

James Bertoch

Born July 29, 1838 - Died March 1, 1924



History of James Bertoch as told by his daughter Ann Elizabeth, granddaughter Anne Henricksen Matthews and daughter-in-law Burdette P. Bertoch.

Re-typed by his great grand daughter, LaRae Bertoch Funcannon, from a copy of Ann's original.

In the spring of 1922, two years before his death, my father James Bertoch told me, his daughter Ann Elizabeth, the story of his life. I was sitting at the bedside of my sick mother and had been listening to incidents of her life when father entered the room. Mother said, "Come and tell Lizzie about your early life." He told several things of his childhood days and gave me the following history:

"I was born July 29, 1838, at Saint Germain, St Segon, Piedmont, Italy, the son of John and Marguerite Bounous Bertoch. My parents were of French Huegonot descent, their ancestors having been Protestant people who were driven out of France during religious persecutions. Five children were born to this union and my mother died when I was just seven months old. The entire family joined the Latter-Day-Saints church in the year 1853, being baptized by John Malan at St Germain.

The family decided to immigrate to America and father sold his home and what land he had to pay our way. However, that same spring of 1853 father was called to preside over the Saints in that part of Italy. But the children, John 27 years of age, Antoinette 24 years, Marguerite 21 years, Daniel 18 years, and I, James 15 years, bade our father farewell, and left Italy in February 1854 and on March 12, 1854, sailed from Liverpool, England, on the ship "John M. Wood" for America. We arrived at New Orleans, Louisiana, on May 25, 1854, and from there began our journey to Utah. Our sister, Marguerite, fell ill and died en route and we buried her on a small island in the Mississippi River near St Louis, Missouri. Also, our oldest brother John died and

was buried on the plains. We crossed the plains in Robert L Campbell's company, arriving in Salt Lake, October 24, 1854. My father remained on his mission in Italy until the year 1856 and that year came to America, but died that same year while crossing the plains.

I obtained employment with Brother Joseph Toronto and worked for him on Antelope Island in Great Salt Lake for two years, then moved to West Mountains. The winter of 1857-1858 I went with Brother Toronto out to Echo Canyon to help keep back Johnston's Army. In the spring of 1858 we were again at our home in West Mountains, now known as Pleasant Green. I lived there taking care of Brother Toronto's cattle. On May 10, 1866, I married Ann Cutcliffe at the Endowment House in Salt Lake and took her to Pleasant Green to live. Here two children were born to us. In the year 1868 we moved to the Old Cave at the point of the mountain, known then as Toronto's Point. We lived there five years and three more children were born to us. I worked for Brother Toronto until the winter of 1878, when we moved to a home of our own in Pleasant Green. My wife and I were blessed with thirteen children, nine boys and four girls. I was ordained an Elder in 1862 by Elijah F. Sheets. I was ordained a Seventy, March 22, 1884 by William W. Taylor, and a High Priest, April 30, 1898 by Charles W. Penrose. From 1891 until 1893 I filled a mission to Switzerland and Italy, laboring in Italy ten months and in Switzerland fourteen months. I also gathered genealogical records while there. I served as first assistant Superintendent of the Pleasant Green Sunday School for fifteen years and was counselor in the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association for a number of years, also served nine years as school trustee in Pleasant Green District. My occupation was that of a farmer.

James Bertoch had received a good education in Italy, having studied the French and Italian languages, as well as music. He was always desirous that his children receive the utmost in education available and also made every effort to secure for them as much musical training as possible. The children all showed musical talent at an early age.

The name James Bertoch was synonymous of honesty and integrity. He was known throughout the community in which he lived for his uprightness and square dealing and at the bank where later in years he transacted his business, it was said of him, "his word is as good as his bond." He was one of the incorporators of the Utah and Salt Lake Canal Company, incorporated October 2, 1880, in Salt Lake County, Territory of Utah, for the purpose of owning, holding, controlling and managing water rights therein, and for the use of the waters of the Jordan River and Utah Lake in Utah and Salt Lake Counties, and for the purpose of distributing said waters. He assisted with the actual construction of the canal which, brought the water from Jordan River and Utah Lake to the thousands of acres of arid land stretching across the valley to Pleasant Green, transforming these barren acres into productive farms and orchards.

