

History of George David Black Jr.
1841-1913

Written by his daughter Harriet Erminnie Black Garner

Into the beautiful valley of the Mississippi with its rich plantations, and old Southern culture, came two humble missionaries, bringing the message that an angel had appeared to the boy, Joseph Smith and told him that a great and glorious work was about to come forth and that they would be an instrument in the hands of the Lord to establish the true gospel of Christ upon the earth. Among those who received this wonderful message of these missionaries were George and Mary McRee Black. Daniel Tyler baptized them in 1841. The same year they embraced the gospel, a son was born to them, George David Jr.. Their parents, on both sides, were very bitter towards them, for having joined the despised Mormon faith, so they left a rich plantation, and beautiful home to move to Nauvoo, so they could live among the Saints.

George David Black Jr. was born Feb. 18th, 1841 in Copiah Co., Mississippi. His parents built a home near the Prophet Joseph Smith and Brigham Young. They became very close friends. My father (GDB.Jr.) remembered the Prophet coming to their home, when he was just four years old. The Prophet asked if George Sr. were at home. He was riding his large black horse. Grandmother told him, "No, George is not at home." As he rode away, George David Jr. said, "Mother, is that the Prophet?" He stopped his horse, and said, "Yes, my little man, I am the Prophet Joseph Smith, always remember that." He never forgot. He described the Prophet to his children. The father of George David Jr [George David Black Sr.] died of malaria fever in 1845. He was told by his doctor to go home to a warmer climate, or he would die, but he refused, saying, " I can either live or die for the Gospel's sake."

After his death, Grandmother lost two little girls, Isabella and Elizabeth, with the same disease within two months. The shock was so great, that she became very ill. The doctor told her that if she didn't go to a warmer climate, that she too would die. She sent for the Prophet. He came, and brought Brigham Young with him. They gave her a blessing, and told her to go back home, and stay until Spring, and that she would live and do much good. She took her two remaining little girls, Melissa and Rebecca, and George David and went back home to her husband's people who had joined the Church. Again the angel of death visited her, and took her other two little daughters, leaving her only little George David. In the Spring she returned to Nauvoo with some missionaries. George David was stricken with malaria fever. Fearing that he too would die, she sent for Brigham Young to come and administer to him. He came and said, "Mary, I will take him down to the Mississippi River and baptize him for his health." Then he did, and sealed him from all diseases. He never had another disease during his life.

After the Prophet's death, and the Saints were driven out, and companies were being formed to go West, James Brown invited Mary, and her small son, to join his company, which she did, joining the countless number of snow-covered wagons that poured out of Nauvoo. After reaching Council Bluffs, Iowa, James Brown proposed marriage to Mary. She accepted and they were married at that place, Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie County, Iowa on July 16, 1846, she taking a mother's place to his seven sons.

When the Government called for 500 volunteers to fight in the war against Mexico, James Brown volunteered, and became Captain of Company C. He took Mary and George David with him on that long journey. They endured many hardships and untold suffering. Mary cooked and washed for the soldiers, and lived on soldier's rations, and was like a ministering angel to them. Little David was her only joy and consolation. After reaching Santa Fe, New Mexico, Capt. Brown was detailed to take the women, children and disabled soldiers to Pueblo, Colorado, where they spent the winter.

In the spring of 1847, Captain Brown, his family and others of the Saints who had been with him at Pueblo, again took up their long journey to the west, arriving in Salt Lake Valley July 29, 1847. George David and his mother went north with Capt. Brown, when he was called upon to buy and colonize a tract of land bought from Miles Goodyear, an old trapper, who had an Indian wife. Mary had to live in an old log hut, with a dirt floor, and the only furniture was a one legged bed nailed to the wall. When she saw her new home, forty miles from a neighbor, she exclaimed, "This is a hard way to serve the Lord!" Ogden, Utah is now located on that land.

Here George David grew up and worked long hours for his step father, who was a hard taskmaster, receiving little in return for his services. His education was very meager, but his mother, a cultured woman of the South lavished much affection on her son. She taught him from the Bible and tried to instill in his young life sound and lasting principles, which would remain with him throughout his life. He grew rapidly, and though quite young, proved of great assistance to his stepfather, for whom he worked until he was eighteen. He was baptized and ordained a deacon in 1851.

