

Daughters of Utah Pioneers. *An Enduring Legacy*. Vol. I-XII. Salt Lake City, UT: Utah Printing Company, 1978.

## William Edward Bunker-Native Pioneer

"The story of William Edward Bunker is woven into the fabric of the history of Utah and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He was born in the territory that became a state of the Union, and added further repute to that won by his father, one of the first to come into the desert to help make it bloom and become the site of an empire in the West. Both father and son left the imprint of their achievements and character upon the era."

Thus begins a short biography of William Edward Bunker published in the Encyclopedia of American Biography, Vol. XXI. [p.82] He was truly a pioneer in several areas of Utah and Nevada and was influential in the development not only of the physical aspects of these communities but in their religious and cultural atmosphere as well.

A seventh-generation Bunker in America, his early paternal ancestors having arrived in America before 1646, he was undoubtedly heir to many pioneer traits and instincts. His father, Edward Bunker, Sr., had served in the Mormon Battalion, had been a captain of ten in a covered wagon journey to Utah in 1850 and was a member of the first city council of Ogden, Utah. He filled a mission for the LDS Church to England from 1852 until 1856. On his return he led the third company of handcart pioneers to Utah, a company that has been seldom mentioned in history because of the lack of casualties and the safe and speedy journey. He assisted in pioneering the St. George, Utah, area and established the town of Bunkerville, Nevada, where he served as bishop of the Mormon Church for sixteen years— all of this while being a well-loved and respected husband of three wives and father of twenty-eight children.

His mother, Sarah Ann Browning, was also a pioneer, having been converted to the Mormon faith in Sumner County, Tennessee, where she was born. She traveled with her parents to Illinois to join the main body of the Church. During the journey she met William Thomas Lang and they were married at Winter Quarters May 29, 1847, where two daughters were born to them. They were intimate friends of Edward Bunker and his wife, Emily, and traveled to Utah in the same group in 1850, settling in Ogden on adjoining farms. William Lang died shortly after their arrival and on June 28, 1852, Edward Bunker took Sarah Ann Browning Lang as his second wife, a polygamous marriage that took place with the approval of President Brigham Young. Sarah and Edward were to become the parents of seven children, William Edward being their second child and first son. He was named William for William Lang, who had no sons of his own, and Edward for his own father. Throughout his life he was most often referred to as William E. Bunker, though his wife and brothers and sisters called him "Will" and his children knew him as Papa or Pa.

William E. Bunker was born at Ogden, Territory of Utah, January 11, 1860, a premature and very small baby. His father gave him a blessing, promising him that he would live and would be "a strong man and a useful man in God's Church."

When he was about two years of age (November 1861) his father was called by President Young to go to Utah's Dixie and help in the establishment of the cotton mission there. Two of his wives and families lived in Santa Clara. Sarah and her children [p.83] were first settled at Clover Valley (later Barclay), Nevada, where they lived in a fort-like outpost. The houses were joined to each other in two rows facing an inner court, with the schoolhouse at one end and a corral at the other. This was done as protection from the Indians. One night an Indian was killed by a guard

while attempting to steal the cattle, and Will, his brother and sister always remembered having seen the dead Indian the next morning. A heavy penalty of food and clothing was exacted by the Indian tribe for the loss of the brave. On another occasion Will and his brother Jim were herding cows when an Indian came and took their dinner away from them. The loss of the food was no doubt as great as was their fear of the Indian, for the families there were completely dependent upon their own resources. What food they had was grown or gleaned from the little that nature provided. They suffered many hardships and privations because of the dry seasons. Because wheat was particularly scarce, most of the bread was made from bran or corn flour. One of Will's earliest recollections was of crying in vain for "flour bread." He also remembered going to bed in the daytime while his mother repaired his only pair of homespun britches.

The home at Clover Valley was finally abandoned because of the problems with the Indians, and Sarah and her family moved to Santa Clara, "The Clary" they called it. There Will and his brothers helped his father in the field, dropping corn, hoeing weeds, picking cotton and herding the cows.

The growing season was long and the boys were needed in the farm work so their schooling was very limited. They attended school for only about three months each year and even then were often taken out of school to help haul wood. They were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling and geography. There were no grades in the school, but the books were graded, so a pupil who had mastered one book was permitted to take a more difficult one. Will recalled having completed only the fourth reader; his education was to be in other than scholarly fields.

Shortly after Will's twelfth birthday he drove a team ("a mule and a mare horse, Lize and Farm") while his father drove another wagon from Santa Clara to Ogden and return. This was in 1872, when the roads were little more than rough trails and Indian marauders frequently engaged in raids upon lone wagoners or groups of people making their way between settlements. Loading their wagons with lumber from Pine Valley, they took it to Pioche, Nevada, a mining camp, a journey of about three weeks. From there they went to Ogden where they loaded merchandise to take back to the stores in Dixie. The wagon Will drove had a narrow track with a "Mormon Brake," consisting of [p.84] a lever and rope contraption fastened to a log placed to the front of the rear wheels. This was his first, but not his last, experience at freighting.

