

H I S T O R Y
of
WILLIAM JOHN STARKEY and EVELINE MAE FOWKES STARKEY
by a daughter,
Lenora Starkey Gerrard

In the town of Furness Vale, Cheshire, England, on April 8, 1862⁴, was born to William Starkey and Priscilla Bacon Greaves Starkey, a son who was named William John. He was the third in a family of seven. Opportunities for education, especially in England, were not as great as they are today, and in most homes the children had to work either in the mills or the mines as soon as they were old enough. At nine, William worked several hours a day at the "pit", or mine. He was bright and intelligent, and learned reading and writing by self-study.

When he was just a young man, he heard Latter Day Saint missionaries preach the gospel. One, especially, William H. King of Utah, impressed him and convinced him of the truth of his message. He was baptized in South Norman-ton, Derbyshire, England by Henry Beará on October 2, 1880. Two years later, on September 2, 1882, he sailed from Liverpool, England, on the steamship Wyoming, emigrating to America. Also on board were 662 Saints, including sixteen returning missionaries, with Elder William Cooper in charge. They arrived at Castle Gardens, New York, Sept. 11, 1882, and continued on by immigrant train to Evanston, Wyoming, arriving in Evanston September 20, 1882. William found work in the mines in Almy, Territory of Wyoming, and there he settled. (Wyoming became a state July 10, 1890.)

He was desirous of becoming a citizen of this great country. He studied and took tests, and received his citizenship papers Oct. 19, 1894, in the Third District Court, Evanston, Wyoming. It had been his desire to bring his father and mother from England to this Land of America. He saved money and sent for them as soon as he could, but learned that his mother had passed away Dec. 11, 1882, about three months after his own departure from England. However, shortly afterward, his father came and lived here with his son in Almy until his death on Aug. 11, 1887. He is buried in the Almy cemetery.

In the town of Almy there lived the family of Reuben and Mary Fowkes. Reuben was mine superintendent and Mary ran a boarding house. William Starkey used to eat at this boarding house, and one day he sat and watched one of the young Fowkes daughters, Eveline Mae, make twenty pies. He had "had his eye" on this young lady, and this incident "capped the climax". He was greatly impressed with her ability as a pie-maker. After a courtship, he proposed marriage to her. They were married in the Logan Latter Day Saints Temple on October 18, 1888, Marriner W. Merrill officiating. Mae was 19 years and five months old, and William was 26 years and six months old. There was a difference in their ages of seven years and one month.

(Parenthetically, would state that there was another young man who was a boarder at the Fowkes home. This was a young Jew who was quite wealthy. He liked Mae very much. After dinner in the evenings he would say, "Come on, Min, and play me a tune." (Mae was often given the nick-name of "Min", for Mimic, because she liked to imitate or mock people.) This young man also wanted to marry Mae, but she preferred William J., although he had no money. (See History of Reuben and Mary Bacon Fowkes for more about Mae.)

The Starkeys lived in Almy, Inez, Carbon, Spring Valley, Cumberland, and Evanston. They also lived in Roy, Utah, for a short time, after leaving Spring Valley. Because of family pressure, William Starkey decided to leave the mines. There had been some tragic explosions, and the family felt that mining was too dangerous. So in 1904 he bought a farm at Roy, Utah. But he did not like farming. He said that it was the dardest work he had ever done in his life. "I wasn't cut out to be a farmer," was a remark he always made in referring to his life in Roy. On the farm, he had to use a hand plow, and would put the horse's reins around his neck and guide the plow with his hands. "I nearly had my neck sawed off", he would laughingly relate. They had to pump their water from a well. The oldest daughter, Laura, assumed most of that responsibility, and as a result, her health suffered. She was never as strong physically as she should have been, as a result of the hard work.

They did not stay long in Roy. They moved to Cumberland, Lincoln County, Wyoming, where he became a gas watchman, and later, a mine foreman. He

worked at Mines No. One and No. Two. When he was a gas watchman, he would have to go to work about 4:30 A.M., to inspect the mine before the men came to work. Sometimes, instead of taking his lunch (or breakfast) with him, mother would send it with my sister Gladys and me, later in the morning. One day mother and dad had had a small disagreement. Dad was a very faithful tithe-payer. He believed thoroughly and completely in the principle of tithing. He was sure that if one payed his tithing, he would be blessed,--if not financially, in other ways. He always gave one-tenth of his wages to the church for tithing. As there was very little money, mother had to be a very good manager in order to get along. One day she spent for some necessity \$5.00 that dad had been saving for tithing. Dad was up-set about it. "That five dollars has to come from somewhere!" he said emphatically. "That tithing has to be paid!" Mother was worried. She didn't know how or where she could get the money.

The next morning Gladys and I took dad's lunch up to the mine for him. It was about half a mile from our house to the mine. We had to pass through a gully, in which a road had been built up over a culvert. There were wide expanses of sage and other bushes on each side. As we were returning home along the road, through the gully, we noticed a bird fly up from one of the bushes. Gladys said, "I bet there is a bird nest in that bush!" We ran down off the road and looked in the bush, and right where the bird had flown from there was an old five-dollar bill. No bird nest,--just the money. We hurried home to show mother. She could hardly wait for dad to come home. When he was told of the incident, he said, "That's the money for the tithing!" We all agreed that that was the reason for our finding the money. They have instilled into their children the belief that they will get along better in life if they will be obedient to the church teachings, and pay their tithes and offerings regularly.

