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History of Ebenezer Brown

The year 1835 was an eventful year in Church **History**. It saw the organization of both the Council of the Twelve and the Seventies. It was also a pivotal year in the life of **Ebenezer Brown**. That year, in Crawford formerly centered on survival, became centered around the gospel and the demands of the beleaguered new church. The nature of Ebenezer's life before 1835 is a matter of piecing together the evidence. He was illiterate as far as we know. He left not one written word that we can ⁽¹⁾find. Deeds and other important documents he signed with an "X". Although he was appointed postmaster at one time, his



wife actually functioned in the job. Nevertheless, wills, deeds, and other documents help us to trace his life through his extensive travels and his impressive contributions. **Ebenezer Brown**, second son of William and Hannah Sweet Brown, was born in Salisbury, Herkimer County (then Montgomery County), New York, on December 6, 1801, just three years before his prophet leader, Joseph Smith. The New York winter of 1801 (and all the winters of those early years) imposed its harsh reality on the region's inhabitants with relentless persistence. Shelter and heat were primitive and only family could supply for itself. Food was non-existent except for had been grown and carefully stored in the summertime against the bleakness of winter, or obtained by skillful

hunting in the virgin forests. No record is found of Father William's having owned land and in the area surrounding Salisbury, but Mother Hannah's parents, Jesse Hulda Whitford Sweet, owned a parcel there, and it is probable that Hannah chose to spend her confinement, and perhaps an additional period of time, in the companionship and care of her mother. Ebenezer was Hannah Sweet Brown's fifth child to be born in Salisbury (following Betsy, William, Hannah, and Polly), so Hannah may have customarily sought her mother's help in her time of need. Those were days when people traveled far to visit and stayed long. However, it may also have been that William and Hannah did live in the area, but did not own land.

By 1808, William and Hannah had definitely settled their growing family (now including seven children) in the frontier area of Dryden, Tompkins County, New York. There William purchased a total of eighty acres (lot 37) from Joel Hull and David Foote.

Dryden was part of the land that was gained from the Iroquois Indians during Sullivan's campaign. It became a military land grant tract, with parcels being granted to veterans of the campaign. The Dryden area was so densely forested that it was called the black forest. Its denseness resulted not only from the plentiful trees, but from the almost impenetrable undergrowth. In order to get from one place to another on horseback, a bridle path was hewn out of the forest. The competition of the bridle path was so necessary and so difficult a project that it occasioned much comment from the people at the time, as well as from Dryden's historians. Isolation was another result of the dense forest. The people were on their own, dependent upon their resourcefulness and the whims of nature.

William's lot had been cleared by David Foote, but as there was no easy way to get the stumps out of the ground, it is likely that William was chipping at them, burning them, and plowing around them during the rest of his life.

As early as they were capable, the children, too, would have been put to work doing the tasks necessary to survival. Some of these tasks, we can surmise from records left by other early settlers, were raising and preserving food; carrying water; chopping, carrying, and stacking wood; and making candles, soap, furniture, and the very houses in which they lived. As for other tasks they must have performed, we are too far removed from them in time even to guess at what they were. Suffice it to say that they were kept constantly and urgently engaged in the business of survival. There was either no time or no opportunity for Ebenezer to go to school, and he grew up, and likely died, without benefit of a formal education, a fact which in no way lessens the importance of his contributions to his fellow men or to his family. In spite of the handicap of a lack of schooling, here was a man who overcame and accomplished much.

Before 1820, Ebenezer's father, William, died, and Ebenezer, at the age of eighteen, came into manhood. The next recorded event of his life is his marriage to Ann Weaver, July 20, 1823. They apparently settled in Dryden and their first child, a son, Joseph Gurnsey Brown, was born there November 8, 1824.

The **Ebenezer Brown** family shows up on the 1825 New York State Census for Tompkins County as owning two horses, five yards of cloth, twenty-seven yards of flannel, and thirty-four yards of linen. A study of the **history** of Tompkins County shows that the area was a center for the home manufacture of cloth. It is likely that Ann had a loom in her home and wove the cloth to sell to a company which solicited the cloth from the local homemakers.

Their second child, Harriet, was born in Dryden, New York, February 6, 1826.

On June 1, 1829, the family bought land in Summerhill, Crawford County, Pennsylvania. Ebenezer went there with Ann's parents for a chance at the new land. The county tax list indicates that he owned fifty acres. From that time on, we assume, he cleared and farmed his fifty acres. It was while they were in Crawford County that Norman, the third child, was born, November 6, 1830. By now the Church had been officially organized. It would not be

long before Ebenezer and the Church would meet.

