

# AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM BENBOW EREKSON<sup>i</sup>



John Benbow and William Benbow Erekson

William Benbow Erekson was born January 17, 1879 in South Cottonwood Ward, Salt Lake County, Utah. U.S.A.

My father, Jonas Erekson, was born in (Near Stavanger on the Sæbø farm on the island of Fogen or on two places near Helmuland) Norway, January 7, 1825. He was the son of Henry and Christenia (Malinda) Erekson, who came to Utah with their (five) children boys (3) and girls (2) in the year (October 25, 1849), settling in Mill Creek Ward. Grandfather Henry Erekson was killed by being run over with a wagon and died October 14, 1868. Grandmother Erekson died at her home in Mill Creek in about the year 1849 (May 10, 1852).

Father and his brother, Ira, went to California to seek their fortunes, but Ira died (January 19, 1865) while there, and Jonas returned without obtaining that which he had been seeking. (1865).

He married Miss Mary Powell of Lehi, Utah, and they started to keep house on his father's, farm in South Cottonwood on the south side of Little Cottonwood Creek. He started raising sheep and cattle and being successful in this occupation he also went into a general merchandising business building the first store in Murray on the state road one-half mile south of 25th Dist. School House. He also

purchased a flourmill at West Jordan and a ranch in Tintic and land in various places. He had seven children by his wife Mary P. as follows: Jonas Henry, William, Mary Ann, Albert, Naomi Susan, James T. and Norman Wines. Albert and Naomi Susan died while they were quite young.

August 30, 1869 Father married Isabella Markham Benbow as a plural wife. She was the only child who lived of John Benbow, a well to do farmer of England. His father died when he was quite young, and he had to work out for a livelihood and by his temperament and industrious habits, he was enabled to purchase a farm which greatly increased his income about this time he married Jane Holmes, and they joined the "United Brethren" Church and boarded the Minister. When the late President Wilford Woodruff called at his house as a messenger of Salvation. He was invited to make their house his headquarters, which he did. In a very short time, through the labors of Elder Woodruff, the whole branch of the United Brethren (about 600) with the exception of one joined the Church. This latter person joined at a later date. Grandfather Benbow and his wife were baptized in the year 1840. His testimony was so strong and his confidence in God's servants so great that he brought his deeds and money and offered them all to Elder Woodruff. Elder Woodruff told him that it was not his place to accept of property and that he should keep it. The above offer was again made to the Prophet Joseph, when he was in the U. S. but was again refused. Pres. Woodruff said Grandfather paid for the first edition of the Book of Mormon in England, which cost \$20,000.00. His purse was ever open to the authorities in the Church. He often went bail for the Prophet and was financially interested in the "Nauvoo House".

While crossing the plains with the Saints his wife died. He came to Salt Lake Valley in 1849 and in 1850 married a widow, Rosetta Peacock, who had two children: a boy, Charles King, the fruit of her first marriage, and a girl four years old, Mary Peacock, Oct. 28, 1852. My mother, Isabella B. Erekson, was born near little Cottonwood Creek not quite one half mile West of our present home. Her half brother lived with his father in Boston but paid mother and grandmother a visit shortly before his death in 1882. Mary Peacock married Nathan Tanner and had one child, Belle. She obtained a divorce and married a man by the name of Lynch and had one son, Charles, she again obtained a divorce and went to California and married Frank Emmerson and had another daughter, Persis. They at present live at Fresno, California.

Unto my mother were born three children. Rosetta Benbow born • John Benbow born September 25, 1874, and William Benbow born January 17, 1879. Rosetta died at the age of five years, and father died 3anuary 4, 1881 after suffering two years from consumption, the foundation of which was laid through

exposure to dampness and cold while attending to his business at the ranch.

After Grandfather Benbow's death, father bought his house and land from Grandmother who removed to Salt Lake, and before his death he willed it to mother and us two boys.

Mother's health was very poor after father's death so she rented part of our house to John Thompson and wife, and Mr. Thompson took care of the farm for the succeeding five years. In Sept. 1882 mother took us boys' and spent seven months in St. George, Utah with her cousin Ellen Carter. Mother devoted a great deal of time to teaching us the way she wished us to go. When I was seven years old I went for a few weeks with John to Mrs. Parry's school and spent the time in drawing pictures. I did not learn to repeat the alphabet, as was the custom of other school children as Bro. Wm. Bradford advised mother not to teach it to me so he could try a Dr. Park's theory with me. Instead of entering the chart classes I started in Bancroft's first reader and would get someone to read the lesson to me and I would know it off by heart and by comparing the words with the written words in the books I soon was able to read and I think this one thing saved me a year in school. I was always studious and never was whipped at school. I excelled in Arithmetic and passed the final examination when I was twelve years old. I completed the 5th reader when 11 years old. In 1892 and 93 John and I attended the Central Seminary receiving good instruction in Theology. In 1893 and 94 I attended the University of Utah but my eyes became very much inflamed so I gave up my course about six weeks before the school year closed. The next year I did not go to school. In Sept. 1896 we moved to 21 W. 1st So., Salt Lake City so I could better attend to my studies at the Salt Lake Business College which I had entered on the 28th of the above month. We rented our house, farm and pasture, John worked at Orson Sanders store and Mother kept house for me. I devoted from ten to sixteen hours each school day to shorthand and typewriting. In March 1897 John received a call to go on a mission to Ohio, which he left to fill in April, being away from home 29 months. After my 9 months were up I laid off two months to try to get work but did not succeed so I work in the College of force six weeks and Nov. 8th obtained a position at the Utah Stove and Hardware Co. I worked in that office till March 2, 1897 when the manager, P. W. Madsen transferred me to his furniture store where I stayed until January 17, 1899. I left to accept a position with the Penna. Smelting Co. I stayed at this place until April 15. As the office would be closed in a few days, and because the Co. had sold to the American Smelting and Refinery Co. I accepted a position with the Diamond Coal and Coke Co. at Diamondville, Wyo. for which place I started April 17, 1899. I held that position until Oct. 1st when I got Lennart Pearson to take my place for a month so

I could recruit my health, which was run down with the hard work, The first week in October, I visited my friends in Salt Lake City and vicinity and was disappointed in not meeting John, who was expected home from his mission. I received word that he would not reach S. L. C. before the 10th, and as I had arranged to start from Diamondville on a hunting trip on that date, I had to fore-go seeing him until I had returned. As Mr. Pearson was not fully qualified to hold the position I had held, he was let out and I worked three days until the Co. could get another man to take my place. I assisted mother with her reports to the court so she could be released as our guardian while we were in Salt Lake City.

From my hunting trip we went 130 miles north of Diamondville and returned Oct. 27th after an absence of 18 days. I killed three deer, one elk, and a number of Antelope, which were very numerous. One band numbering as near as we could judge, about 3000. I was pleased to meet John whom, I had not seen for 30 months. I found awaiting me a call to go on a mission to New Zealand. I told them I could be ready Dec. 12, 1899 and was then informed that I was to be ready to sail Dec. 14th from Vancouver, B. C.

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<sup>1</sup>The biography was scanned and produced from the typed copy, which was in the possessions of Marie Young Erekson, by her grandson Allen B. Erekson on 21 January 2010. Bracketed dates are inserted by the typist from family history genealogical records.