Will, who had always known hard work, was soon to learn to shoulder responsibility. At fourteen his father hired him out and sent him a hundred miles from home at a wage of twenty-five cents per day. He always remembered how homesick he became before returning home. At fifteen he lived and worked one summer in the United Order at Santa Clara. That fall (1875) Will's father gave his mother her share of the farm. The reason for this is not known, since there was no alienation between them, but perhaps he felt that the boy was now old enough to assume the care of the family. At any rate, Will, together with his brother Jim, thirteen years of age, did all of the work and provided the support of their mother and her four younger children, ages nine, six, four and one. The following fall, Jim recalled, "My brother Will took molasses and dried fruit to Sevier County and got a load of flour and potatoes and other vegetables and we lived very well that winter."

The attempt at living the United Order in Santa Clara had been unsuccessful. Edward Bunker, Will's father, wrote of it as follows:

"...I put in all I possessed, the labor of myself, two teams, and two boys (Will and Jim). I had a nice crop of grain growing, said by the appraisors to be the best in the field. I worked until the order broke up, which it did just one year from the date of commencement.... At the division

in our town, my teams and wagons were returned to me, but I wasn't given a pound of hay, grain, or cotton, with twenty in the family. Be assured this was a dark day for myself and family, but we said in our hearts, 'The Lord knows we obeyed that principle with a pure motive and He will not let us suffer.' I took my boys and teams and went into the mountains and cut and hauled wood to St. George for the temple and for individuals, and in this way obtained flour and factory pay (credit at the Cotton Factory in Washington) to sustain my family until another harvest. The next year I raised enough to support my family and pay off a one hundred and fifty dollar cash debt. So you see the Lord abundantly blessed us for our integrity.

"Having seen by the spirit of the Lord the necessity and blessings of the United Order, I labored... with my family and neighbors and friends, and counseled with President Brigham Young previous to making a settlement on the Rio Virgin, fifty miles south of St. George."

On January 1, 1877, a meeting was held with these family members and friends, and a company was organized for the [p.85] purpose of living the United Order on what was then called the Mesquite Flats in Nevada. Edward Bunker, Sr., was the president, and the community they settled was named Bunkerville in his honor.

Will, seventeen years old, was a member of that group. He recalled standing in a circle with seventeen other men and boys while his father, in the center, dedicated the land to the Lord. During the prayer, his father let wheat fall through the fingers of one hand and soil from the land through the other. That same year Will was ordained an elder in the Church and went through the St. George Temple where he received his endowments.

No time was wasted at Bunkerville in beginning the work of building a canal and clearing and planting the land to sugar cane, wheat, corn and cotton. On the first day they put up a building that served as a meeting and dining room, constructing it of lumber hauled seventy miles from Pine Valley, Utah. Homes at first were crude log or willow cabins. Will recorded later:

"To substitute for shingles we covered the roofs with water rushes or flags (iris). The church was covered that way. The flags were tied in small bundles placed on the roof...like shingles. It turned the water and never did leak."

Water for drinking, cooking and cleaning had to be hauled in barrels from the river. "The river was always muddy... The water had to be 'settled' before it could be used for domestic purposes. To clarify the water for washing clothes, the large flat prickly pears would be split open and put in the water. The slime and juice from the prickly pears would gather the mud and then it (the water) had to be softened with cottonwood ashes."

The work under the United Order continued for three years. Again Edward Bunker wrote:

"At the end of that time, we attempted to organize into stewardships, and the result was that we broke up. The brethren did not understand the principle sufficient to accept of it. Previous to this, we had labored in one company. Our labors, however, were very highly crowned with success. In settling up we paid off the capital stock dollar for dollar, fed and clothed the company and paid eighteen percent on every man's labor. We made a valuation of our improvements, divided them up and they went to pay our indebtedness."

The capital stock had been based on what each man had originally contributed in property to the Order. Will, along with other young men who had had nothing to contribute but their labor, did not receive a property settlement.

Many of the original settlers continued to live in Bunkerville and to work in cooperation with one another. They enjoyed [p.86] a good life and as much prosperity as the members of

other communities in the area. The population remained small because there was not sufficient water or productive land to support large numbers.

Will grew to manhood with a great deal of love and respect for his father and mother and all of the members of the family. He was one of thirty children, seven being the children of Edward Bunker and Sarah Ann Browning Lang Bunker, two the children of Sarah Ann Browning and William Lang, eleven the children of Edward Bunker and his first wife, Emily Abbot, and ten others the children of Edward Bunker and his third wife, Mary McQuarrie. Twenty-eight of these children grew to adulthood. Sharing with each other as children and later as adults, they grew up with such close relationships that they never thought of each other as half-brothers or -sisters. Will always spoke with the greatest respect for all of them, often mentioning the help he had received from them but seldom the help which they recalled they had received from him.

Prayer was a daily ritual in his home as he was growing up, but he was taught to pray not only as a ritual but as a consultation with his Father in heaven about any problems as they might occur. He continued this practice throughout his life. He was first called on to administer to a sick child when he was eighteen years of age and was often called on by family members, friends or neighbors from that time on.