The year 1833 finds Ebenezer selling out his Summerhill land and buying 100 acres in Conneaut, Crawford County. He paid \$350 for his new farm. This was new land to be settled. Remembering the thickness of the Dryden woods, one wonders at the time and effort he must have expended to get his farm ready for planting. A hundred acres of unautomated farmland would be an awesome undertaking. All of it must have been under cultivation.

It was while the family was in Crawford County that Ebenezer and Ann joined the Church. They were baptized June 13, 1835. There is no record of who taught them the gospel, but from that year onward, Ebenezer had more than merely the physical struggle for survival to occupy him. Now he must strive for his spiritual survival as well.

The very next year, 1836, Ebenezer and Ann sold out in Conneaut. Ann signed her name to the deed. Ebenezer made his "X". They took their stake, the \$1010 they got for the land, plus whatever else they had, and headed west to cast their lot with the Saints. From then on, the lives of Ebenezer and his family closely parallel the **history** of the Church.

In 1837 they were in Peru, LaSalle, Illinois for the birth of their fourth child, John Weaver Brown. Ebenezer's sisters, Betsy and Hannah, were also living in Peru at that time. Hannah and her husband, Zimri Lewis, are known to have had a hotel there in 1840.

We are especially blessed by John because, whether by assignment or inclination, he appears, for the short duration of his life, in the role of the family historian. It is from his diary that we learn of the family's move in August of 1838 to Far West, Missouri. There, on January 2, 1839, Ebenezer and Ann received their patriarchal blessings at the hands of Isaac Morley, an ordained patriarch of the Far West Branch (Church **History**, p. 524.).

The family's stay in Far West was short. In March, with the persecutions against the Church reaching a feverish pitch, Ebenezer moved on with the rest of the dispossessed Saints to find a home in Illinois. He and Ann settled south of Nauvoo in Quincy, near Pleasantville. There they prospered. There they also suffered. John mentions nothing in his **history** of a baby sister, Ann, born in 1842. He speaks of himself as the youngest child, as indeed he was. Baby Ann died shortly after she was born. Mother Ann died, too, leaving Ebenezer bereft of his companion of nearly twenty years.

Ann had been ill for some time. To care for her, Phoebe Draper Palmer came to live at the Brown home. Phoebe was a widowed mother of four children and the sister of Ebenezer's friend, William Draper. Ebenezer and Phoebe married that same year of 1842. Phoebe's and Ebenezer's children combined to make a large household.

Pleasantville, located as it was some distance south of Nauvoo, was a place of peace and prosperity for the Saints. Religious persecution, so harsh to the north, had not reached them yet. Nevertheless, when the call came from the Prophet Joseph Smith that the Saints should break up their settlements in outlying areas and move into Nauvoo, Ebenezer and Phoebe packed up their household and left. They stayed in Nauvoo during the stormy period of 1842-1846. At one time Ebenezer was jailed with the Prophet, and then released. *The History of the Church* documents his release, but not his arrest and

incarceration (Church **History**, III, p.211.).

During this time in Nauvoo, the spirit of apostasy was rampant. It appears that Ebenezer's mother may have even been touched by it (Church **History**, II, p.441). But Ebenezer seems to have risen above it and remained faithful to the gospel and to the Prophet. We are left to speculate about his reaction to the death in 1844 of the beloved Prophet leader. We do know that on December 24, 1845, Ebenezer took out his own endowments in the Nauvoo Temple, and that in 1846, he and Phoebe were among the refugees who left Nauvoo and headed for a home even farther west.

The call for the Mormon Battalion came in the summer of 1846 while the Browns were in Iowa. Ebenezer was designated second sergeant of Company A, and Phoebe had the title of laundress. Zimira Palmer, Phoebe's son, went with them. The other children were left behind to make their way west on their own. Harriet, by then nineteen and married to Oliver Stratton, took charge of the younger children, among them John, who was nine years old. John remarks that, "Father left us in very poor circumstances having no protection from the storm except our wagons and tents and only the protecting care of the Almighty from wicked men." The children had a lot of company in their "poor circumstances." Most of the other refugees were in similar straits, nor were they the only "orphans" left stranded on the prairie. They made their way west with the Saints on the plains and Ebenezer and Phoebe took up their adventure-ordeal with the Battalion.

