

A Sketch of the Life of William Livingston Widdison

William Livingston Widdison, was born September 21, 1864, in the town of Chapel Hall, Lanarkshire, Scotland. His father was Thomas Widdison, born in Sheffield, Yorkshire, England, May 6, 1806, the son of Samuel and Hannah Widdison.

As a young man, Thomas left his home in Sheffield and went to Scotland to work for Robert Russell Jr. as a file cutter. Thomas wanted to learn to be a file cutter.

While working for Mr. Russell, Thomas fell in love with his master's daughter Janet, who was born Feb. 20, 1812, and in due time they were joined in the bonds of wedlock.

Robert Russell Jr. born December 9, 1787, and Agnes Adam, born Feb. 11, 1787, were married April 14, 1811.

Robert Russell Jr. was born March 6, 1760, the son of Robert Russell Sr. and Janet Tom. Robert Russell Sr. was the son of George Russell.

Agnes Adam was the daughter of John Adam.

To the happy union of Thomas and Janet Widdison were born five sons and two daughters, as follows:

Agnes	Born	December 28, 1836	at	Shotts Lanarkshire Scot
Hannah	"	January 15, 1738	at	Sheffield Yorkshire, Eng.
Henry	"	May 11, 1841	at	Chapel Hall Lanarkshire, Scot.
Robert Russell	"	March 21, 1844	at	" " " "
William Livingston	"	Septem. 21, 1846	at	" " " "
John	"	1848	at	" " " "
James Gourley	"	January 12, 1853	at	" " " "

Henry and John died in infancy, the rest of the children all lived to come to Zion with their parents, who had embraced the Gospel.

Thomas Widdison and family set sail for New Orleans, U.S.A., March 23, 1853, on the ship Falcon, with Captian A. T. Wade in charge.

From New Orleans, they were taken up the Mississippi River to Omaha, where they were met by a wagon train waiting to take them to the Valleys of the mountains. They reached Salt Lake City, October 1, 1853. He went to school during the winter after arriving in Salt Lake City.

In 1854, he went to work at the wollen mill and worked till the hard times in 1856, he then went home where he and the rest of the family lived on weeds and roots till harvest. At harvest time the mother and children went into the wheat fields and gleaned wheat,(just a head or two at a time) but in the course of the day they would get their sach full, after which they would return home thresh it with a flair and wind it out. In this way they obtained enough wheat to provide

flour, by using it sparingly, to last till the next harvest which was a long way off, for the next year was the time of the move.

Grandfather often spoke of the Utah War, especially the entry of Johnston's army into the valley, at the approach of which about fifty thousand persons abandoned their homes and moved south near Provo. The saints expected their homes would be plundered, but to their surprise and joy the army marched through the city without stopping to touch a thing. The move was made in the spring, and it was too late in the summer when they returned home to plant crops other than a few quick maturing garden vegetables. They still had some food left over so by being very saving and living principally on weeds for greens, they managed to hold out till the next harvest.

When grandfather was ten years old, he and his brother Robert 2 1/2 years older, got a yoke of oxen from a neighbor and hauled wood on shares.

When he was sixteen years old he took his first trip away from home. He and his brother Robert, of whom he was very fond hired out to a freighting company and went to Nevada. The oxen were worn and tired before starting on this journey as they had already during the summer made a trip across the plains and back. The Indians had been very bad. As the company traveled along they would see where stage stations had been burned the men and horses killed.

When they reached their destination it was too late to take the outfit back to Salt Lake City, as the animals were exhausted and there was no feed. The team-masters had to walk the 450 miles back to Salt Lake City. One mule outfit was sent along to carry the food and bedding etc. It was on this trip that an incident occurred which showed his devotion and loyalty to his brother Robert.

While returning Robert became ill and could not keep up with the company so he was left behind. In the evening grandfather asked if he might take a mule and go back to get his brother. The captain refused saying: "Robert would die anyway and besides the mules were already overloaded". So grandfather walked back to his brother placed him on his back and started to carry him to the camp. In the meantime the other teammasters prevailed on the captain, he had a change of heart and a mule was sent back to assist.

Two days before they arrived home it snowed and blew on them constantly. One night they came to some cattle sheds which were filled with cattle. They were so wet cold and tired that they rooted the cattle from their resting places and then laid down on the ground which had been warmed by the cattle. The trip home took them 17 days but it was they arrived home two days before Christmas.

Instead of being paid in cash as was agreed, grandfather received a suit coat and his brother Robert a hat.

He then went to school until spring.

In 1867 he was called to cross the plains to get emigrants. The train left Salt Lake City the first of April and even then they encountered much snow and high water. The Platt river was 1 _

miles wide where they crossed and in some places so deep the oxen had to swim. They encountered lots of Indians but they always managed to get by without too much trouble.

On reaching their destination they did not have to wait long till eight or ten persons with their luggage were assigned to each wagon. There were eight head of oxen to each wagon. All persons able to walk would have to walk most of the way.

On the return trip the Indians were quite bad. At one place soldiers had been sent out to take care of the Indians. The officer in charge told the Captain of the train he had better wait till another train caught up to them so two trains could travel together for protection. The captain told the officer they were well prepared to take care of themselves and went on and to their joy they were never molested and they arrived in Salt Lake City in September.

The next year he was called on another mission of the same kind. He often related an experience he had on this trip that was anything but pleasant. The train he was with and another were racing, each trying to get ahead of the other. A yoke of oxen came up missing and he was sent back to get them. In the excitement of the race he was forgotten for two days and then the men told the Captain they would not move again till grandfather was found. He reached camp that morning without the cattle, he had found them but could not get them to camp, he had been out two days and nights without food.

This was the last year the emigrants crossed the plains in wagons.