In the fall of 1879 Will met Sarah Vilate Burgess, a beautiful fifteen-year-old girl (born February 15, 1864). She was the daughter of Harrison Joseph Burgess and Amanda Melvina Hammond of Pine Valley, Washington County, Utah. They fell in love and were married in the St. George Temple on October 4, 1880, when he was twenty and she was not yet seventeen. Though they started life together with nothing, they were happy and made plans for their future. Their first few years are best told in his own words:

"We lived with my mother that winter (1880) and the next spring I took my wife and went to Pine Valley, where her folks lived, and worked through the summer chopping saw logs to get lumber to build a small house. Our first baby (Edward Harrison, named for his two grandfathers) was born while we were in Pine Valley on August 18, 1881. We went back to Bunkerville that fall and that winter I built an adobe, one-room house on the Mesquite Flat, and worked all winter clearing my land for crops in the spring. In the spring of 1882 I moved into my little home, and oh how happy I was with my wife and baby and little home. My crop that season was good but after I had harvested my grain crop there came a terrible storm that washed out all of [p.87] the dams on the Virgin River and just ruined our canal, and... the people moved away from Mesquite Flat.

"I sold what I had left for a new Bain wagon and one mule. I had a sister in Richfield (Mary Lang Clark, wife of Henry Clark) and they wrote for me to come there, which I did. I worked for my brother-in-law the rest of the season and in the fall of 1883 I moved to Annabella as I had purchased a farm there. Annabella was about three miles southeast of Richfield. This farm proved to be very poor land and I, being poor with but little to go on, went to freighting, mostly to Pioche with flour and grain. It took three weeks to make the trip. Sometimes I made a little and sometimes I didn't—only expenses. Times were awfully hard in those days. I was the town marshall for one term and was president of the Mutual for awhile.

"We had four children born to us while we were living in Annabella (Maude Elethier on March 26, 1883, Eliza Jane on March 16, 1885, Amanda Ann on March 3, 1888, and William Lang on March 5, 1890)."

It was true, times were hard for everyone and it was with difficulty that Will provided a living for his wife and family. But this did not mean they were not happy. They enjoyed one

another's companionship, their family and their home. Will always loved children and they loved him. He worked and played with his children, and later his grandchildren, often counseling them, and while this love was not often expressed verbally, it was understood by him and by them.

Wherever Will lived he was active in community affairs and in his church, which also provided many social functions that the family enjoyed. He also enjoyed the friendship and activities of the men of these small towns, and confessed that on occasion he drank wine with the "boys."

In Dixie young men often engaged in fist fighting as a sport and Will was among them. In Sevier County the sport seemed to be wrestling. Will was not a large man, only about five feet, ten inches and of slender build, but he was strong. In wrestling he met all comers— about two hundred men eventually— and pinned them all, earning the proud title of "wrestling champion of Sevier County."

During this time his brother Jim began having trouble with his eyes, so Will went to Bunkerville to sell Jim's farm for him and Jim came to Annabella to live. When Jim got married he and his wife lived with Will and his family for a short time until they could build their own home.

Will finally sold his farm in Annabella, moving to Richfield and renting the Henry Clark farm for one summer and winter:

[p.88] "I loaded my teams, for I always had good teams and I took good care of them, and I took my own grain and went west for the winter to freight. I freighted from Milford to Pioche, and most of the time all alone. It took me about ten days to make a trip."

During this period he hauled cordwood used by the wood-burner engines of the first railroad in that country— also bullion for the railroad.

"I remember one man was loaded for Washington, Utah, with a load of flour mill wheat and it was real bulky and he was afraid of the road to Dixie. I told him that I would take it. He was all ready to start the next morning so I told him I would take his wagon and he could take mine. While I was in Dixie I went around to Gunlock as I had a sister living there and then I got on a deal with a Mr. Hunt for his ranch about six miles north of Gunlock, known as the Bigelow Ranch. I traded him my freight outfit for the ranch. So I went back home and got my family and moved to Dixie, my native land. I got to Dixie the third day of March, 1891. The next day after I got to the ranch there came a thaw wind and melted the snow in the mountains and a flood came and washed the dams and ditches all away."

He had returned to Dixie to face somewhat the same kind of problem that had once caused him to leave.

One might suppose that such early exposure to farm work as a boy and farming under such difficult circumstances might discourage a man from continuing it, but this was not the case with Will. He seemed to have been "born to the land" and took great satisfaction, even pleasure, in clearing it, cultivating it and making it produce. And just as a horseman likes the challenge of breaking the wildest horse or a doctor of conquering the worst disease, he seemed to be drawn to the land that produced the most challenges.

There may have been times, too, when his family wondered if he were "married to his horses" so great was his love for them. He seemed to be able to recall each event in their lives— -their birthdays, illnesses, etc.— as well as, if not better than, those of his children, but then the care of his children was shared by his wife and his animals were his responsibility alone. He took the best care of them, exhibited great pride in them, and was often seen caressing them, talking to

them, encouraging them and generally showing greater affection than many men show to their children. At the same time, he would not tolerate an undisciplined animal.

