

REUBEN FOWKES HISTORY

Combined histories of son, Reuben N. Fowkes, daughter Catherine Emma Fowkes Sellers, daughter Edith Elizabeth Fowkes Wanlass, granddaughter Margaret Wanlass Schmith, compiled by 2ggdaughter Alona Perkes.

Reuben Fowkes was born 18 Feb. 1842 at Ibstock, Leicestershire, England being the son of Richard Fowkes and Mary Barrass.

When Reuben was only 9 years old his father died, so he used to work for the farmers by weeding the crops and in that way he was quite a help in providing for his mother and brother Charles.

Reuben first heard the gospel preached on the streets in England, and he was baptized in 1855. Because he joined the church he became an outcast among his companions. One Sunday morning some of his friends called on him and invited him to go for a walk with them. His mother did not feel right about his going, but finally said he could. They walked until they came to an old abandoned mine, and after walking out on a trussel they pushed Reuben off, ran away and left Reuben for dead. He happened to land on a lot of loose sand so he survived the fall with a lot of bruises, a sprained knee and part of his front teeth being broken off.

When Reuben reached dating age he met the two Bacon sisters at church. He started paying alot of attention to Elizabeth who worked in a lace factory as an overseer. When he left for a few days bot girls felt that Elizabeth was his choice, but a few days later a letter arrived addressed to Mary Bacon. Elizabeth claimed the letter as hers but Mary insisted it was hers, so she put the letter, unopened, down the neck of her dress and said, "We shall see when Reuben comes again." And there the letter remained until a few days later Reuben arrived and varified that the letter was indeed for Mary, telling her that he had fallen in love with her. Elizabeth remained very angrey for a long time over the situation.

Reuben and Mary Bacon were married 5 April 1863 at Hugglescote, Lanc. Eng. on Easter Sunday. They were later endowed at Salt Lake City, on Dec. 1868.

Reuben, Mary and two little daughters; Edith Elizabeth & Ester, migrated from England to America on the Ship "Minnesota" with a company of 53 emigrating Latter-Day-Saints on June 30, 1868. They arrived in New York on 12 July 1868 after spending 3-6 weeks on the ocean. They then traveled by railroad to Fort Laramie, Wyoming which at that time was the terminal of the Union Pacific Railroad Company. They continued their journey across the plains with the ox teams, in a company commanded by Captain Loveland. They traveled along the Platt River for days & days. The "Big Sandy" which was a mountain of sand was difficult to cross as the oxen would sink up above their knees and the wagons to the hubs in the sand. All that could possibly walk did, with Reuben carrying Edith Elizabeth most of the way on his back. The heat was so terrible that Mary had a sun stroke and lost so much weight that she lost her prized wedding ring in the quick sand and they never found it. They had to forge the Platt River many times and it was very dangerous because of the quick sand it contained. Wood was scarce and difficult to gather even enough to make fires to cook on, however, they were a happy group in spite of all the discomforts. They held meetings, sang hymns and had dances along the way to break the monotony of the long journey. They arrived in Salt Lake City on 20 Aug. 1868 with only what they stood in.

Disappointment waited the Fowkes family when they arrived in Utah, for there was plenty of work to do but no money. Reuben's first job was working for W. W. Cluff in the Grass Creek Mine, but was never paid for his work because the company had no funds. Mary was an exceptionally good tailoress and rented a sewing machine that fastened on a table and had to be turned by hand, so she made suits for men and lovely dresses for the ladies and for her pay she received produce such as; potatoes, flour, bacon, fruit, etc. She also would walk miles to get animal fat to make candles to sell.

The family moved to Coalville, Utah where Reuben built a home, using his stone mason and civil engineer skills. There was a rock hill close by so Reuben carried the large rocks and Elizabeth carried the small rocks to fill in the gaps between the large ones to make a good sized one room home for them to live in. It had a dirt floor, with cloth to cover the door and one window. There wasn't any lumber of any kind so Reuben cut cottonwood trees into poles and used it for the bed, the smaller tree branches were used for the roof, then covered with dirt. He got some straw from a man that threshed a small amount of grain and used the straw for a mattress. He made a fireplace to keep them warm and to give Mary a place to cook. The house was located at the banks of the beautiful Chalk Creek which supplied them with water. There was no work to be had so they along with others, suffered alot of hardships.

