

## Brief Sketch of the Life of Isaac Laney

Isaac Laney attended an open-air meeting near his home in Kentucky, where he first heard a "Mormon" elder explain the gospel of Jesus Christ as revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith. He accepted the gospel at once and desiring to be near the Saints, soon went to Illinois, where he worked for Samuel Howard. After leaving Mr. Howard's employ, he went to Missouri with a Mr. Lewis, where he shared with the rest of the Saints the terrible persecutions of the mobs.

The 28<sup>th</sup> of October, 1838, found him with a small number of Saints working at a place called Haun's Mill, in Missouri. It was on this day that the mob came upon them demanding that they sign a treaty of peace and deliver up their weapons of war. The demand, of course, was outrageous and ridiculous, as they were minding their own business, making an honest living; however, they were allowed no word in the matter and had to comply. Grandfather had little faith in the mob's promise of peace. October 29<sup>th</sup>, passed peacefully at the mill, but that night grandfather had a dream which was a warning to him. In the dream he seemed to be passing a trail where there were a great many snakes. They crawled along the ground, hurled themselves through the air and hung twisting and hissing from the limbs of trees. Dodge and hurry as he might, his body was soon pierced and bleeding from the attacks of the angry snakes. Finally escaping the serpents, he met a man with whom he was acquainted. "Brother Laney," he said, "you are terribly bitten and it is no use to encourage you, for no one was ever bitten as you are by snakes and live." "Well, then I will be the first, for I am not going to die," was grandfather's answer. In a patriarchal blessing given to Grandfather Laney, he was told that he was a direct descendant of "Joseph, the Dreamer," son of Jacob, and that he inherited the gift of dreams. On October 30<sup>th</sup>, the mob, heavily armed, dashed down on the little party at the mill and began shooting. Grandfather gained possession of three guns, gave two of them to the other men and, placing himself between the mob and the cabin housing the women and children, began shooting. Lead was flying around like a hail storm. You may judge how thick was the hail of lead, for while he was preparing to shoot, eleven bullets hit the stock of his gun, cutting it off in his hands. One hit and knocked off the trigger guard, but the "works" were still intact, for he loaded and shot it once more and saw one of the mob drop as the result. Grandfather could see he was doing little good and they were cutting him to piece, so he returned to the cabin, told the women and children to run for the woods. As he turned, a bullet struck him in the right arm-pit and came out of the left arm-pit. This was not the first wound he had received, for two bullets had passed through his breast and came out of his back, and two had passed through his hips from front to back. As he was running up the hill, his body much bent with effort, a large bullet struck him in the back near the kidneys, passing lengthwise through his body and came out of his mouth. This bullet he caught in his teeth and spit it out in his hand and placed it in his vest pocket as he ran. He said, "This one came nearer knocking me off my feet than any. The rest just 'plunked' through me as if I were a squash." Knowing he must hurry to help or give up his life, grandfather sat down to take off his boots; they were so heavy to lift in his weak condition. He had to slit his boots with his knife before he could remove them. Grandfather struggled on and soon met the man he had seen in the dream. He said, "Brother Laney, it is no use to encourage you for no man was ever shot as you are and lived," and grandfather replied, "Well, then, I will be the first one, for I am not going to die." Just a little farther on was the home of a friend who took him in and after washing and dressing his wounds, put him in bed. His clothes were cut to

pieces and his body had been hit with seven bullets, leaving thirteen scars. For some time he lay near death, being fed with a spoon; he was so weak; he could not open or close his eyes. The elders were called in and he was anointed and promised in the name of Jesus Christ that he would recover. From this time on he rapidly recovered.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of March, 1841, he, Isaac Laney, married Sarah Ann Howard in the State of Illinois, where they lived until the enemies of the gospel forced them to move. Near the first of July, 1847, he, with his wife and two children, Margaret and George Culbert, also his twin brother, William, with his wife and one child, left Winter Quarters with the first emigrants, 'The Big Company,' as it was called, consisted of 1353 persons and was equipped with 566 wagons.

The Laney families belonged to the 100 of which Edward Hunter was captain. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September, 1847, they arrived at the old fort in Salt Lake City, Utah. They occupied the third house east of the south gate in the fort.

With the families of William and Isaac Laney, crossing the plains in Bishop Hunter's company, were Mr. Doremus and two other men always referred to by them in later life as the old man Stump and old man Wolf. These men seemed to be without other family connections and were assigned to this group to complete the ten. The Secrist family were in an adjacent group and Mrs. Secrist and the wife of Isaac Laney became very close friends. They seemed to be kindred spirits in that they neither of them were very firmly converted to the wisdom of such a journey.