In 1914 the Starkey family left Cumberland, moving to Evanston, Uinta County, Wyoming, about fifty miles distant. For awhile, William Starkey (Dad) and his brother-in-law, Seth Thomas, drove to one of the Almy mines,--No. Three, I think, to work. One morning, while they were inspecting the mine, a "gas pocket" exploded. Dad threw himself to the ground, realizing that was his best chance to survive. However, the two men were badly burned. They were brought into Evanston, and a doctor treated their burns. Their suffering was intense. Dad's face and hands were burned to a crisp. He looked terrible, and was in a critical condition. But the burns began to heal, and mother would sooth the pain and the itching with olive oil. Dad and Uncle Seth wore LDS garments, and their bodies, which were covered with the garments, were not burned at all. If they had been, it is believed their burns would have been fatal. They recovered completely from this accident. It is a miracle that not a scar was left, although dad's hands were always somewhat wizened.

Dad also had another serious accident. A huge rock fell on him in the Spring Valley mine before they moved to Roy. It took several men to lift it off his leg. His leg was badly crushed and broken. He was "laid up" for a long time, but miraculously recovered from this accident also. It was after this accident that he decided to leave the mines, and take up farming. But he preferred mining to farming.

One night, while living in Almy, while Dad was at a dance, there was a terrible explosion at the No. Four mine. Many men were killed. The force of the explosion sent a huge wooden log through the wall of the house where he lived, and onto his bed. If he had been in bed at the time, he would have been killed. He had so many narrow escapes that we all feel that the Lord was protecting him for some special purpose. His time had not yet come.

I would like to state here that their eldest daughter Laura was organist for the Spring Valley ward choir for a long time, and on her thirteenth birthday was given a party by the ward, and presented with a beautiful gold watch and chain. Frank Overy was the choir conductor. In an old newspaper clipping dated Spring Valley, Wyo., June 29, 1904, I read:

"William J. Starkey and family were given a farewell reception on June 28 in Spring Valley by members of the Spring Valley Ward, and the Improved Order of Red Men, Cloud Tribe No. 6, on their departure for their future home in Roy, Weber County, Utah. About fifty couples gathered in the city hall, and welcomed Brother Starkey and family on their entrance. Felicitous addresses were made by Bishop H. T. Williams and Frank Overy in behalf of the Ward and the Red Men. Refreshments and dancing added to the evening's enjoyment.

Elder Starkey was president of the YMMIA, and First Assistant in the Superintendency of the Sunday School, and his daughter Laura M. Starkey was the Ward organist since the reorganization of our Ward last September, and they will be greatly missed." (Note: "The Red Men" was the name of Dad's union lodge)

In 1919 William J. Starkey was called on a mission to Great Britain for the LDS Church, arriving in Liverpool June 6, 1919. He and his friend, William Easton departed together, dad going to England, and Mr. Easton to Scotland. Dad labored in the Liverpool conference until June, 1921. George Albert Smith was the mission president. A fine friendship developed between these two men. Pres. Smith later became President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. At the dedication of the Idaho Falls Temple in September, 1945, dad and mother went up, hoping to attend the dedication. Tickets are required for a dedication, and the number is necessarily limited. Dad was afraid they would not be able to get tickets. But he went to the Temple ground and saw Pres. Smith there, and he immediately gave dad the desired tickets, asking how many he would like. In regard to his mission: It had always been dad's desire to go on a mission to England, and with his call came the fulfillment of a long cherished dream. Gladys, who was a book-keeper for the Blyth and Fargo Company, and I, who worked in the First National Bank, sent monthly checks to him. Other members of the family, though married, helped with the finances sometimes.

On his release from his missionary work, while still overseas he and Brother Easton toured the World War One battle fields of France. He said, "We saw many miles of devastated territory laid waste by the enemy: Billeau Woods (where the Germans came the closest to Paris); the ruins of Rheims and the Cathedral there; the ruined village of Boureshes, captured by the Marines on June 6, 1918; Vauf, destroyed by American shelling; Chateau Thierry; Svissons; the Marne; and other places. It was both interesting and awesome." Dad returned to the United States on the R.M.S. Minnedosa.

About 1926 William F. "Bill" Starkey, the oldest son in the family of William J. and Mae Starkey, purchased the Evanston Floral Company. Dad was associated with Bill in that business for about twenty years, when Bill sold it to Ralph Brimhall in September, 1943. Bill worked in the land office, starting there about 1922, while his father worked in the floral shop. But Bill would make the corsages and floral pieces of every kind, for funerals and parties. Bill worked in the U. S. Land Office here for about twenty-eight years. At that time, -1950- the Land Office ("The Bureau of Land Management") was closed, and Bill was transferred to Cheyenne, where he continued to work in that government agency.

My parents, William John Starkey and Eveline Mae Fowkes Starkey, celebrated their Golden Wedding Day October 18, 1936. Laura Starkey Butts, the oldest daughter, had a family dinner at her home in their honor, and in the evening an Open House was held at Phoenix Hall. All their children were present. Many people, friends and acquaintances, called to congratulate them and wish them continued happiness. They were delighted to receive letters of congratulation from President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Governor Leslie A Miller of Wyoming. These letters follow:

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

October 14, 1938

"My Dear Mr. and Mrs. Starkey:

It has just come to my attention that on October eighteenth you will celebrate your golden wedding anniversary. I am happy indeed to join your many friends in extending hearty congratulations to you on that occasion, and to send you my very best wishes for your future welfare and happiness.

Very sincerely yours,
PRES. FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

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