Upon arriving home he found a great demand for men to work on the railroad, so he went to work for the Union Pacific Railroad Co., as a blacksmith helper. The Union Pacific was coming West to make a junction with the Central Pacific coming from San Francisco, thus connecting the east with the west. The project had taken nearly seven years and now was nearing completion. Thousands of Chinese had been brought to America to work on the project. He was present when the last spike was driven May 10, 1869.

After the completion of the railroad he went to work at the Salt Lake Temple quarry as a blacksmith. He worked there several years.

Not far from his home there lived a Mr. George Wilding and his family. Mr. Wilding was a violinist, grandfather like the violin, so he made arrangements with his neighbor to take lessons.

The eldest daughter of George Wilding was Mary Alice. She too liked music and was a very fine alto singer. She seemed interested in the progress of her father's pupil. An acquaintance was made which developed into a courtship, which terminated in a marriage December 23, 1872.

Grandfather became a good violinist and played for dances in the social hall and other places of amusement.

In 1877 he moved with his family to Sanpete, where he tried to farm. After 1 __ years he gave up the moved back to Salt Lake City. To many Indians, rattlesnakes and crickets for him.

In Salt Lake City he worked with his brother Robert as a blacksmith for a time. He then worked for J. W. Summerhays and Co, for several years. It was while working here that he decided that it would be better for his increasing family to be on a farm, so in the fall of 1888 he moved to Rexburg, Idaho, and took up a farm on homesteaded on Teton Island. It was not easy going for the pioneers of the valley. Canals had to be made, fences built, the land plowed, and the sage brush grubbed off and then irrigation ditches dug before crops could be raised.

The first house was two rooms built of logs. The first fall and winter were busy ones. Hauling logs for stables, posts and poles for fences, and wood for fuel. The next year a small crop was raised.

Houses were a long way apart. It being a mile to the nearest neighbors and four miles to Rexburg, the nearest town. Other settlers moved in and soon there were families about every half mile.

His first farm of about 160 acres was purchased from Mr. Merrick. This particular land was later owned by Mr. Steve Hunt. He also proved up on 160 acres under the timber culture act. This he retained as his home until the time of his death.

He purchased the cattle belongint to John Davis. He built the herd up for a number of years and constructed large barns and cattle sheds to shelter them from the winter winds and snow. He ranged them on the open range south and east of Rexburg. At that time this land was free range to all stock raisers.

During the depression of the Cleveland Administration he lost his cattle and some of his real estate. After these losses he centered his energies on his remaining land and later built a new home and surrounded it with a fine orcha rd lawn, flowers etc.

For many years he served as a director for the Teton Island Canal Company

He took no particular part in politics, yet he sensed his responsibility as a citizen. At voting time he picked his man, cast his ballot and after the election gave his support to the officiating officers.

December 9, 1894, a Sunday School was organized, known as the Teon Island Sunday School, with grandfather as Superintendent. The name was later changed to Island Sunday School.

February 24, 1895, a ward was organized with Geo. A. Hibbard as Bishop, and was called Hibbard Ward. Grandfather was chosen to be ward chorister.

During the winter season it was customary for the members of the ward to take turns entertaining the others. All would gather at a home where refreshments would be served, a program of songs and readings given, and the rest of the evening given over to dancing. Grandfather would always be there with his violin. He and his wife sang well together and often took part on the programs.

An outstanding feature of his family was the pleasure of home evenings. All of the family being home and spending the evening with music and song. In the family there were two altos, three sopranos, two tenors and two bass. There could be a female quartet or a male quartet, or all join together and have a double mixed quartet.

Grandmother was a practical nurse and was often called into the sick home. Grandfather was always found ready to leave his work and take her to the home of the sick. He was never too busy to leave his work and to the farthest home to administer to the sick and on two occasions the restoration of life was manifest.

He took great pride in his personal appearance. It has been stated that he dressed up whenever leaving home. He was not an elaborate dresser but always had a best change which were a little better than his everyday clothes.

He was a great participator in sports, being a very good ice skater, graceful dancer, outstanding swimmer and diver, and he was seldom excelled in the standing broad jump.

He did not leave a fortune to his family, yet he was very liberal in his donations for the erection of churches, schools, colleges and temples, and he often remarked that these would be standing monuments long after his many was gone.

He was the father of 13 children, seven grew to maturity, these were William, Robert, Nettie, Abner, Rose, Rachel and Leah. After the death of his wife, he made his home with his children.

After living to see and helping to bring to pass the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Prophet Joseph Smith, that Zion would be built up and the Saints would become a mighty people in the valleys of the mountains, he passed on to his reward there to receive the glad plaudit of the Master- "Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter into your joy."

Children of William Livingston Widdison and Mary Alice Wilding

	Born	Place	Married
William	15 Dec 1873	Salt Lake City, Utah	Anna Knapp Rebecca Edwards
Mary Alice	23 Aug 1875	Salt Lake City, Utah	
Robert Wilding	13 Mar 1877	Salt Lake City, Utah	Jane Berry
Florence Jannetta	19 Aug 1879	Salt Lake City, Utah	John Willmore
Elizabeth	29 June 1881	Salt Lake City, Utah	
Abner McRary	15 Apr 1883	Salt Lake City, Utah	Mary Ellen Fisher
Elice Lane	13 Nov 1885	Salt Lake City, Utah	
Rosa	31 Jan 1887	Salt Lake City, Utah	Ollie D. Roe
Rachel	9 Jul 1889	Rexburg, Idaho	Thomas Olive
Ella Leah	10 Sept 1891	Rexburg, Idaho	Eugene Widdison
Frank	21 July 1896	Rexburg, Idaho	

Compiled by Lu Sela Widdison Petersen
June 1943

Transcribed by: Christina L. Robinson
Fall 2002