Besides three or four sheep, Isaac Laney brought with him a red heifer and a black one with a white stripe along her back. He drove two yoke of oxen and his wife drove a team of horses. One of the horses was a high-lifed black mare, somewhat balky, and the other a blue-roan horse. They were called Kit and Nig, respectively. Some of the wagons had for tires, split hickory or birch saplings tacked around the felloes with hand-made nails. When these wore out they were replaced with new ones, a supply of which were carried along the side of the wagon box. Going down hills that were steep, it was the custom to lock the wheels with a chain to keep the wagon from crowding the team. This naturally was hard on the wood tires, so grandfather invented what was known and used for many years as the Mormon brake. This contrivance which was in general use in pioneer days, consisted of a short piece of a small log swung under the wagon gears just in front of the rear wheels. This piece of log was attached to the rear axle by a chain and a short piece of a small pole was fixed into a large hole bored into the log. A pull on this pole would roll the log, winding up the chain, thus pulling the log back against the wheels. This braking action held the wagon back, yet permitted the wheels to revolve some and wear more evenly the wood tires. This gave the tires a much longer life and made stops for repairs less frequent. Such a contrivance was crude and simple of construction, yet it involved all the principals of the modern brake which we use today.

Very soon after the arrival, grandfather made a spinning wheel and loom, the first one made in Utah, and grandmother spun the yarn and wove the first piece of woolen cloth made in this state. During the early days when the Saints were threatened by the U.S. army, grandfather had another dream which was fulfilled. Again it was the sign of an enemy—a large snake coiled and menacing the Great Salt Lake Valley. The head raised high and seemed to be watching something in the east. Then it began to sway from north to south and soon the head broke off and flew to the south, then the whole snake broke up, some pieces going north and some south. We see the fulfillment of this dream in Johnson's army, which was a menace to the city until the outbreak of the Civil War, when the head broke off and left to join the Southern army, the rest returning East in disorder, some to join the North and some the South.

Isaac Laney lived in the fort three years, then he built a log house on the northwest corner of Sixth South and Ninth East street, Salt Lake City. This was later replaced with a story and a half adobe house that had the basement finished for living quarters, also. The log house was the first one built in the Tenth Ward of Salt Lake City. Grandfather, Isaac Laney, built a picket fence around this lot. The posts were bored to receive the rails and the pickets were of shaven boards or boards split from the log, instead of being sawed. On this lot he built a granary, or silo, of the same material. As I remember it, having played about as a youngster, it was about 8 feet in diameter, and 10 feet high, round shaped, and held together by birch hoops.

Grandfather was a very generous man with everything he possessed. At the time they were on the way from Nauvoo to Winter Quarters, and while encamped there, he went down into Missouri, notwithstanding the bitter feelings prevailing at that time, where he, by working and trading, secured much that was of value to him in this new settlement. Among the acquisitions was a mill that was used to grind corn, wheat, etc. This was set upon a post when he arrived in Utah and his neighbors given free access to its use. His wood pile at the home in the Tenth Ward was always free to poor Saints, who had just arrived and were in need of fuel. His teams, as well, were often loaned to the newcomers, and his son, George Culbert, who had learned very young the technique of team-work, was sent many times to assist and teach this work to the emigrants from Europe.

As the California gold diggers began to pass through Salt Lake City, one sick man was left at Isaac Laney's home. He died, and being without funds or instructions for the disposal of the body, grandfather took the body upon the bench and buried it. This was the first grave in what later became known as the Mt. Olivet Cemetery.

Isaac Laney was familiar with the cultivation of hemp, cotton, flax, indigo, and all crops common the South from where he came. He raised these with considerable success in the Salt Lake Valley. He also propagated vines and fruit trees, having a wide variety around his home. On some of the trees he grafted several varieties. He also experimented with the improvement of different wild fruits with success. I well remember how large his chokecherries and service berries grew under cultivation.

When the move came in 1857, he went to Spanish Fork.

In 1860, he was called to go to St. George to help build up the country. He stayed there about a year.

In 1865, he was called to aid in the settlement of Blackfoot, Idaho. In 1866, he went on a mission to the [southern] states, and preached the gospel in his home country. He died October 13, 1873, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

(Written by George Culbert Laney, Grandson.)