Will had grown up in the more or less closed environment of an isolated Mormon community, but his experiences in freighting brought him contact with people of all kinds in the mining [p.89] and railroad towns and around the evening fires where freighters and travelers met as they camped at night. While he was often compelled to travel alone, he preferred companionship. He liked people— all people. Throughout his life, he looked for the good in others and was able to find it in most of those he met. Though he was not given to preaching or pushing his beliefs on others, he was very open and straightforward about his convictions, never hiding them or being ashamed of them. An extremely humble and mild-mannered man, but never boastful, he was naturally pleased if he felt he had been a good influence on a fellow traveler. He was childlike in his faith and uncomplicated in the expression of it. Two experiences from his freighting days illustrate these aspects of his personality:

"I had been away from home for quite a long time and was returning with a toad of lumber when I met a man by the name of Henry Lasser who was going to St. George with a load of potatoes. We decided to travel together... and that evening we camped together. We got our supper ready to eat and I said, 'Brother Lasser, if it is alright with you we will have a blessing and attend to our prayers while we are together. I have always made it a practise to attend to my prayers away from home as well as at home.' He said, 'Oh sure, that will be just fine with me.' Following the prayer we went to our beds.

"The next morning and during the day he told me the difficulty he was in. He said he had bought a piece of land and the payment was past due. He had to get enough money out of those potatoes to make the payment or he would lose that property. He said, 'When we pray, let's pray for my success' so we did that.

"He said to me that evening, 'Brother Bunker, I am getting to be quite an old man and I have traveled a lot and with many bishops and men holding high offices in the Church, but this is the first time in my life that I have ever heard a man pray on the road.'

"When we got to Cedar City the roads parted. One went to St. George and the other through Pinto and on to my ranch. At the forks of the road we stopped and he asked me if he could get to St. George on the road I would take. I told him yes but it was farther and the road was much worse. His reply was, 'I don't care about the bad road or extra time for I have never in my life had such pleasure on a trip as I have had while I have been with you and I know that it is our prayers that have made it so pleasant.'

"We started through the mountains and he seemed to worry some about whether he would be able to get the necessary money out of his potatoes, and I could tell he was very concerned about his financial problems. When we arrived at Dan Page's ranch [p.90] we camped for the night. I was acquainted with Mr. Page and he asked, 'Where is your partner going?' I told him that he was on his way to St. George and took him over to Lasser's wagon and introduced them. Mr. Page said to him, 'Would you like a job here?' Of course he said yes, so Mr. Page sent the boss out to talk to him. The boss asked if he could cook. 'Oh yes, but not much on the pie and cake.' 'Well, I'll give you \$2.50 per day and board to cook for nine men, and I will keep you three months.' Brother Lasser said, 'Fine, but what will I do with my potatoes and team?' 'I will buy half of your spuds and you can store the rest of them here in Page's cellar. I will take your team out to the mine and I will feed them and have them there to haul wood and water to the mine.'

"Brother Lasser was one of the happiest men you ever saw, and he said it all happened because our prayers were heard."

Will was glad to again get a farm of his own. A man by the name of George Burgess owned one-third of the ranch, and together they repaired the ditches. Later Mr. Burgess agreed to sell his share of the ranch to Mr. Bunker. A deal was made and Will owned the whole ranch. He recalled:

"I could see quite a future in this place as but very little had been done. There were apples, peaches, pears, plums and grapes growing on the ranch and a three-room log house. My brother-in-law (Isaac Burgess) wanted to buy in as it was too much work for one man so I sold him one-half of the ranch and we went to work, made new ditches, took in new land and fenced it. There were only eighteen acres in the place when I bought it and when we got through taking in new land we each had forty acres.

"Everything went fine for about five years. We moved to St. George in the winters for school and hired a schoolteacher (Lois Earl Jones) to teach our children during the summer months. Another family moved in and we had a branch of the Church organized and I was set apart as Presiding Elder."

During this period the farmers of the area grew a lot of fruit. They used what they could, their wives bottling some for the winter months. They also sold what they could, but transportation was slow and fresh fruit could not be moved very great distances. Much excess fruit was dried to be used for trade with northern communities for flour and potatoes, but there was still some to be disposed of. Being thrifty, they made wine, which was often sold at the mining camps. Having the wine available proved to be more of a temptation than most of the men, including Will, could bear.

"I lived in Gunlock one winter and I was out in a crowd one day. We had all been drinking wine and the bishop came and said to me, 'Will, come with me. There is a sick woman who [p.91] wants us to administer to her.' I didn't know just what to do. I hated to refuse. I knew there was an odor on my breath, and oh, how my conscience hurt me. So I went, but I said to myself, 'This will be the last time that anything like this will happen.'