While in the Mormon Battalion with Capt. Brown and his mother, Capt. Charles Jefferson Hunt of Company A, also had his family with him. A little daughter, Mary, two and a half years old was in George David's special care who was then five years old. While their two mothers cooked meals over the campfire, David would amuse Mary. The children loved each other, and spent many happy hours together.

After the Mormon Battalion was mustered out and Capt Hunt returned to Utah, he, along with others was called to colonize the San Bernadino Valley in California. The children were separated until Mary was about fourteen years old, then her father, Jefferson Hunt, was called back on account of Johnson's Army coming to Utah. The Hunts located in Ogden. Mary Hunt was a beautiful, blue eyed, dark haired girl and very witty. She had learned to dance gracefully, and had learned the Spanish language while living in California. She had many lovers. During these years David had retained his love for his childhood sweetheart. When he met her again, he fell madly in love with her, and vowed that no other man would claim her as his wife. Mary returned his love and they were married Sept. 16, 1861 at the home of Capt. Hunt. The ceremony was performed by Joseph A. West, the first Bishop of Ogden. Later they were sealed in the Endowment House in Salt Lake. They made their home in Ogden, Utah until 1871. Four children were born to them while living at Ogden, **Nancy Jane Black, George David Black III**, both died while very young, **Charles Jefferson Black**, and **William Jesse Black**.

During this time George David took care of large herds of cattle on the promontory. He was a fine judge of cattle. His dearest friend John Henry Smith herded cattle there too. Their love for each other was like "David and Jonathan" of old. George David was a member of the first Marshall Band of Ogden, playing the snare drum. He was also a good violinist, and played for the dances. He was the official firer of cannons and fired them on all special occasions. One day he did not move back as quickly as he should have, and he received a shock which impaired his hearing, and as he grew older he became quite deaf.

In the fall of 1871 he moved his family to Huntsville. The snow became very deep that winter, covering the dugouts that most of the people lived in. They would have to shovel their way out after a snowstorm. David and Mary lived in a one room log cabin. At that time, April 21, 1872 their 2nd daughter, Harriett **Erminnie Black (Garner)** was born. In March of the next year, they were on the move again, settling in Oxford, Idaho, where they lived for eleven years. The following children were born while there: **Joseph Warren Black, John Franklin Black, Mary Abigail Black (Barney), Grace Black (Hayes), and Henry Harrison Black**.

In 1874 George David was ordained an Elder by John Boise and in 1875 was made Presiding Elder over the Oxford Branch, Cache Stake. He held that position for three years, and was then chosen as first counselor to Wm. T. Fischer, who was called from Richmond to be Bishop of the Oxford Ward. The family lived in Oxford until the Mormons were colonizing the Upper Snake River valley.

George David was called by the president of the stake, William B. Preston to go and help build up that valley. Once more they traveled over mountains, through deep sand, through the Bannock Indian Reservation, then a barren desert, with only an Indian Agency at Ft. Hall. As we drove through the Partneuf Canyon, the children expected every moment a band of Indians would come rushing out of one of those ravines. Finally we reached the Great Snake River and crossed the old toll bridge at Eagle Rock (now Idaho Falls), and on to Market Lake. There were no roads just a trail to follow. Again we reached the river north of Rexburg. When we knew that we had to ford it, our courage almost failed, but we had come to build a new home, and Father told us not to be afraid, so we offered up a prayer, and we drove into that mighty river and safely reached the opposite bank on Nov. 18, 1883. Our lone log cabin looked good

after the long journey. Heavy snow fell that night, and we did not see bare ground again until May 1st. It was a very severe winter, the snow being from five to seven feet deep. There was no amusement so people visited by using snowshoes. In March Bishop Thomas E. Ricks from Rexburg organized a Sunday School, so that we might have something of a spiritual nature.