A baby girl was born to them in their new rock house in May 1870, and they named her Eveline May, but the folks called her "Hard times" because she came in the middle of poverty and hardship. They were very poor and Mary couldn't nurse her babies, and because they couldn't buy milk, Mary boiled rolled oats until they were done, strained it and fed her baby on it. When they were ready to bless May, they didn't have a bonnet so Mary tied one of Reubens hankchiefs on her head and this served as a bonnet. When the baby became fussy Mary would take a little sugar mixed with water and soak a corner of cloth in the mixture and then let the baby suck on it, it was called a "sugar Tit" in those days instead of a pacifier.

They didn't have much to eat and when they did have flour it was made into little round cakes and baked on the fireplace Reuben had made.

About this particular time (1890) the Union Pacific Coal Company went to Evanston and Almy Wyo., in the Bear River Valley to open some coal mines. Reuben took 2-3 flour cakes, tied a quilt on his back and walked from Coalville, Utah to Almy, Wyoming where he found work and then sent for his family.

Reuben decided to homestead a piece of land along the Bear River. He was the first white man to take a wagon down the east side of the Bear River, and he got along well with the Indians which roamed freely through the country. Old Chief Washake and his son called on Reuben frequently and they ate often together, Reuben would rather feed the Indians than have them run his cattle off.

His ranch consisted of 366 acres about 10 miles north of Evanston, Wyo., and he raised hay which was cut with a scythe, he stocked his ranch with cattle, sheep and horses. He used to raise oxen and teach them to work and then sell them to the ranchers to plow or pull heavy loads.

When the company got started there was work for everybody, especially the ones that were emigrating in. Reuben later became superintendent of the Union Pacific Coal Mines, and the Fowkes family helped the community grow into a very lovely place. Almy grew so fast the company had to build a boarding house to take care of the working men, and the company asked Mary if she would take care of the boarding house which she did for many years.

During the years 1883-4 the company shipped in quite a crew of chinamen to work the mines at reduced wages. Reuben was very displeased about it and it caused alot of trouble among the different mining groups. The cowboys were in sympathy with the American workers, one afternoon a man came on horseback to Reuben's home and told his daughter Elizabeth to put a red light in the window next to the road. At first she said she wouldn't, but went and asked her father about it. Reuben said she had better do as she was asked, because there was going to be trouble and not much could be done about it. So Elizabeth went home and put a red checkered tablecloth over the window and set a lighted lamp on the table behind the cloth to make a red light. Everyone living near the Bear River bridge put a red light in their window as a guide for the cowboys to use as a guide to chinetown. At 12:00 P.M. The cowboys went to china town and forced the chineese onto flat cars and forced the conductor to transport the Chinamen out of the country, and they had no more trouble with the Chinese and the mines.

There were very few loaded gun shells to buy so Reuben bought a reloading outfit and would reload empty shells for their trips and hunting trips. Everybody took care of their empty shells, Reuben would get the empty tea containers made of lead from the store, break the lead into small pieces, put them into an iron ladle and hold it on a hot coals of the fire until it melted. Then he would pour it into molds and the lead hardened quickly. For the shot gun shells, he had a small measure shaped like a mallet on one end and this measured the powder and buckshot. In the empty shell he placed the hardened lead, measure of buck shot, powder a paper wad and then the shell was crimped around the top and ready for use.

They became the parents of 13 children, four of whom died in their youth, but the rest required a constant determination on the part of both Reuben and Mary to provide for their needs. Reuben would have the children read a chapter in the Bible before going to bed each night, and he would share his very strong testimony of the gospel with them.

Reuben died very suddenly at the age of 50 years on Feb. 24, 1892 at Almy, Uinta County, Wyoming.

Mary lived to be 74 years of age before joining Reuben in her resting place at Almy, Wyoming.