"In a few days after that— between Christmas and New Year's— five of us went to St. George, each with a load of wood for tithing. When we got to Santa Clara we camped for the night.... One of the men said, 'Who is going to get the wine tonight?' for every cellar in town was full of it. I said, 'Let's not have any wine tonight. Let's sit around the campfire and talk about something that will do us some good.' And they were willing to do that. They were not a bad crowd, but just got in the habit. So we talked about different subjects until quite late. Finally we got on the Word of Wisdom, and after talking a while on the subject I said, 'How many are there in this crowd who will make a resolution to start New Year's morning to keep the Word of Wisdom? I am number one.' Another said, 'I am number two,' and so on, until all had agreed. Within thirty days all were breaking the Word of Wisdom except me. As far as tea, coffee, tobacco and strong drinks are concerned I have made good up until now, and it has been thirty-six years (1932) and oh, how that has helped all along my life's work."

Five years was a long time for good fortune to stay with them but now things were to change. Isaac Burgess' wife became sick and died, leaving him with six children. Of course this made things sad for everyone at the ranch. That winter Will became sick and was confined to his bed for a period of three weeks. He had extreme headaches from time to time thereafter. In the spring of 1897, after planting his crops, he hired a man to care for them and with his brother Alfred took his teams and went to Delamar to work. On the way they stopped at a sawmill and during the night Will took sick again. A friend from Dixie, Tom Gardner, came by the next day

on his way home and he took Will with him, leaving the teams with Alfred. The trip home took about three days.

"When we got within one day's drive, we stopped to camp at Huntsman's Ranch. Tom said to Mr. Huntsman, 'How is everybody?' and he replied, 'All right, except Will Bunker's wife and she is awfully sick.' When I heard that I jumped out of bed to find out all of the particulars I could. He told me that the folks at home had been phoning all over the country to try and find me. I said to him, 'Can you take me home tonight?' So he hitched his team on his buckboard and started. When we got on our way it was after sundown. I saw a man coming just as fast as he could on horseback. I said, 'He is coming for me. I can tell the horse's gait and it is Jim's horse.' So when he got to us I said, 'Where [p.92] are you going?' and he said 'After you.' I said, 'How is my wife?' and he said, 'Some better, but she is awfully sick.' He got in with us and we got home about midnight....

"The doctor came from St. George and gave us some hopes for her and left medicine for me, but she only lived three days after I got home.

"By this time I was able to be up and around, but I had that awful pain in my head. It was hard for me to make myself believe that I should get well, for I wanted to die too. I had never buried a child, nor a father nor mother nor brother nor sister. The worst came first and I wasn't at all prepared for such trouble. If I had been well I think I could have braced up much better. It was weeks before I could realize that I had four small children to care for. I wanted to be alone and just live our lives all over again. But finally, when I got so I could pray, I went to my Father in heaven for help."

His wife died June 6, 1897. She was thirty-three years old and he was thirty-seven. His mother stayed with him for the rest of the summer and helped him with the children. At that time there were eleven motherless children at the ranch. Later some of his children lived with his brothers or sisters for short periods of time. The following months were very lonely for Will. Before this time he had never read much but now he began to study different Church books and became most interested in the Book of Mormon. He "began to go out again and associate with my friends and attend to my Church duties and the more I did the more I would want to do... and I saw joy in the midst of trouble."

Again he went to freighting. His brothers and sisters were helpful to him and he enjoyed their company, and after about two years he began going out with some of the young women in the area.

"A short time after this I went down to the Beaver Dam. I had a brother making a farm there and I wasn't very busy, so I thought I would visit him for a while. It was only about one and a half miles over the hill to Littlefield, a small town in Arizona. The next Sunday was fast day and we all went over to meeting. There were five or six young women in the town. In the fast meeting one of them got up and bore her testimony. I said to my brother, 'There is faith there.' I learned after meeting that she was single and I was interested in her. I stayed and helped my brother for a while and got more acquainted with Miss Iverson and the next thing I knew I was in love with her and in a short time I proposed to her and she said, 'I will give you the answer in a few days.' She knew I had a family of children and it was taking a heavy responsibility to marry me. When she gave me the [p.93] word 'yes' I knew there was no mistake made. We got married February 6, 1900. We moved to my ranch that spring."

Emma Iverson, the daughter of Hans Peter Iverson and Dorothea Caroline Johann Evers, was born December 17, 1878, so she was just twenty-one when she married Will and he was then forty. It was indeed a heavy responsibility she had accepted, and she was to have many

difficult times ahead, but she loved him and intended to be a good wife and to care for his children while they needed her. Nothing was ever said or done to indicate that either Will or Emma ever regretted their marriage.

Again Will wrote:

"I sent my oldest son, Edward, to Annabella for my children. My oldest daughter, Elethier, was now married. The children came and they had a good home to come to. Emma made them welcome and took the very best care of them."

The children at home were now ages nineteen, fifteen, twelve and ten years. On May 21, 1901, Emma's first child, a beautiful baby girl, Sadie Theresa, was born, but she lived for only five days. A second child, their first son, Owen Woodruff, was born on September 22, 1902.

They went to St. George that winter so the older children could be in school and Will burned charcoal for the smelter in St. George. While living at the ranch they attended church at Gunlock where Will was assistant superintendent of the Sunday School. The ranch was a fine place, with all kinds of fruit growing on the productive land and the surrounding country was beautiful.

