

FRANKLIN NEFF

The ancestors of Franklin Neff who were Memmonites, came to America from Europe to escape religious persecution, and settled in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The Neff family came of Dutch Swiss lineage and was an industrious and business-like family and amassed considerable wealth in this new land.

Franklin, the eldest son of John and Mary Barr Neff, was born February 12, 1824 in Strasburg, Lancaster County, Pa. Nine other children were born to this couple.

The Mormon Elders visited them sometime before the summer of 1844. A meeting was held in a school house near the Neff home. The speaker was Henry Deem. The parents and some of the children were converted at this meeting and soon were baptized. In the spring of 1844 the parents and oldest daughter visited the Prophet Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, staying with the Prophet at the mansion House. Upon returning home they made arrangements to sell their property in Pa., and cast their lot with the mormons in Nauvoo. The Prophet had told them he did not expect to live long, but the news of his martyrdom six weeks later came as a great shock to the Neff family. Undaunted and with characteristic determination and faith they went ahead and sold most of their property and in the spring of 1846 joined the saints in Nauvoo who were in the midst of moving west.

As a child in Lancaster, Pa. Franklin had known a little girl named Elizabeth Musser. But the family moved away and when the Neffs joined the saints at Nauvoo he met Elizabeth again, now a young woman and he fell in love with her and they were married on the bank of the Des Moines River March 5, 1846. The young couple then joined the rest of family and saints on the trek west.

The teams and equipment of the Neff family were the best that money could buy and President Young said they were a great help to many of the other Saints who were compelled to leave their homes with almost nothing. Franklin, his father and brothers carried gold pieces sewed in their belts. The gold did them no good along the trail, the strong horses and wagons did provide transportation for them and ones less fortunate, but to tire, to suffer and often coming close to despair was their lot as ^{it} was with the other saints. *Franklin had the*

When they arrived at Winter Quarters, Pres. Young wanted a flour mill built to provide flour for the people. The mill would cost \$3600. He asked and received \$2600 from the Neff family to build this mill. Now the gold peices were taken out of the belts.

When the main body of saints moved out the following spring, the Neff family was in the second company to leave; all except the oldest son Franklin who was asked to stay on at Winter Quarters and run the mill for the people who were left and were arriving there. This was in 1846-7.

In the spring of 1848 a daughter was born to Franklin and Elizabeth and was named Martha Elizabeth, and soon after her birth they all moved on to the west. The portim of the family who had come to the Rocky mountains the year before had stayed that winter in the Old Fort, and in the following spring they moved to the mouth of Mill Creek canyon where Franklin, his wife and daughter joined them.

They all set about to build houses and Pres. Young requested the Neffs to build a grist mill in that area. By Oct. 1848 the mill was grinding out flour and separating the bran, shorts and white flour as they had done in the east. Two other mills had started action a short time before but the Neff mill was the first in the west to bolt the flour. A process of running the flour through silk goods which they bought by the bolt and brought with them from Pa., thus sifting the coarse from the fine flour.

On the 2nd of Feb. 1853 another daughter was born to Franklin and Elizabeth. The mother lived but three days after the birth and died at age 27. The baby survived her but by three months.

Two years later Franklin met a young widow Frances Maria Stillman Russell (my grandmother) who also had a young daughter. They were mutually attracted to each other and were married

Cyrus was buried along the trail, Mo. 1841-2

on Jan. 1, 1855. Nine children were born to them: Frances Maria who died at age eleven; Mary Minerva, John Franklin who died at age of seven; Barbara Matilda who died at the age of five. These three children all died between March and December in the year 1866, of diphtheria. Then Rosella was born, then May Seymour, then Alice Amelia who died at age 27, then Seymour Howard, and last Alfaretta (my mother).

It is said that Franklin Neff was one of the first settlers to get a patented deed from the government for his quarter section of land. This land extended from about 20th east to the foothills and from 33rd to about 40th south. He gave immigrants a piece of land on which to make their homes.

He was a brick and adobe maker and built his house of these as well as a number of others.

He and his father had a shingle and molasses mill. He did become what is called "well to do" and at one time when the Saints were going to live the United Order, grandfather deeded all his property and all he had to Brigham Young. But as the saints were not able to live this order Presl. Young returned his deed to him.

Many experiences were had by the family of Franklin Neff as he operated the flour mill. He fed the Indian the flour for free and one time an Indian Chief grew so fond of Franklin that he offered him his daughter in marriage and was so insistent that he accept ~~him~~ this high favor that he ordered a feast to honor the marriage, and a dog was killed on which to feast. Grandfather managed to extricate himself from the bonds of matrimony on this occasion also from the feast without incurring the ill-will of the Indian Chief.

President Young called grandfather and his brother-in-law Orrin Porter Rockwell to go out among the Indians as Indian scouts to make friends with the Indians and help the later companies of Saints through to the valley. Grandfather and Porter Rockwell let their hair and beards grow long as a compliment to their Indian friends and gathered with them around the campfires to smoke the pipe of peace

Many people came to Franklin Neff for advice and council in time of trouble. One such was Brother 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, and grandfather would try to comfort him, telling him everything would be made up to him in the next life as he had been a faithful and true Latter-Day-Saint. Another one who came for comfort was Eliga K. Able, who was also colored and had been a friend of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Grandfather took Eliga Able in his home and provided for him as he did for many others who came to this community. There were Indian Pete, Leah, who were part Indian, Napoleon Bonapart, John Abe, Old Fred and his wife, etc. He tried to live by the Golden Rule. As he died he left his blessing with his family and loved ones. Turning to his young son his dying words were "Always be a good boy".

He died November 17, 1882.