

## The Life Story of Jesse Lorenzo Walker

I, Jesse L. Walker, having been born of goodly parents in this good land of America, choice above all other lands— My parents were of sturdy pioneer stock. My father, William Albert Walker, was born April 25, 1850 at Winter Quarters, Iowa, son of John Beauchamp Walker, born in 1814 in Livingston County, Kentucky, the son of Ephraim Walker, born about 1775. My mother, Charlotta Brimhall, was born on May 20, 1892, in Hyrum, Cache County, Utah, daughter of Noah and Lovina Lake Brimhall, [Noah] who was born in 1862 in Olean, Allegany, New York, son of Sylvanus Brimhall.

I will put in writing my life history that I have on record and as I remember it. I was born in a two-story adobe house close to the east bank of the San Juan River in Fruitland, San Juan County, New Mexico, on August 25, 1896. I lived there until I was seven years old. From there we moved to Jewett, New Mexico. There I went to my first school, at the Presbyterian Mission for the Navajo Indians. I had about three month's schooling that year, 1902. My father was branch president of the Jewett Branch of the Burnham Ward, San Juan Stake. His counselors were two women—Merry Jane Pierce and Sister Elese Hunt. There were no men in the branch holding the priesthood at that time except my father, who was a high priest and in the high council.

Our family consisted of, at that time, four boys (my oldest brother having passed away in Fruitland in 1896) and seven girls.

Some of our friends in Fruitland were William G. Black, Elmer F. Taylor, John R. Young, Abby S. Young (wife of Brigham Young Jr.), Benjamin D. Black, Joseph Hatch (my first Primary president), Luther C. Burnham (bishop), Joseph H. Dean (Sunday school superintendent), Clayborn Brimhall (who was also a bishop), and Alma J. Brimhall. These and many more, with their good families on one side of the river and the Navajo Indians on the other, were our neighbors in Fruitland.

Our neighbors in Jewett were Peter Shumway, Harry Baldwin (store keeper), Joseph E. Wheeler, Howard Deluce, James Pierce, William Hunt, the Zufelts, John Stocks, John Oliver, William Oliver, George O. Curtis, the Hamtons, Norman Brimhall, Charles Nelson, Ernest A. Lee, Mr. Broadhead (principal of the Presbyterian Mission School and my first teacher), and many more whites on one side of the river and Navajo Indians on the other.

I was baptized in the irrigation ditch by my father on August 25, 1904. I was confirmed on August 26, 1904, by George Curtis, an elder. My brother Don Carlos married the daughter of Joseph E. and Harriet Bingham Wheeler—Pearl Susan.

The first time I saw Apostle David O. McKay was at a conference in Kirtland, New Mexico, in the Burnham Ward. Elder McKay was on the Sunday school board with president Joseph F. Smith in 1906. We lived in the Jewett branch, and as I remember, he shook hands with all of the children. Being a child of ten, I will never forget that meeting. I have had that privilege many times since. I think every child who attended that conference will always remember Elder David O. McKay. He spent most of his time talking with the children.

How did my folks make a living for that large family? My father kept some bees, so we had plenty of honey to eat and some to sell. He burned lime and sold it to building contractors to mix with their mortar. I drove a team and wagon, hauling lime for the first buildings at the Indian school in 1906. I was ten years old, and my older brother, Don C. Walker, drove the lead team and wagon, then I followed if I could. One time I got too far behind in a rain storm and had to unload my wagon to keep the wagon from burning up. Part of that lime is still there (1966), about 1 ½ miles east of Shiprock, New Mexico.

My mother raised turkeys, which were a good price. She made some money to help out. Father was a good blacksmith and wagon maker. He made some money in his shop doing the work he loved. We always had cows and plenty of milk, butter, cream, and cheese. Mother was a good dressmaker and could get plenty of work in that line.

When I was eight, my brother Ezra E. Walker brought home a small colt that he had bought from some Navajos for one dollar. He gave me the colt. I raised him, and I think I rode him at least a thousand miles, bareback, herding cattle. I rode him to Colorado. (His name was Flee.)

The first winter in Redmesa, Colorado, 1907-1908, we walked a mile to school—a one-room school, with Miss Mable Greer as our teacher. With about 35 children in all eight grades, she was a very fine teacher. The next winter, 1908-1909, we had moved one mile further away, so we walked two miles that winter to school, with Frank J. Bush as teacher for the next three years. Then Karl Decker taught the next two terms. Mary Matley taught 1913-1914, the year I received my eighth grade sheepskin.

Those first winters in Colorado were very bad, with lots of snow and muddy roads that first winter. My father hauled hay from some farms about 15 miles away—he was on the road most of the time—to feed the cattle and horses. We traded our farm in New Mexico for 160 acres in Colorado with a two-story frame house and ten acres fenced and the sage brush cleared off. That was our first start in a new country. We used bobsleds in the snow that winter. Sometimes the snow was two or three feet deep. But when it melted off, oh, the mud. It was almost impossible to go anywhere until the mud dried up in the spring.