"Everything went well for awhile. Another baby boy came, Clark Iverson (August 12, 1904). When he was about seventeen months old he took the croup. I was away from home at the time working on the road. My wife sent for me as he was very low. I rode as fast as I could, changed horses on the way, but he died just a few moments before I got home, (January 10, 1906). He was such a large, fine baby. Our home was made so sad and it was so hard on Emma."

Ed and Elida, the two older children, by now had married and moved away, and while Will and Emma loved their ranch, they began to see the disadvantages of continuing to live there.

"The ranch was six miles from town (Gunlock) and bad roads to travel over. (A trip to St. George required a full day.) The thoughts of living so far from 'nowhere' grew on me. We were deprived of the social side of life and so far from church and school. I began to get dissatisfied. Money was hard to get and I had to be away from home so much on the freight road... I was discontented. I wanted to go and I didn't want to go. I [p.94] knew I had a good place for that country. I often prayed that if it was right for me to stay there that a contented spirit would come to me, but if it was right for me to leave the way would be opened up.

"I knew that I didn't have money to buy a ready-made farm, and if I sold out I wouldn't get much for my ranch for there wasn't anyone there who had much money. If I left, I wanted to go to a new country among new people. I didn't know where that would be.

"In the spring of 1906 Oz Gardner came to my place and said he had traveled all over, to Oregon and Idaho, and had come back to what they called Melville, in Millard County, and he told me about that country. I figured I would go and see the place in the fall, but in the early summer a stallion kicked me on the arm and broke one bone. I was unable to work and thought, 'This is a good time for me to go to Melville,' so I prepared for the trip. Elida (my daughter) had just lost her husband (Jim Holt). She said she would like to go with me and help me pay the expense of the trip."

When they got to Fillmore they stayed with friends and talked with people there about the Melville area, inquiring not only about the land and water rights but about the type of people who were buying property. They then went on to Oasis where they were invited to stay at the Tom Reid home. They were treated so kindly by the Reids then and in the future that they became lifelong friends.

"The next day I went in search of Samuel Bennett who was looking over the Melville land... and he took me over the project. It didn't look good to me. I thought, 'what a barren waste.'

Our buggy didn't make tracks enough so that we would follow it back, and I didn't see a thing that looked inviting to me. All of the land close in had been sold. Mr. Bennett tried to encourage me the best he could.... When we got back Mr. Reid said, 'Well, what have you seen and how do you feel?' I said to him, "I haven't seen a thing all day'... but I said to myself, 'This is the country that I have been praying about, a new country, a new people, where I can help kill the snakes, make the canals, build the bridges and help to erect meetinghouses and schoolhouses and a new town.' I made arrangements with Mr. Bennett for 160 acres of land and water. The land was way out in Section sixteen."

On October 13, 1906, their daughter Grace was born.

Will made arrangements with John Bowler to buy his ranch, for which he received some cash (about sixty dollars), some horses and cattle, and the rest he was to receive in produce in later years.

[p.95] "On about February 18, 1907, we left the ranch for Melville. Oh! the snow and water and mud that we had to contend with on the way. We were on the road twelve days, getting into Deseret March 3. The fields there were green and people were pasturing them. I thought I had got into another Dixie... Tom Reid helped me to locate a house in Oasis.... I went and got me a job on the canal. I had two good teams and a good boy [his son Will, seventeen years old] to drive one of them. We had only worked a few days when I learned teams were wanted on the Big Dam (now Yuba)."

Will got permission to postpone his work on the canal and went to work on the Big Dam. When pay day came he was pleased to be paid twenty-five cents a day more for his work with his large team than any of the others received.

"One rainy day we were all laying off and the boys got up a purse for the best puller out of about two hundred head of horses. The boys talked me into letting one of mine pull, which I did. I won the purse."

Almost all of the men in the area worked on either the canal or the dam to earn money to help them pay for the land they had contracted to buy. Will was no exception. About this time he learned of an opportunity where, he thought, he could earn money faster:

"There were some Holden men who had a sawmill out in the Deep Creek mountains (on the western Utah border) and they got after me to go out there with them. They said I could make as much again as I was making. They wanted to pull logs to the mill and they pictured it so nice to me with my large team. My brother-in-law came up from Dixie. He was quite a timber man and he wanted to go, so I left the dam and went to log.

"I took my wife and babies and tent. When we got to the mill we fixed up our logging carts and went after logs, and oh, how disappointed we were! The timber was up on the mountain and the mountain was so steep that we couldn't get our horses to pull them down, and it wasn't steep enough to slide them. So we worked, skidded and rolled them while our teams were standing watching us work. I said to my partner, 'We can't make our salt here.' They paid us for what logs we had put in and we went back to Deep Creek and took a small job of hauling some hay."

Will returned to Oasis, contracting on the way (at Callao) to cut, rake and haul a crop of hay at \$2.25 per ton. They hauled about two hundred tons and felt they had done very well. He finished his job on the Melville canal, worked for a while on the diversion dam and spillway and in the fall took Emma and the children back to Gunlock to "put up" fruit for the next season. They were undoubtedly happy to spend the winter in Dixie.