As Christmas time approached the children began to talk of Santa Claus and toys. David and Mary were very sad because the only money they had was 75 cents. They talked it over and decided that the children should at least have a little candy. Father had to drive seven and a half miles, with his horses hitched to an old homemade sleigh. The night before, a raging blizzard came. He had to ford two rivers, but he started out. Before he reached Rexburg, at the first river, the horses broke through the ice, plunging them into the icy water. He had to get into the water, get hold of the horses bridles, turn them around, and lead them back to the bank. He almost lost his life and his horses. He finally reached home almost frozen. Mother was disappointed that her children would not have candy for Christmas, but so thankful that her husband's life was spared. That night after the children had gone to bed, Mother made a little candy from her meager supply of sugar, made some doughnuts from parched corn, and she and Minnie made rag dolls for the little girls, painted eyes and hair, using charcoal and for coloring the cheeks they used fruit juice. Finally the stockings were filled. Christmas morning came bright and clear, but not as bright as the children's faces! They shouted excitedly, "Santa Claus did come!" It was the most humble but happiest Christmas of our lives!

Spring found Father plowing and planting seed. He was chosen to serve as Sunday School Superintendent., and was Presiding Elder of the Wilford Branch. When the Bannock Stake was organized, he was chosen as a member of the High Council (Senior Member). He often walked 12 miles to attend his quorum meetings. He was indeed a true friend and many people sought his counsel. Pres. Thomas E. Ricks was one of his best friends, also William F. Rigby during the days of polygamy they often took refuge in Father's home. He arranged a hunting party and acted as guide. They traveled by covered wagon through Yellowstone Park to Gardiner, Montana. There Pres. Ricks entrained for New York and there took passage for England. We did not know where Father had been until his return home.

He was a true friend to the Indians. He told us that they were the children of God, just as we were. He had played with Indian boys in Ogden and had learned to speak their language. They taught him to hunt and fish and often he caught the biggest fish, so they nicknamed him "Pigga Panguitch," meaning big fish. He traveled to Salt Lake to attend the Fiftieth Year Jubilee of the arrival of the Saints in Utah. While there he saw an old Indian woman whom he remembered as the mother of one of his playmates. He spoke to her and called her by her Indian name "Loanna." She was almost blind, but peered into his face, and then threw her arms around him and called him "Pigga Panguich," with tears streaming down her face. He always fed the Indians whenever they came to his home. The second summer after we moved to Snake River Valley, one day while father was not at home, ten Indian braves came and they were all painted and wore feather head dresses. There was one young boy among them and the leader told him to pull all of the vegetables and melons from our garden that they wanted. Their leader stayed at the house, and he took my little sister in his arms and sang to her until she fell asleep. He carried her to his horse, and I ran after him as I was afraid he was going to take her with him. He laughed and said, "Here take her." We were never afraid of them again.

Mother and Father passed through all of the trials incident to pioneering a new country. Father filled many positions of trust. He helped build new meetinghouses and school buildings. He was a carpenter and plasterer by trade. He helped many new settlers to locate on farms, thus making new friends and acquaintances.

While living at Wilford more children were born to them - **Celia Margaret Black (Lewis), Wallace Edwin Black,** and **Maude Olive or Euline Black,** who died when she was 8 years old.

In 1903 George David moved his family to the Grande Ronde Valley of Oregon, settling at LaGrande, where his son Jefferson was Bishop. They moved into a beautiful home, but did not live in LaGrande very

long as they longed for their Idaho home, so they moved back in 1906. They bought land at Sugar City and he built another home. They stayed there two years, and again they were persuaded to move to Oregon, where he bought a home at Mount Glen. Father took pride in having a fine garden and fruit. They eventually moved back to Wilford, where he bought another home, his last one. He loved the Teton Peaks, and thought that they were the most beautiful sight in the world.

On April 2nd, 1913, while riding home from St. Anthony on a wagon that was loaded with wheat he was knocked off the wagon by some boys scuffling. He fell between the wheels, which passed over his body. He was so badly crushed that he died five days later. Before he became unconscious, he told me to tell all of his sons and daughters to always stay with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, as it was the only true church.

It can be said of George David Black that he was a honest man of resolute character, firm in his beliefs, a man who followed the dictates of his conscience, and kept the commandments of God.

The president of the stake said at his funeral, "There lies an honest man. What more can be said of any man."

He was a devoted husband, a kind and loving father, and a true friend to everyone.

He died, was loved and honored by everyone who knew him, April 7, 1913.