

A sketch of the life of Franklin Neff, a pioneer of 1849, written by his son Seymour H Neff. May 1937. East Mill Creek, Utah.

Franklin Neff was born Feb. 18, 1824 in Strasberg Lancaster County, Penn., a son of John Neff and Mary Barr Neff, the oldest of ten children. The family joined the church in Penn. They decided to dispose of their property there and come to Utah with the Pioneers. In 1847 grandfather John Neff with part of the family came to Utah and settled near the mouth of Mill Creek Canyon, and there built the first flour or grist mill.

Franklin Neff remained at the old home in Pennsylvania to run the mill there and finish up the business of the Penn. home. In 1849 he came to Utah and began to run the mill here.

About 1850 he married Letitia Musser, there was born to this union twin daughters, they were named Letitia and Martha. Mother Letitia died when Martha and Letitia were born. On the first day of January 1855 he married Francis Maria Stillman Russell. To this union were born nine children (names listed elsewhere).

He was one of the first to get a patented deed from the government for his quarter section of land in section 34.

Franklin Neff was also one of the first brick and adobe makers in the country, having located a brick and adobe mill on the quarter section of land he home staded near what is now 39th south street.

The first house built by John and Franklin Neff on the old Mill site was built of adobe made by them. He also operated the first shingle mill.

President Brigham Young requested the Neffs to locate in this vicinity so they could operate a flouring mill as that was their business in Penn.

After coming to Utah Franklin Neff operated the mill, grinding the flour and corn meal on the old burrs. The power used to run the mill was the old overshot water wheel and penstock. Rather than to sell the flour to people going through to California for a very high price he would sell it to the farmers and local people for \$2.50 or \$3.00 a hundred. He also provided the Indians with flour and corn meal and received nothing for it except their thanks.

He was called by Pres. Brigham Young to go out among the Indians to pacify or make friends with them. Brigham Young's doctrine was "it was better to feed the Indians than to fight with them." On many occasions as they were gathered around the camp fire in the evenings Franklin Neff would smoke the Pipe of Peace with the Indians passing the pipe around indicating they were on friendly terms. He also let his hair and beard grow long as a custom of the Indians.

He assisted in building our first meeting house which was built of logs about a quarter to a half a mile east of the old mill site. He later assisted in building the old part of our present chapel (East Mill Creek).

Franklin Neff was a very kind and affectionate father and husband, his acts of charity and love were many. As a benefactor he was excelled by few, having built several homes in the ward that was later known as East Mill Creek Ward. He built homes for Cyrus Neff, Amos B. Neff, and Alva Keller. His only tools were a cross cut saw, old style wooden plane, a tomhook for a hammer and an old time iron square. He also gave or sold land for a very small consideration to people for homes to build up the community. He reserved a right of way through his homestead for roads to the mill, one road is now known as Hillside Lane another as Neff's Lane.

He was a great friend of Porter Rockwell who also let his hair grow long, having been out on the frontier a great deal of his time, he was a staunch friend of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Having upon one occasion made the statement when asked by the Prophet for counsel as to where they should go or what they should do in the time of the trouble in Nauvoo, "You make your bed and I will lie with you."

In later years Franklin Neff possessed the gift of counsel, many

people going to him for counsel in their times of trouble. One incident of kindness, encouragement and counsel that was well known of was the case of Bro. Chambers, a negro, who came to the mill to have his grain ground. Bro. Chambers would weep bitterly on account of his dark skin and not being able to hold the Priesthood. Another the case of Eliga K. Able who was also colored and a friend of the Prophet Jos. Smith, Franklin Neff took him into his home and provided for him, as he did many others who came to this community. There was Indian Pete, Leha, who was part Indian, Napoleon Bonapart, John Abe, Old Fred and his wife and many others that he took into his home.

His motto through life was "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you".

As he was faithful in life so also was he faithful in death, leaving his blessings with his family and loved ones.

As I stood at his bed when he passed away, his last words to me as his son were, "Always be a good boy."

Franklin Neff died Nov. 17, 1882 in the old home in East Mill Creek, Salt Lake County, Utah at the age of 58 years, 8 months and 29 days.

The site of the grist mill and old Neff Home became a show place when it was later purchased by a Col. Holmes.

FRANCES MARIA STILLMAN RUSSELL NEFF

As told by son
Seymour Howard
Neff

Frances Maria Stillman was born the 29 of May 1830 in the state of New York, came to Utah crossing the plains in the fall of 1850.

(She married -----Russell and two girls were born to this union. (Information about this will be gathered and listed later)

She was married to Franklin Neff the 1st day of January 1855 by Julian Moses. They received their endowments in the old endowment house at Salt Lake City.

They made their home at the mouth of Mill Creek Canyon, the place later being called East Mill Creek Ward.

There were nine children born to them. Father and mother each had a living daughter by a former marriage.

In the early days it was hard to get people to take part in civic and church affairs. Mother was one of the first school teachers, having taught in the old log school house on the hill. The house was used for all purposes school, church and social gatherings.

They built their home back of the old Pioneer Grist Mill now known as Oakwood. There is one monument remaining of the old home and old cotton wood tree planted by Franklin Neff when he first came here.

Mother was always very hospitable and kind, taking in the Fisher family and helping them to provide a home. Many times she would feed the Indians who would come to the door asking for biscuits. Father also supplied them with corn meal and flour from the mill.

She often nursed the sick in the community, being called out any hour of the night or day. She very often assisted in bringing babies into the world.

She was an officer in the Relief Society for several years also an officer in the Primary organization. Mother very often entertained and provided for the church authorities when they were visiting in the ward, Jos. E. Taylor, Steven Marks of Junday School and Mary Freeze of the Y L M I A along with many others. In her childhood days in Illinois the Prophet Joseph Smith visited her parents home very often, and the Prophet would hold her on his knee and talk to her.

She was a very kind and affectionate mother and would make any sacrifice for her family. One of her special maxims was, "It is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong."

She died Sept. 13, 1903, Sunday morning at the home of her daughter Alfaretta N. Seely in East Mill Creek.