[p.96] In the spring they were back in Melville. (The name was changed to Burtner on May 12, 1908.) It was a dreary looking greasewood flat as far as the eye could see. He leased a farm in Abraham, west of Burtner, where they lived that summer and raised a good crop. He had not yet cleared the Burtner site.

"We joined the Oasis Ward when we first got there and I want to say this for the people of Oasis, that I was never treated with more courtesy and kindness in my life than the people of Oasis treated us. We learned to love them."

He had never felt satisfied with the land in section sixteen to the east of Burtner and was now fortunate in being able to sell it and to buy forty acres of land about one mile south of the Burtner townsite, on the road to Hinckley. To him it was "one of the choicest little farms in this large valley."

"Sometime during the summer we learned that there was going to be a Sunday School organized in Burtner on Sunday, September 6, 1908. So I said to my wife, 'Let's go and see who they put in.' It was a branch of the Hinckley Ward. We intended to make it our ward, so we went up to the organization and they, the stake officers, put me in as superintendent. After that we traveled from Abraham to Burtner for Sunday School."

The Burtner townsite had by now been laid out one mile wide, in ten square blocks. A lot in town was given to every farmer who "took up" forty acres of land. Lots were drawn for each homesite, and Will was fortunate enough to draw a choice location in a block adjoining what was to become the town square. During the summer he contracted to haul brick from a nearby brickyard to Hinckley for a new elementary schoolhouse that was being built. His son Will, with the help of one hired man, did most of the hauling. Payment for the contract was received in bricks, which were then hauled to Burtner for the construction of Will's new home.

"After I got my crops gathered in the fall I moved my family to Burtner and we lived in a tent while Brother William H. Gardner laid up the house. When the carpenters and plasterers got through we moved in. The house was of brick (the first in the town) with five rooms, pantry, clothes closet, three porches and basement (later a bath). I built a stable for my horses. My house was the second house built of any importance. There was one log room and one lumber shack on the townsite. I had a well driven, and I put in a cistern of concrete thirty-six feet deep. It seems to me that I furnished all of my neighbors, as they came in, with water for years." (The house is still in use in 1977.)

The following spring (April 7, 1909) a son, Lee Kendall, was born to them. How happy they were in their new home and beginning to work the new farm.

[p.97] "We finally got the water in the new canal and put in some crops. We had just commenced to irrigate our crops when out went our dam (June 14, 1909). The dam was a large one and it took some weeks to build it up. We finally got the water back in the canal, but it didn't stay in long until the cement spillway went out! That left us high and dry for another year, losing all of our hard work of putting in our crops and building our dams and spillways. We went up the river four miles and took the water out on gravity, which we should have done in the first place. It would have saved us about one hundred thousand dollars. We got the water back in the canal in the spring and our dam troubles have been over since that time.

"People had begun to come. There were enough now to organize a ward on October 19, 1909. Hiatt E. Maxfield was chosen as bishop and Edgar W. Jeffery as his first counselor. I was his second."

Will served in that capacity for ten years and then as first counselor for another five years. He was later chairman of the genealogical committee for five years. He was chosen to act

on the Melville Irrigation Board for some time. Later he served on the town board and on the school board.

Then they were again to know the heartbreak of losing a child. After an illness (thought to be meningitis) of but a few days, Lee Kendall died at the age of sixteen months on August 24, 1910.

"He was a large, fine boy— took the prize at the baby show when he was fourteen months old. When he died the family was left brokenhearted and what made it seem worse, his was the first death in the new ward and he was the first one to be buried in the new graveyard. We could stand in our door and listen to the coyotes howl, we thought, over his little grave up there all alone. That was awful for his mother. It makes me shed tears now when I write about it. We tried to acknowledge the hand of the Lord in his death and make the best of it, but oh, we were so lonesome without our baby boy."

But while life ceased for some, for others it must go on. Life went on for Will and Emma, and they accepted tragedy without bitterness, for they knew there was much they still had to do. After a while two little girls were added to their family— Rachel Dorothy on November 3, 1911, and Jetta on June 19, 1913. The two girls were always together. Emma dressed them alike and they were often thought to be twins.

Things began to look up some. "My little farm proved to be a good one. My first crop of wheat went fifty bushels per acre, and in later years I planted eight acres of sugar beets which averaged twenty-one tons per acre.

[p.98] "I helped move our first schoolhouse from Hinckley and later helped build what we called the Ward Hall, as we used it for all purposes.

"In 1918 I built a house on the farm, consisting of five rooms. It was a frame building [also still in use]. We rented our home in town and moved to the farm, living there for a number of years."

He also purchased a farm in Oasis.

There was a small, two-room frame building on the farm which the family called The Red House. It was home to several families who at different times arrived in Delta (the name was changed from Burtner in 1913) with only a few personal belongings. Will would let them live there and work on the farm to pay for rent, food and a small income. Among them were the Martins from South Carolina and the Gauders from Oklahoma. The family of Bols Singh, from India, lived there until they could buy a farm of their own. Will treated all men with the same courtesy and respect.