The Battalion marched out of Council Bluffs on July 20, 1846. Ebenezer was 44 years old, Phoebe, 48. There is little recorded of Ebenezer and Phoebe's personal experiences on the march. Some of the hardships that the Battalion as a whole suffered we know from other histories. Hunger, thirst, illness, inept doctoring, and inadequate supplies plagued them all along the way. South to Fort Leavenworth they marched, then southwest to Santa Fe, all along suffering from illness due to short rations and lack of good water.

The Battalion arrived in Santa Fe in October. From there a sick detachment, and the women and children who had accompanied the Battalion, were sent north to Pueblo for the winter. From Pueblo they would be able to join the main body of the Mormon pioneers, at government expense, the next summer. The rest of the Battalion, now traveling without its sick and its women, headed on west.

Phoebe must have fared well during the first part of the journey, as she was one of only four women permitted to accompany the Battalion all the way to the coast. From Santa Fe to Tucson they blazed a new trail. Water, which had been scarce before, now was non-existent for days. The men and women held pebbles in their mouths to lessen the thirst and tried not to think about it. From Tucson the trip, which had been hard at first, became desperately difficult across the desert. The group trekked 75 miles without finding water, boiled rawhide for soup, and walked barefoot across the cactus because their shoes were so poor as to be harder on their feet than the cactus spines.

At last, on January 29, 1847, they arrived at their destination, San Diego. They had walked eleven hundred miles. Two days later they had a new destination, San Luis Rey Mission, an additional three days' march. During the next six months, the Battalion served at San Diego, San Luis Rey, and the Cajon Pass outside of Los Angeles. It was mustered out of service on July 18, 1847.

President Young had advised all Battalion members without means to stay in California and earn money for their trip to the Salt Lake Valley. As Ebenezer had no money, he was one of eighty-one officers and men to re-enlist and remain at San Diego. This enlistment expired in March 1848.

Next he and Phoebe worked a year for wages at Sutter's Mill. They left California late in the summer of 1849 to arrive in the Salt Lake Valley just one week after Harriet and the children came in. Ebenezer immediately set out to find a place to settle, as the Salt Lake City area was already distributed among the earlier arrivals. Again John provides us with the story of the search for a home and the beginning of the settlement of Draper, Utah: "My father, Ebenezer, and his three sons... set out to find a new and unclaimed land .. Together we discovered unoccupied land and water in a large cove in the southeast corner of the Salt Lake Valley through which the water from four springs ran ... and began immediately ... to build a cabin on the ground and to prepare for crops to be planted in the spring ... In 1850 father brought Phoebe and the rest of the family down from Salt Lake City to make a permanent home."

Ebenezer must have found the sparsely forested location refreshing to cultivate after the dense forests of the East. His son, Norman, is credited with plowing Draper's (then South Willow Creek) first furrow.

The problems they didn't have in clearing the land and finding water for their pasture and crops were offset by the problems they did have due to the abundant water. The area was so marshy that Ebenezer had to cut willows lay them crosswise to make a "corduroy" road across the marshes. Still it was a good place and there was space there, so Ebenezer's friend and Phoebe's brother, William Draper, joined them there. Soon other Drapers came to settle -- the community was growing.

Ebenezer had barely begun to get settled in his new home when he was called on a settlement mission to Iron County. On December 7, 1850, he and others under the leadership of Apostle George A. Smith left Salt Lake City.

The Iron County company consisted of a large group - 120 men, 30 women, and 18 children. Most of the group were chosen for their specific talents. Farmers, blacksmiths, sawyers, shoemakers stone masons, bricklayers, teachers, smelters, doctors, midwives, and many other specialists were asked to go. Iron County was to be set up as a community first, and was then to be established as the source of iron for the Mormon colonies.

It seems from reading through the diaries and records of the Iron County mission, that Ebenezer's job was not to settle the area himself, but rather to aid others in establishing a permanent community. He rode south on horseback. He and Isaac Goodale led a group of twenty into the forest to cut timber. John D. Lee, recorder for the group, tells of a wolf that came to camp. A couple were catching their chickens when the wolf came up within a rod of the women. Ebenezer felled the animal with a rifle.

Apparently Ebenezer's Iron County mission was filled by 1852. In September of that year we find him back in South Willow Creek for the organization of a branch of the Church. By then there were about twenty families on South Willow Creek. William Draper was

designated Presiding Elder of the new branch, with **Ebenezer Brown** and Zemira Draper as his counselors.

