young wouldn't do much talking, perhaps she didn't know much to tell. She made my father cross when she said "William couldn't have been up to much". However, she said her mother never said William ever was unkind or abused her, then she said "but she is sealed to my father so what can it matter to you". Father said it mattered a great deal. He had discovered that William never married again, that he died in Chicago, Ill. owning a great deal of property (a city block) and it was left to his son Issac and daughter Harriet, through an advertisement in the early Salt Lake newspaper (believed the Deseret News) the family learned of it. A cousin of the family, by marriage, and a lawyer was sent to receive the inheritance and they (the family) never saw him again - nor the inheritance.

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Father felt a great need for genealogy and life stories, probably because he could learn such a little about his grand father William. He talked often to my sister Leola about searching out genealogy and personal histories and she became very interested and worked at this for a number of years before her death. My father said he would help her, and before his death told her there would be some money for the project, it would be 'set aside'. After the services and we were gathered to read his will, which left his wife Vera (our aunt Vera being his second wife) provided for, and each of us remembered, there "was money in the house for genealogy". Leola said "It is hidden in the basement so let's look for it". It was with a feeling of un-reality and mystery that we five children went looking in the basement. In the furnace room where the coal was stacked we found a quart fruit bottle stuffed with a roll of 'green backs', the genealogy money!

We have all wished to know the circumstances of the separation of William and Lucy Ann Seely, more about their life and family. We run across a few lines here and there and try to piece a history together. We know Lucy was very young when she married and had three children, the last one dying shortly before her separation from William. We read in Alvin Dyer's book 'The Refiners Fire' that William was taken prisoner together with two men who were members of the church, by a mob and word sent to their families that they would be killed. While David Patten and company got them released (suffering mortal wounds while doing so), we wonder if Lucy thought him dead and left with family and friends for Nauvoo. Again a teacher of history told his class he read where William Seely returned from a battle to find his wife and children gone.

One of Brigham Young's daughters writing about her mother states; "Mother would have periods of singing and whistling a sad little song about "lovers lost"--- and always had a far away look in her eyes, when we asked her why she sang it she didn't say ----- We wonder too!

Father, Arta McLain Seely died in his home in Brigham City, Utah May 17, 1945 of cancer. He is buried in the Seely family plot in the Brigham City cemetery

The following information is verified from church records - Film 186 206 No. 3022 Book A page 175

Arta McLain Seely born November 3, 1874  
Baptized June 17, 1883  
Endowed June 11, 1897  
Sealed May 3, 1899