On one occasion a Mexican itinerant worker was charged with murder. Will was foreman of the jury at the trial, which was held in Fillmore. Though the man was found "not guilty," Will felt that his responsibility did not stop at arriving at a verdict. Will felt that the man had been wrongfully charged and unjustly treated. He learned that the man wanted very much to return home, but had no money, so a collection was taken from the jurors, the man rode back to Delta with Will and was provided with railroad fare home.

Will and Emma's last child, born December 7, 1919, was named Willma, a combination of her parents' names, and she was adored by the whole family. She was a frail child from birth, though, and died on November 14, 1921, only two years old. They had now lost four of their eight children.

There were other problems, too, some of them minor perhaps to people not involved, others major by anyone's terms. But since the problems were common to all of the settlers, they all worked together to solve them. Mosquitos and flies were almost unbearable. At one time, to

help in a drive to rid the valley of flies, children were admitted to the picture show by paying the price of one quart of dead flies. Gophers were not only devastating to the crops but their burrows caused many an irrigation ditch or canal to go out. One year a plague of rats swept through the valley. When the land became waterlogged, they installed a system of drainage canals. In later years there were at least eight major fires, destroying hotels, schools, an amusement hall and one full block of business buildings, but they were rebuilt and firefighting equipment purchased.

[p.99] The Bunkers also knew happy times. The town continued to grow and they took an active part in both religious and community activities. Settlers came not only from other Utah communities but from other states, and a few from other countries. This, together with its location on the railroad, gave the town a more cosmopolitan atmosphere than many communities of the same size. It was the scene of many a one-night stand for "imported" cultural events—from Dixieland bands to serious theater, from the circus to the chautauqua. They also developed their own bands and orchestras and a dramatic society, and they established good schools. Social activities were provided by both church and community groups. There were picnics at The Grove (the only group of trees in the valley large enough to shelter a dozen people), and there were family and church outings at Oak Creek Canyon, fifteen miles to the east. Trees and gardens were planted throughout the valley.

Emma's four sisters and their families moved to Delta and several of Will's brothers and sisters settled there too. His brother Alf built a home for their mother next door to Will's and she lived there until her death, May 16, 1916. They again enjoyed the association of their families.

They continued to work hard. Alfalfa seed was the most staple crop grown. One year Will realized three thousand dollars from the sale of his seed, more than the total value of his farm. That year he purchased his first automobile, an Allen. But growing alfalfa seed was a gamble. When his son Will once complained, "I've just lost five thousand dollars. If I'd have sold my seed before the price fell I'd have been that much better off," his father philosophically replied, "Forget it, Will. You can't lose something you've never had."

In October of 1918 a large sugar factory was completed in Delta and the growing of sugar beets was encouraged. "We moved back to town [in 1923] and I worked for the Utah Idaho Sugar Company as a field man for four years. The white fly (which caused curly leaf) and the drought came along and ruined our sugar beet business, and the sugar factory was moved away."

And then came the depression (1929). It treated Will no more kindly than thousands of other Americans, but, strange as it may seem, when he wrote his autobiography in 1932 at the age of seventy-two, no mention was made of any financial problems, though his family knew he had them. Perhaps it was that, economically, much of his life had been a depression. More possibly it was because a strong desire for material possessions had never been a predominant part of this man's nature. He still had the things that were most important in his life. He wrote of his children, "They are a credit to me" and of the satisfaction [p.100] he had had in his church work the "peace and joy it had brought to my soul." He loved the town he had helped to build and the people in it. He cherished the relationship he had had with his two good wives. He had many friends and, to the best of his knowledge, no enemies. In short, he enjoyed peace of mind and looked forward in pleasant anticipation to the remaining years of his life.

On September 4, 1933, he and his wife were called on a mission to the Manti LDS Temple, where they served for six years. They then moved to Salt Lake City where their son Owen and their daughter Grace were living. Will was set apart as an ordinance worker in the Salt Lake Temple on November 6, 1939, and served in that capacity for four years.

Always a stalwart man in his religion, he experienced many spiritual and faith-promoting incidents throughout his life. At the request of the Church Historian, a biographical sketch and an account of these incidents were placed on file in the LDS Church Historical Department in November 1944.

He continued to enjoy his children and grandchildren, who loved to be with him. In spite of his eighty-five years he still felt young. He told a daughter: "The spirit never grows old. I'd be just as young as I ever was if I wasn't hampered by this darned body." And indeed this was true. Though in the last year of his life he was bedfast most of the time, suffering from cancer, he continued to study and, in his patient, quiet way, to teach. An article he wrote, "Promises of Old— Yet New," was published in the Improvement Era, December 1944, and another, "Some Facts Concerning America's Witness for Christ," appeared in the September 1945 issue, which came out just at the time of his death. The latter article concerned the genealogy of the Book of Mormon, a book he had come to know in a very intimate way. He had carried it with him on his early freighting trips and studied it throughout his life.

At the end of his Book of Mormon is an inscription in his own handwriting: "August 5, 1945, I finished reading the Book of Mormon through thirty-six times. W. E. Bunker."

He died August 31, 1945, and was buried at Wasatch Lawn Memorial Park. — Jetta B. Hepworth