Ebenezer's cattle business did well. By 1853 he was a man of enough substance to support an additional wife. That year he married Elsie Samantha Pulsipher, and the next year he married Mary Elizabeth Wright. In the meantime, he continued his cattle business and branched out his activities. His little community began to grow. A school was built, and Phoebe became one of the teachers. Indian troubles broke out and they built a fort. South Willow Creek had its name changed to Draperville in honor of Elder Draper, and it received a post office. In 1854, **Ebenezer Brown**, still as far as we know illiterate, was appointed the first post-master. Phoebe kept the office in her home in the fort.

One might think that in his fifties, Ebenezer was building a settled life for himself and his family. It was not to be so. At April conference, 1856, 257 missionaries were called. Among them were John Weaver Brown to go to Hawaii, and **Ebenezer Brown** to go as a settler to Carson Valley, Utah (now Nevada). Father and son left together. Ebenezer, acting as a Captain of Fifty, took Samantha and Mary Elizabeth with him. John accompanied them and reported on their journey: "We started each day between 8-9 o'clock and made about 15 miles a day... We were blessed in many ways. Our teams were strengthened and we met with few accidents worthy of notice. The weather was fair except for a few days of wind and bluster. We found feed and water supplies to be fair most of the way... On 24 June (1856) we arrived at Carson and pitched our tents in the Washoe Valley where a town is located and a number of saints have taken up farms and commenced improvements."

From there, John traveled on to his mission, leaving Ebenezer and Samantha behind unchronicled. The Carson Valley settlers remained for just over a year. In that time, Ebenezer was called as a counselor to President Seth Dustin of the Washoe Branch. Samantha had a baby, Samantha Ann. The settlers, under the leadership of Orson Hyde, acquired all the good land and streams in the area and began the organization of the new settlement.

Almost the entire stay in Carson Valley was fraught with uncertainty. The political upheaval in the Salt Lake Valley, later known as the "Utah War," caused tremors in Carson Valley. Eventually the settlers received word that Utah had been put under military rule. The settlers did not know whether they should stay or whether they should return home. Finally on September 5, 1857, special messengers from Church Headquarters arrived. The message was come home immediately. Half expecting such a summons, the pioneers were ready. They quickly picked up their camps and moved back home.

Once again in Draper, Ebenezer was at last home to stay. He lived there another twenty years. His prosperity and generosity are attested to by a simple story related by his son, David Pulsipher Brown: "When Peter A. Nielsen, a convert from Denmark, came to Draper to live with his family, Father asked him if he had a milk cow. 'No,' answered Peter. 'Well,' said Father, 'You go in my corral, look over the milk cows, pick out the one you would like, and take her home.'" Years later, Peter Nielsen's son, Arthur Richard, married Ebenezer's granddaughter, Chloe Samantha (daughter of David Pulsipher Brown), thus joining the family by blood as well as charity.

His two young wives' families were still growing, so Ebenezer built a new home for them, while Phoebe remained in the old home in the fort until 1870. On March 29th of that year, Mary died, leaving four children, one of them an infant. Mary's parents took the baby and Phoebe moved into the new home to help care for the other children.

Ebenezer's health began to fail. He spent one long winter ill. Then, on April 29, 1877, his wife, Samantha, died, leaving behind seven children. The youngest, ⁽²⁾Elisha, was not yet three. It is evidence of the closeness of the large family that it was now Mary's daughter, ⁽³⁾Elizabeth, who moved into the family home to help care for the aging father and the motherless children.

As Ebenezer's health continued to worsen, records his daughter, ⁽⁴⁾Eunice, he voiced his one regret to Bishop Stewart. It was his sorrow that now he should have to leave all these children with no one to care for them. He provided for them to stay in the big house together under the care of an administrator, ⁽⁵⁾Joshua Terry.

Ebenezer Brown died January 26, 1878, after a remarkable long life of service and obedience. He was seventy-five years old.

We who look to him as our ancestor may well look within ourselves for the evidence of our inheritance from him: a sturdy, energetic constitution, a readiness to obey those in authority and to serve those in distress. A paragraph of his patriarchal blessing, which was "found in an old red folding purse," particularly concerns us:

1. See John Weaver Brown's **history**. There was a letter written to his daughter.
2. Elisha Brown (b 1874)
3. Mary Elizabeth Brown (b 1859)
4. Eunice Brown (b 1865)
5. Joshua Terry (b 1825)