In the winter of 1914 we moved our house (a two-story building) from the south homestead to land we bought in 1907. This was one mile nearer to school and church. It took 22 horses and 11 teams three days to move it. The men who helped with teams were Mr. Carl, Bill Willden, John Willden, Myron Willden, Tom Hadden, James Slade, Hyrum Taylor, Joseph H. Dean, Lewis B. Burnham, and B. B. Warren. We moved it on skids while the frost was still on the ground, and the snow helped. We worked hard that summer getting the new house fixed up and moved into. I had my room all painted and my new clothes that I bought hanging in a new wardrobe and lots of good things. We were harvesting potatoes about three miles from home when fire wiped out everything we had except the clothes we had on, which were not too good to face a winter with.

In life there is no place to stop. So with the help of our many friends and neighbors, we went to work rebuilding. My brother Walter went to work in the Cherry Creek Sawmill for the Craig brothers. They let us have some lumber, and the neighbors helped haul it. With their help we soon had a roof over our heads again.

My mother was a fine cook, so she and I went to work at the Roy Dean saw mill on Turkey Creek, 13 miles north of Mancos, Colorado. Mother cooked and I worked in the mill, setting ratchets on the log carriage. That was a cold job, as I stood in one place and couldn't move around much. We worked out in the open with a shed over us, two ends and one side open in weather anywhere from 20 above to 30 below zero. Then in the spring when the snow started to melt, the mill closed down.

Mother and I went to Weber, a little town south of Mancos, and stayed with friends for two or three weeks, waiting for the road to dry up so father could come after us in a wagon. Oh, what a time I had with all those good-looking girls.

Father and I went to Kirtland, New Mexico, to work cleaning ditches for irrigation until the mud dried so we could start farming. This was in the spring of 1915. My mother stayed in Redmesa with the girls.

At home, my brother Walter was the farmer of the family. I gave him a hand when he needed some. I would help the sheep men with lambing, then the last of June go to the harvest fields for the rest of the summer and fall. Then in 1916 we bought some sheep together, taking turns looking after them.

In 1917, during World War I, there was no help. It was hard to get men, wages were so high. So I turned the sheep over to my brother Carl and the farm to my brother Ezra ("Dick"), and I went to work at the Ft. Lewis Agricultural College. My brother Walter was still working at the saw mill for the Craig brothers. I think he was saving to get married, which he did in June 1917. Then the Army took him for a year or so.

In 1918 World War I was very bad, food was getting short, and manpower was getting shorter, as the Army was taking the men off the farms. I was still working for the Ft. Lewis Agricultural College, looking for the call which was sure to come sooner or later. And it did on September 1, 1918. I left for Denver, Colorado, from Durango on September 3, 1918, on my way to Camp Funston, Kansas. I stayed there until December 5, 1918, and received my discharge from the 3rd Bn. 164th D.B.

The fighting had stopped on November 11, 1918, so the boys were starting to come home in the winter with no jobs. For most of us, the government checks stopped coming. Things were looking very bad. It was hard to find enough to eat until spring, when some farm work would start up. I left Camp Funston with \$45 to last from December 5, 1918, to April 1919, when I started working for Jim Henderson in Hay Gulch. I stayed there through April and May. With the crops planted, there was a wait until time to put up the hay, which would be in July. So while waiting, I looked for another job. I found one in Kline, Colorado, near my home. I worked there from June through October for Walter Fielding.

The most important thing there was just over the fence. There lived a very good-looking girl, 17—Miss Annetta Eaton, whom I talked into getting married. We were married on November 15, 1919, at her father's home, John Riley Eaton, by Bishop Thomas D. Harris. We lived in her father's home until April 1921, then we moved to Redmesa, Colorado. Annetta's father bought a herd of sheep, so I rented his farm for 1920 and raised a crop of wheat, hay, and barley. Our first son was born there August 7, 1920, Riley Lorenzo Walker. C. D. Smith and Bernice Harris delivered the baby.

My wife and I had a family of 11 children. One of them passed away in infancy. We raised ten of them. The oldest of the children is Riley Lorenzo Walker, who was born in 1920. Second is Verda Walker (Gallagher), born in 1922 in Redmesa, Colorado. Third is Wyer Dale Walker, born in Durango, Colorado, in 1924; then Belva Walker (Nielson), born in Redmesa in 1926; Arlea Walker (Washburn), born in Breen, Colorado, in 1927; Elouise Walker (Herron), born in Redmesa in 1929; Sherrel Buddy Walker, born in Redmesa on December 30, 1933; Jeanette Walker (Christensen), born in Redmesa in 1936; Burnadette Walker, born in Farmington, New Mexico, in 1939 (died at birth); Linda Kay ("Lynda") Walker (Bean), born March 7, 1943, in Blanding, Utah; and Jerry Gordon Walker, born December 8, 1947, in Monticello, Utah.

[December 22, 1965]