

Stowell Edward Whitney

This account is written exactly as Stowell E. Whitney related it to his granddaughter Delores Ann Bednar Ridout.

I, Stowell, Edward Whitney, am an old tree in the forest of the Lord, withered in the branches and ready to die. The winds of seventy-seven years have peeled off the old bark that I live on but before I go, I feel the necessity of having a written account recorded for my posterity and will endeavor at this time to write a brief history of my life.

I am the son of George and Lovina Syphus Whitney. I was born in Bunkerville, Nevada on March 28, 1884. Chills and fever were on the rampage at the time I was born. My father was very ill at the time I was ready to be born, the family had a hard time waking him to go and get the midwife. Mother told how she had to give him hot drinks to awaken him and get him on the way for the midwife. The women of the area were of great assistance, bringing in food and taking care of the family.

My parents were considered to be upright, staunch, people among their associates and they have always had very deep religious convictions. No parents could have been more faithful in seeking the Lord's help for guiding them and in seeking His protecting care for their children and family. It was through their prayers in my behalf that I was able to successfully survive the period of time in my life that I drifted from the Church and the gospel teachings.

Father was a school teacher by profession. There was no school building in St. Thomas, Nevada, nor were there enough children there to have a school. Arrangements were made with my father to move there from Panaca, Nevada, with his family so there would be a sufficient number of children to organize a school, and he was hired to become teacher of that school. Because there was no school building at that time in St. Thomas, it was necessary to rent a big room in a dilapidated adobe building (now Gibson Home) to hold school. I was ten years old at the time of this move. As time passed on, we finally obtained a large tent in which we held school and also went to church.

At this time, the closest railroad was approximately 250 miles. All supplies and provisions had to be shipped from this point by team. The land and climate in this vicinity was favorable for raising fruit and all kinds of vegetables, so we depended mostly on our own labors to supply our food and prey needs. At this time, small game was abundant in this area. Quail, rabbits, ducks, geese, badgers and coons were obtained through both trapping and shooting. As a boy I was very fond of trapping and hunting, and this was the way I spent the better part of my leisure time.

When we moved to St. Thomas there were many Indians of the Paiute tribe located in the area. There were about three to five Indians for every white man at that time. It was the custom among this Paiute tribe to appoint one of the ordinary tribe members as a doctor, and it was the custom of these Indians to kill the doctor and his horse and to burn his tepee and other belongings when ever the doctor lost one of his patients. Then the entire tribe would move on to a new location. It was very difficult for them to exist because of the scarcity of food. There was no employment of any kind for either the Indian or the white man, and it was mighty hard for the Indian to survive. When they were hired by the whites on their farms, they were paid either by flour or

some other produce that the family employing them might be able to spare. However, as I stated before, small game was plentiful and it used to be a great thrill for me to go out and watch the Indian as he hunted wild game.

The Indians would go out in groups of forty or fifty, part on horseback and part on foot. The only weapon they ever used in their hunting was the bow and arrow, but it was seldom that a rabbit or even a large rat would ever escape them. Even if they were to come upon a cow that had died in the desert, they would haul it home, cut it up and eat it for food. Yet, regardless of the food they ate, many of them lived to be very old men and women.

One of the big thrills of my life was when a fine old Indian character who had been appointed doctor by the tribe and then lost one of his patients come to St. Thomas to tell all of the white people goodbye for he knew he must give his life. There were six or seven of us located in the valley at this time and we quickly gathered together and went to the tribe as a group to forbid them to kill this doctor. It took plenty of courage for us to do this as the nearest sheriff was at least 125 miles away. The Indians were aware of this fact but we were able to persuade them to change their minds and to my knowledge there was never any further practice of this custom.

It was a great pleasure after becoming older, even 75, for myself and my wife to go as missionaries among the youth of these old timers and to tell them of my experiences with their forefathers.

There were many years of trying experiences and happenings in St. Thomas because of the poor employment opportunities in that area. At the age of sixteen or maybe seventeen years, I obtained a job via correspondence, in another location. It was necessary for me to take a three day stage trip in order to reach my place of employment. On this trip it was necessary to go through Las Vegas, which at that time consisted only of the old Stewart Ranch and the Kyle Ranch.

