

Aldo B. Barrus (1879-1959)
Obituary

On November 15, 1879, an infant son was born to pioneer parent Benjamin Franklin Barrus, Stake Patriarch, and Lavina Steel, at Grantsville, Utah. This son was the eleventh child for this couple and was named Aldo Benoni Barrus. The mother became serious ill with milk leg and was unable to nurse her baby. To feel cow's milk at that period of time when sanitation was unheard of spelled dysentery and almost certain death; so the father wrapped balls of brown sugar in a piece of cloth, making what was called "sugar tits", and ten or twelve of these were sucked by the infant each day. Aldo was placed in a cradle close to the mother's bed and with her one good leg, the mother would rock him and feed him his brown sugar diet, and frequently shooing the many, what was then considered harmless, flies away. Miraculously he survived and became a pleasant contributor to the goodness in that highly respected family.

His school life began in what was called "The Old Block" school house, a one-room shanty-like structure that adjoined the pavilion in which programs were given. After a few years the Grantsville Academy was built and Aldo was transferred there, where he remained until he graduated at the age of nineteen.

Near the turn of the century in the fall of 1899, Aldo rode into Salt Lake City to attend school at the L.D.S. Business College where he remained for two years. While in Salt Lake he had an opportunity to feed a talent and an interest that he had from his early youth, and the old Salt Lake Theater had a frequent visitor in this young man. He saw most of the fine plays produced in that theater those two years, and himself became an active participant in drama during that time. There was rarely a play produced in Grantsville that Aldo did not have an important part in. His reputation as an actor was earned when he was a youngster at which time he played the role of a Chinese boy particularly well. His brothers and sisters before him had been unusually active in drama and the giving of readings, so it was natural for him to adapt himself to this interest.

A Thanksgiving dinner in 1901, at the home of his brother, Albert, marked an important development in Aldo's life. It was there he met his bride-to-be, Mabel Louise Robinson who was a niece of his brother's wife, Alice Millward. These young people were attracted to each other, but Aldo went back to college and it was June before they saw each other again. At this time, Aldo borrowed his parent's buggy, hitched it to the old mare Blackie and took Mabel on their first buggy ride together.

Aldo took up two occupations at this time: clerking in the store in Grantsville and courting Mabel. The latter, the more interesting, involved considerable walking as Mabel lived on the extreme north end of two and he the extreme east, and to go and come meant five miles of walking with a dance sandwiched in-between, but he was young and in love and all obstacles seemed insignificant. This couple was married in the Salt Lake Temple on January 8, 1902. This first son, Calvin, was born to this couple in Grantsville, December 12, 1902.

A new land was being opened up in Star Valley, Wyoming that was beckoning many new settlers. Aldo's older brothers already were there and encouraged Aldo to come also. In 1923, he pieced together a wagon with old lumber and parts gathered from neighbors and relatives, piled it

high with furniture, and hitched to it two small horses. A buggy trailed behind carrying his wife and six- month old son. The trails to that distant area were primitive, treacherous, and extremely rough, and after twelve days of travel the wagon fell to pieces near Montpelier. Albert Barrus, a brother, met them there and brought them into Star Valley. There Aldo purchased 80 acres of land and homesteaded 160 acres. The winters and frosts were severe, cash was unobtainable, and this couple was forced to return to Grantsville in early March, 1907, in time for a third son, LaMar, to be born. Aldo worked in the mines until late spring, then all returned to Star Valley. Again, financial reverses compelled a new venture and he and his brother, Emery, went into stone business. The giving of too much credit over a period of years closed this venture.

Farming was a difficult process in Star Valley. If the crops did survive the frosts, it was impossible to get them out of the valley to a market to exchange for cash. A system of freighting by wagons and mules or horses was set up, and Aldo became a freighter guiding loaded wagons fifty miles through treacherous canyon trails to Montpelier. The trip took four days, but Aldo got \$9.00 for his effort and he was now able to buy much needed commodities for his family. On some of these trips the temperature would go as low as 40 degrees below zero; he would dig deep into the snow and roll himself in a heavy quilt and sleep. On one trip he was hurrying to get back to star Valley with a new bed that cost \$5.00 so his wife could have it when their sixth child arrived. The child arrived before the bed did, but it was nevertheless appreciated.

Throughout the years in Star Valley, Aldo was active in dramatics. He was head of a Dramatics Company that, through the proceeds from plays, was able to finance the ward. At one time, this company was able to payoff a \$600 debt the ward owed. Children were bundled in brick-warmed sleighs and all would be off to the meeting house for rehearsals and performances. He was also active in church, serving in the Sunday School superintendency and acting as one of the seven Presidents of Seventies.

It was the desire of this family to have a new home, so in the winter time, Aldo would go into the mountains and get logs for the home and pay for having them sawed. When he got home at night his clothes were so wet and frozen he would have to stand by the fire to thaw them before he could take them off.

A fine seven-room, two story house was finally built, but this family only enjoyed it a year when they were forced to leave the valley because of the ill health of the wife and mother. Mabel's heart could not stand such high altitude and it meant her life to stay longer.

On August 14, 1917, Aldo bought a farm in Sugar, Idaho and moved his family to this location. By 1918, a new home was built on the farm, which has been the permanent residence of this family since. Aldo farmed in the summer and worked in the Sugar Company in the winter. During the particularly reverse times, Aldo left the farming to his sons and he worked for six years in Pocatello making railroad ties coming home to his family each weekend. After concluding this employment he clerked in the Sugar City Mercantile for seventeen years, retiring in 1943 because of ill health.

For many years, Aldo taught the adult class in Sunday school and was a counselor in the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association in the Sugar Ward. He went frequently to the temple for

many years, one year doing 50 male names. He was active in many plays and operettas, and frequently gave readings through the Snake River Valley. He was especially famous for his interpretations of readings involving Swedish dialect, and delighted in impersonating one Swede called "Ole." Among his friends he was often affectionately referred to as "Ole."

In 1953, Aldo suffered from a stroke that limited his activities. His health since that time had become increasingly poorer until his death Wednesday, January 28, 1959, at 9:00 P.M. During this time, his wife, Mabel, devoted all her energies to care for his needs and comforts. He has not lacked for love or care and he often expressed his gratitude.

He loved his family and enjoyed his grandchildren, frequently encouraging them to perform for him at family gatherings.

He was the father of 13 children, eight of whom survived him. They are: Heber Calvin Barrus, Sugar, Idaho; Aldo Alton Barrus, Mountainview, Wyoming; Charles LaMar Barrus, Sugar, Idaho; Clarence Franklin Barrus, Idaho Falls, Idaho; Fern Louise Barrus Seager, Ogden, Utah; Keith Robinson Barrus, Idaho Falls, Idaho; J. Grant Barrus, Sugar, Idaho; and Rondo Millward Barrus, Sugar, Idaho.

He has 20 living grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren. He is also survived by one brother, Albert Almond Barrus, and two sisters: Angela Barrus Cline, and Luella Barrus Millward.

One son recently remarked that he had never heard his father say an unkind word to anyone or complain about anything. No matter what his condition, he would always remark, "I believe I am feeling better today."