(This part must have been written by his grand daughter Ann Henricksen Matthews)

In order to be an upright citizen there are certain laws to which we must conform. By obeying these laws we are allowed certain privileges and by breaking them we lose their advantages. There are also laws of a more infinite nature that work on the same principle. Whether grandfather consciously or unconsciously conformed to those laws is hard to say, but nevertheless he received blessings of high order. He was a very spiritual and prayerful man. Probably he received his first lesson in prayer from his father who always knelt and asked for blessing in their little hillside garden in Piedmont. Upon several occasions grandfather received visions and dreams

in answer to his prayers. One very interesting story he told was of the time when he was working for Joseph Toronto:

“H.T. Spencer and I were taking care of Joseph Toronto’s cattle during the year 1870-71. It was a hard winter and there had been severe snowstorms, which drove the cattle into the hollow of the mountains. The snow on the level was up to our knees. We hunted the cattle for several days, but there were still twenty head we could not find. We didn’t know where in the mountains to look for them. That night I had a dream or vision. An Indian, as straight as an arrow, came from the hollow where the cattle were. He said, “Your cattle are in the hollow of Porter’s canyon, and if you don’t get them in two or three shinips (days) they will all be dead.” When the Indian told me this I could see plainly just where they were. The following morning when HT Spencer came, I said “come along, we will find them today. An Indian showed me last night just where they are.” We went together and found the cattle snowed in, in the hollow. We had to break trail first with the horse and then led them back and forth to make a trail to bring the cattle out one at a time. We saved them all, excepting one that was too weak to travel. This was a great testimony to me that the Lord will hear and answer prayers in the time of need.

Grandfather Bertoch was a great lover of flowers, plants and all growing things. His fine orchard and lovely garden were talked of and praised by everyone for miles around. On his return from his mission to Italy, he brought with him two small fig trees. These he packed with the greatest of pains and planted near his home in Pleasant Green. Due to the exceptional care he gave them, these young trees grew and eventually bore figs, and were a distinct novelty in this climate. He did a considerable amount of budding and grafting in his orchard and with great success. In the pioneer days the choicer varieties of fruit trees were expensive and hard to obtain, so grandfather would manage to get shoots, or small twigs, of the better fruit varieties and patiently graft them on to the cheaper or more common trees. At one time he had four different kinds of pears on one ordinary pear tree. He loved to work in the orchard and garden, and it was never too much trouble to carry fertilizer or water. The little weaker trees or plants were always given a little special care, such as a father would give to an ailing child. We recall that when very old and nearly bent double, because of an injured back, he patiently crawled on hands and knees to weed and care for his plants and garden.

“He who plants a tree, He plants love,
Tents of coolness spreading out above
Wayfarers he may not I live to see.
Gifts that grow are best,
Hands that bless are blest.
Plant: Life does the rest.
Heaven and earth help him who plants a tree,
And his work it’s own reward shall be.”
Lucy Larcom’s “Plant a Tree”

Grandpa and John Bouck were the first of the pioneers to keep bees in the Pleasant Green area. Grandfather produced honey of exceptional quality and flavor and it was always in demand at the old Barnes and Hardy Store (located at that time on Main Street between South Temple and First South, Salt Lake City) where they took it, together with the fine butter which grandma made, to exchange for groceries, clothing and other needed things.

From the year 1872, when grandfather and grandmother Bertoch first took up their homestead farm in Pleasant Green, until the year 1905, they developed this land into a splendid farm, with a fine orchard and a good substantial home. This farm was located approximately one-half mile north and one-fourth mile west of the present Magna Plant of the Utah Copper Company, and moved to Hunter, building a good and comfortable home on thirty-third South Street, just east and across the street from the Hunter Ward meeting house. Here grandma passed away on September 9, 1922.

This was indeed a great loss to poor grandpa. He grieved for her so, was like a little child who had lost its mother. His daughter Lizzie came from her home in Granger and stayed with him for a while, and eventually took him to her home to care for. Then because of Lizzie's poor health, his daughter Pearl took him to her home in Holladay. Here he was a great favorite with the children and the children were also favorites of his. He was past eighty years of age when he came to this home to live, and because of his weak back, it was difficult for him to stoop to lace his shoes, so it became the duty of Pearl's little daughter Ann, just three years old, to do this for her grandfather. And no one enjoyed a lark more than little Ann did this one.

Grandfather passed away at Pearl's home in Holladay on March 1, 1924, at eighty-six years of age, bringing to a close a life that was exceptionally exemplary. He was buried beside his dear wife in the Pleasant Green Cemetery, Salt Lake County, Utah.