My period of employment consisted of a short sixteen day period of time, and I was very disappointed when the mine closed down. All in all, it was not a very profitable trip after spending stage fare both ways and the cost of meals.

Many years later, after the railroads had reached Las Vegas, there was considerable mining activity around Las Vegas. I was working at Delmar, Nevada. Ed Clark, who owned all the forwarding agents of freight to different mining camps, wrote to me at Delmar. At this time everything was shipped by team and wagon. Ed Clark had bought a six-animal team and wagon in Caliente and wrote me in Delmar to load and ship same to Las Vegas for him. This I did. From that time, and for several years, I followed the occupation of driving teams and hauling supplies to different mining camps in and around this vicinity. Kyle and Beatty were two companies that were booming at this particular time. While the distance was not great, perhaps 100 miles, it still took about eight days to make the trip with a small six horse team. Other larger teams, such as twenty-four animal teams, could make it in about fourteen days. Freight rates were very high, heavy freight was five cents a pound and lighter was up to ten cents a pound.

Mr. Clark owned a wholesale liquor and beer business and it was my job to haul much of this kind of freight. Building materials were very hard to come by at this time. Beer bottles and liquor bottles accumulated faster than most anything else in these mining camps and as a result the first building to be built in the area was built from this surplus of empty beer and liquor bottles.

I also had many interesting experiences hauling with large teams to Searchlight, Nevada. Because I was the driver of the largest outfit, twenty four animals, it became my privilege to haul most of the heavy freight and equipment to equip the mines in Searchlight. I spent about five years in Arizona in the same occupation of driving team and hauling profession to Goldrod and Oatman.

During this time I was associated with the very lowest kind of people in and around saloons, mule skimmers, thugs of all descriptions. It began to look as though the direction in which my life was leading was not very promising. For years, from the time I was a Deacon of fifteen or sixteen I never entered Church right up until the time that I was married. My inactivity was due to my occupation and the type of people I was associated with in the mining camps. I do not recall ever seeing or even knowing one Latter-Day Saint during this period of my life. People with whom I associated were surprised to learn that I was a Mormon. I can recall this one fellow saying that if all the Mormons lived the kind of life I did, he wouldn't mind being a Mormon himself.

About the time I was thirty years of age, things had become rather slow in the freighting business in and around Goldrod and Oatman, where I was at this time. I had accumulated a pretty good outfit, six horses and two wagons of my own, but business had slacked off to the point there was not enough to justify staying in Kingman any longer. Kingman was the shipping point at that time for the mines surrounding Kingman.

For some unknown reason, I got up one morning feeling very discouraged and blue, I loaded what possessions I had in the wagon and headed back across the desert for the old stomping grounds, St. Thomas, Nevada. While the subject of matrimony had never occurred to me to any great extent, I did have a dream concerning a family that might come to me. I had stopped the wagon on an upgrade road one evening as I journeyed across the desert and I fell asleep. I dreamed that I got married and in the dream there were six children born to me and my wife.

I was pleased about my move from Arizona to St. Thomas. I had not been there very long until I found out what had prompted me to move back. As I said before the matter of matrimony and raising a family had never been of great importance to me up to this time. I soon found after reaching St. Thomas what had prompted me to return for it was there that I met the beautiful, fair-haired, blue-eyed girl that changed my whole life. Also, I was returning to the people of my faith. I would go with Isabel to Church and the many activities, and was shortly sustained Superintendent of YMMIA before we were married. It did prove to be a wise move for the teachings of my dear parents concerning the truths of the gospel were soon remembered and I regained my testimony of the gospel. Then, too, the fair-haired, blue-eyed beauty who was my happy lot to marry had a beautiful testimony of the gospel truths and was a good influence on my life. Because of the beautiful teachings of our Church concerning the importance of marriage, I readily saw the necessity of going to the House of the Lord and being sealed for time and all eternity, with the promise that all of the dear children that we became parents of would have the privilege of going onward and upward through all eternity as a family unit, providing we keep the covenants that we made with the Lord; and to all my living kindred, I bear testimony that this will bring more joy and satisfaction and happiness than any other thing that can happen to mortal man.

It was not too long before I found out that the obligation of taking a new bride was not the whole story for from that time forward, at pretty regular intervals of two

years, there was added to our family first three fine girls; Lavina, Relda and Pearl; then three fine boys, Cleo, Lloyd and Donald Whitney. While there was much responsibility added to the shoulders of my wife and I through the birth of these fine boys and girls, it has been the greatest experience ever given to my wife and I. It is also interesting to note that my dream previously mentioned was fulfilled to the very letter.

At this time, while we are reaching the Saturday evening of our lives, and our own children are all married off and have children of their own, it is still a great joy that brings happiness and contentment to our souls to have them call and visit us with their families. At the time of this writing, we have 21 grandchildren and three great-grand children.

After our marriage, we made an honest effort to make a living and livelihood in St. Thomas, but it seemed like we could never made ends meet. I had an opportunity to buy one-half interest in a ranch in Las Vegas in partnership with Ed Clark. After this deal was made, we moved to Las Vegas. I worked the ranch in partnership with Ed Clark for a good many years. We had a contract to furnish beef and hogs for wholesale to the butcher with the Nevada Meat Market in Vegas. We finally decided to sell one of the ranches and so we did. Then I bought out Ed Clark's interest in the other ranch we had been operating as partners and I ran it myself.

After we had been located on the ranch a few years, there was great excitement and the building of Boulder Dam began. The property mentioned above that we had purchased was right on the line that they wanted the highway from Las Vegas to Boulder City to run. I donated the land to the Highway Department, providing they would run the road right through the property. After and while the road was being completed, I hired an engineer to lay off sub-divisions on this property along the highway in lots from one hundred foot to lots of two and a half acres to make some money and while the Boulder Dam project did bring a lot of traffic and money into the area, there was a great panic in 1929 and 1930. It seemed like it was almost impossible to sell the lots for no one seemed to have much money on account of the depression. In as much as we could not sell the land to anyone else, we finally did sell considerable property to the bootleggers, but we did not make enough money out of the sale of the property to pay our expenses.

After we had sold considerable property there, the question came up among the people that had bought property as to what the town should be named. The majority of the people in the area insisted that the town be named "Whitney". I recall that there was one man who was very strong objector to name the town "Whitney" and was very determined that this would not be the case. A meeting was held and the name of the town agreed upon. The next morning, this objector came up and attacked with a gun, one of the men who had been so interested in calling the town "Whitney". Fortunately he missed him. The fellow who had been shot at went in to get his gun and the other fellow fled in his car before he returned with his gun. It was a good many months before we ever saw him again, even though he had purchased property there.

We gained favor with the people of the town because of our sincerity in trying to make a success of our project there. The water we had been using on the ranch was surface-fed water and because of drought for so many years, the water supply got so low that we were unable to make a livelihood at farming anymore there. We put a great deal of the money that we received from the sale of land back into it, drilling wells and putting

up water tanks and laying water pipe on a fifty-fifty basis with all the people located there at that time, in order that they might have a water system in the town.

I was not a pioneer that had to cross the plains, but yet I did pioneer the outskirts of some civilization while in this area. We, meaning myself and my family really enjoyed our work here. While we might not have been considered too successful financially, we felt we were accomplishing something in trying to carry on the work of the Church in Las Vegas. My good wife was one of the first Relief Society Presidents in Las Vegas, and I myself happened to be in the Bishopric at the time the first Mormon Church was built in Las Vegas. While we lived about eight miles out of town (which was a good distance in those days) we spent a lot of time running back and forth attending our duties as members of the Church. We received a great deal of joy and satisfaction out of this work from what we felt we were accomplishing and from the encouragement we received from the people.

While we were located on this ranch, we had one very exciting experience. I was not at home myself when the flood occurred, my wife and children were at home tending to the property and the chores. While one drop of rain did not fall at the ranch itself, there was an awful cloudburst back in the mountains that caused this terrible flood to come down without any warning. My wife told me of the events at the house. "It was July 7th and Cleo's birthday and I had made a cake for him and put it in the cellar. The children were in the front yard playing. I could hear voices yelling outside for all they were worth. Cleo was asleep in his bed. We were told that we should start running, but we had to go to the dam and see the flood instead. Mark Blake and the hired help brought shovels and other tools with which to cut holes and cut the dike to channel the water away from the house. I ran back to the house and moved the car up on the hill. I went down to go get Cleo's birthday cake and when I went upstairs to get Cleo, the water was coming into the house. Fortunately, the house was on high ground and the men mentioned, had diverted part of the water, by the time I got outside with Cleo the water was running pretty deep around the house. It's hard to tell what might have happened had it not been for the men cutting the dike."

After we had spent about 17 years at Whitney and the vicinity of Las Vegas, a gentleman from Moapa Valley came out to the ranch and approached me on the subject of buying a ranch that he owned in Moapa Valley. After a few trips to the valley and a lot of bickering, we finally bought the ranch which was a fine piece of property, a parcel of eighty acres in all. Later on I purchased another forty from the same man.

Conditions had much improved in the valley since we had left there to move to Las Vegas. Boulder Dam had been constructed and they now had power here and all of the conveniences that come with electricity. Also, there were wonderful highways through the valley. We have felt from that time to the present that it is a very pleasant and agreeable place to live.

Shortly after we moved to Moapa Valley, a man approached me and asked if I would be interested in furnishing the milk for one of the dairies in Las Vegas, Heinies Dairy. We made a deal that I would furnish him his milk for the dairy, providing that I would be his lone supplier and furnish him with all the milk he used in his operation. We did this for about eight years. Finally, his business grew until we were no longer able to produce enough milk to meet his demands and it was necessary for him to start taking in other milk producers. However, we did continue to furnish part or most of the milk up

until the time that we sold part of the ranch. We sold eighty acres, and turned forty across to Cleo to let him finish buying in order that he might have property of his own.

We really did very well on the deal and the business on the ranch. We decided that perhaps we would retire on the money that we received through the sale. We took a trip to California and spent the biggest part of the year there. After one year however, we decided that we did not have as much money as we thought we did so we bought another ranch in the valley. Again, we made a deal with the same dairy to furnish milk but this time, I took my son Lloyd, as a partner on the dairy end of the business. Because of my older age and failing health I was unable to carry on alone. Lloyd and I finally dissolved our partnership in the dairy business because of the fact that he wanted to go in to Las Vegas and into another business. On account of failing health and old age, I became unable to carry on the business and sold the same to my youngest son, Donald, who has been carrying on the dairy up to the present time and is selling milk to the same party.

Now at this time there is a recorded account available to my family relating to the highlights of my life. Because of my wife's and my own deep religious convictions, we have very much enjoyed our labors in the Church since we returned to the Moapa Valley, and we have found joy and pleasure in trying to serve our fellow men in doing whatever we can in our power to carry on God's work here in this little valley.

Now, may I say to all who will read this account that if my entire life could be placed before you as an open book, that which I record next is the most important.

While throughout our lives, my wife and I and family have always loved to participate in church activities, yet, now in my older age new determination has entered my life, this great desire came to me through a dream that I had. This dream occurred shortly after the death of my brother George Luke (Sept. 26, 1952) (and after I had been named as President of the Whitney Family Organization.

This dream was concerning genealogical and research work and the only reason I am alive today is because of the desire in my heart to do this work. In this dream it was shown unto me that I did have kindred dead who were anxiously and patiently waiting for the work to be done for them here on the earth. In this dream, I saw Apostle Orson F. Whitney, who had departed from this earth, laboring and trying to give hope and consolation to these people, that this work might be done for them. As I approached the place where they were gathered and talking (I never did go down to them, but stood on the hill looking down upon them) the look on their faces was one that I shall never forget as long as I live. They were the most disheartened people, like they were down-trodden and grief stricken even with the comfort that the Apostle was trying to give them.

About this time, Apostle Orson F. Whitney beheld me standing on the hill above them and pointed me out to the entire group of people to whom he was talking. While I was not able to hear what was said to them at this time, I am sure that he must have told them that through me there would be help and relief for them. I have never seen people's expressions change so much as they did after he had pointed me out to them and told them about me. I have never before nor since had such a stirring experience as this. However, I had been chosen as head of the family organization and that is the way the Lord works, through the head of any group of people.

I feel this dream was shown to me for my own benefit and to help me understand the importance of this position, and also for the benefit of the rest of the Whitney family. Through me, as head of the Whitney Family I could work with living kindred to gather

financial aid or any other help that might be of use in assisting these people; and, it is from the bottom of my heart that I am very grateful for the support and confidence that my living kindred have shown me in helping to finance research work – that through this means we might be able to reach those of our kindred dead whom I beheld, and now also any others that we may be able to assist.

The year after Stowell had his vision of the spirits in heaven, he repeated it at the Pine Valley reunion. His white hair shining in the sunlight so impressed Afton Hannig she wrote this after he passed away.

The white-haired Patriarch
Stood within the circle of his kinsfolk.
While overhead the tall pines sang the theme song
Of the gathering of the Whitney Cal.
Accompanied by the gentle music of the stream
A shaft of sunlight filtered through the trees
And fell upon the white-haired Patriarch,
Bringing a bright translucence to his face,
As if the mantle of a saint had fallen there.
Gentle his ways and gentle, too, his voice,
Except when words of faith and counsel
Came with accents strong and clear.
His was a sermon of example
Given through the years with toil and tears and laughter.
The years, the pain, the twinkle in his eyes
Had etched their lines upon his face.
But love and tenderness and kindness had given to the lines a certain beauty
Illumined by the sunlight as he spoke.

Dear white-haired Patriarch!
Death had no power to bruise nor make afraid.
It only could unlatch the gate
And let the noble spirit through..
The dear sweet clay is laid to rest
While the dearer sweeter spirit
Is set free from pain and trouble
To join the ones he loved who went before
And those who had the blessing
Of the temple through his efforts
Shall welcome him with gratitude and praise.

His charming wife, his children
And his children's children
Bless his name and see again in memory
The time of happiness- his gentle humor;
The times of sorrow
When his words of faith and wisdom buoyed them up.
The saga of the white-haired Patriarch
Will live throughout the ages.
He left his foot-prints in the sands of time.

Afton Whitney Hannig

Patriarchal Blessing given to Stowell Edward Whitney

August 6, 1922

Las Vegas, Nevada

A blessing given by Patriarch Joseph Ira Earl, upon the head of Stowell Edward Whitney, son of George Burton and Lovina Syphus Whitney.

Brother Whitney, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Authority of the Holy Priesthood, I lay my hands upon your head and give unto you a Blessing. Your heart is right before the Lord and you desire to serve him with an undivided heart and if you will put trust in the Lord, you will be able to concentrate your whole heart and labor into his service.

The Lord will bless you abundantly both with His Spirit and the good things of the earth. Your lineage is of Joseph that was sold into Egypt. Thus the blood of Israel flows through your veins. You were born an heir to all the privileges and blessings of the Gospel, and through your faithfulness you shall become a mighty man in Israel in the defense of the truth and righteousness, and your testimony of the truth shall become brighter and brighter until the perfect day, and the Spirit of the Lord will be poured out upon you so that every principle of the Gospel shall become plain to your understanding, so you can teach it with power to the unbeliever as well as to the believer. You will be beset by the evil one who will try to destroy your testimony and the faith you have in the Gospel, but the stead-fastness of your parents and those you are surrounded with in the priesthood will be a stay and a staff to you so you will be able to rise above the temptations of the evil one and continue your labor in righteousness before the Lord.

Your opportunity shall come to labor in the House of the Lord for the living and the dead, to be a standing minister before the people and they shall have confidence in you because of your faithful labor. You have reason to be proud of your parentage. You have a long line of ancestors of splendid men and women who will accept the Gospel when the work is done for them in the Temple of the Lord. Be faithful Brother Whitney, and all the righteous desires of your heart will be granted unto you and you will live to see your posterity grow up around you in fear of the Lord, and a desire in their hearts to keep every law of the Gospel and when your work is accomplished upon the earth, you will have done all necessary to an exaltation in our Father's Kingdom to go onward with your wife and family to your eternal reward.

These Blessings, Brother Whitney, with many that the Lord has in store for you, I seal upon your head in the Name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Kenneth O. Earl, Scribe