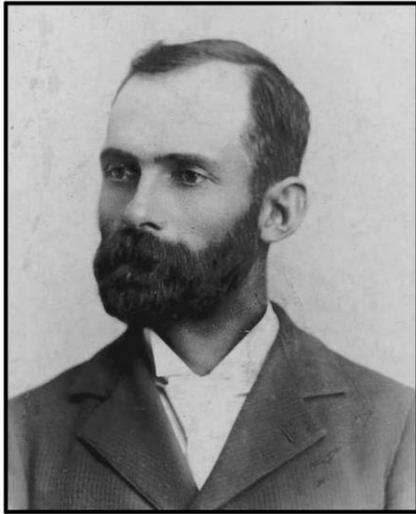


Aaron Benjamin Porter and Rebecca Margaret Poole



A Family History

by Shelley Dawson Davies

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

ESTABLISHED IN ZION	4
A Righteous Birthright	4
Growing Up.....	5
Rebecca’s Childhood	7
An Eternal Covenant.....	8
Church Callings.....	10

CHAPTER 1

IDAHO	14
Isolated Country	14
Untimely Death	17
Grandmother Poole	19

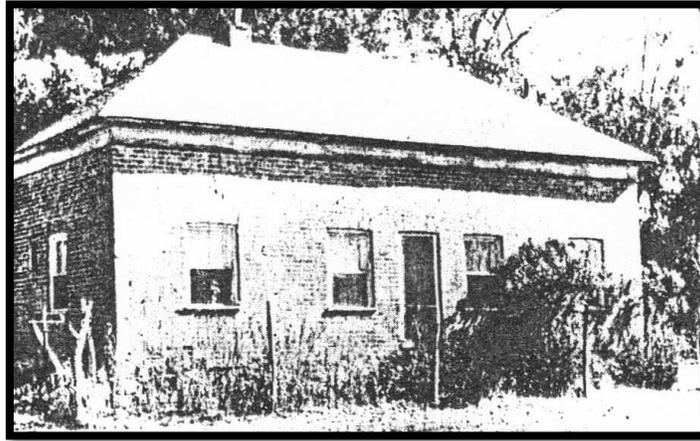
BIBLIOGRAPHY	24
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INDEX	26
--------------------	----

Chapter 1

Established in Zion

A Righteous Birthright



Aaron Porter's boyhood home in Centerville, Utah.

Centerville, Utah, may have been a pioneer settlement “hundreds of miles from anywhere, the nearest place to nowhere...squeezed hard against a two-mile high mountain wall by the stripped barren front of a salt sodden lake,”¹ but it was home to Aaron Porter,² who was born there to Nathan³ and Rebecca Porter⁴ in the spring of 1851. Aaron’s folks were among the first settlers of the village, building and farming on neighboring lands to keep the family close. Grandfather⁵ and Grandmother Cherry⁶ had a place right next door, and Uncle John,⁷ his father’s brother, built so close both families shared some of the outbuildings. Aaron’s Porter grandparents also owned land nearby. It was Grandfather Sanford Porter,⁸ bishop of the ward, who gave Aaron an infant blessing in church.⁹

Aaron’s sister, Sarah Jane,¹⁰ had been born in a hastily-built log cabin two years before, but by the time Aaron arrived, the family was living in a cozy adobe home on twenty acres of good farming land his father was anxious to improve.¹¹ It turned out Nathan would have to wait before setting to work, however, as he accepted a mission call from the church which took him to Europe for four years. During that time, it was Rebecca Porter who ran the farm with the help of her extensive

and supportive family. Little Sarah Jane and Aaron pitched in by doing what chores they could, aided by nine-year old Nathan Cheney, adopted by the Porters when the boy's parents died the same year Aaron was born.¹²

Aaron was only a year old when his father left, and five when he returned. Nathan came very close to not returning at all, as he was travelling across the plains behind the ill-fated Willie and Martin Handcart Companies in 1856, and became stranded in the snow. Nathan was among the survivors, but he was so weak and starved after his rescue little Aaron not only failed to recognize his father when was brought into the house, but hardly recognized him as a man. Rebecca nursed him back to health all winter, while Nathan forged new bonds with his children.

By spring, Nathan was not only able to resume his work around the farm, but he had committed to living the principle of celestial marriage by taking Eliza Ford¹³ as a plural wife. Eliza was a cheerful young English convert and a delightful addition to the Porter family. Rebecca sincerely welcomed Eliza and the eleven children she eventually bore, and by all accounts the two families managed to live harmoniously in the same home "for nearly forty years."¹⁴ Being surrounded by his large family was a comfort to Aaron, and helped him through the difficult time of losing his older sister, Sarah Jane, to fever in 1861.¹⁵ That same year, Nathan Cheney, who was every bit a brother to Aaron, left home to make his own way.

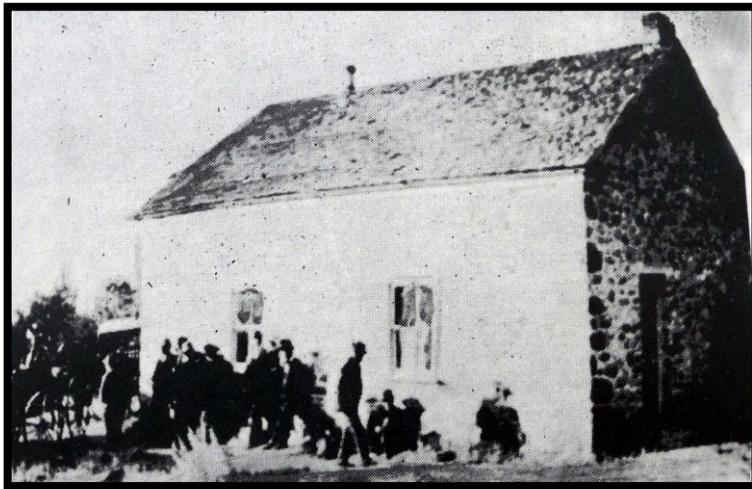
Growing Up

Aaron, now the oldest child at home at the age of ten, understood the Wasatch front's desert beauty with its vast stretch of silvery green sage and tawny grasses, and enjoyed nothing more than watching the setting sun as it warmed the Great Salt Lake every evening with orange light. He became skilled at coaxing crops from the dry land, working at his father's side as they planted, tended and harvested the grains, corn, peas and squash the women cooked and preserved for winter.

Aaron's help at home was important, but his parents also impressed upon him the value of an education, making sure he attended classes during the winter months. After all, Nathan was a trustee of the Centerville school, a small building on the north side of Duel Creek, where reading was taught with old Noah Webster readers and writing and arithmetic were worked out on simple slates.¹⁶ As in most schools of the day, the "three Rs [were] the staple of learning, history and

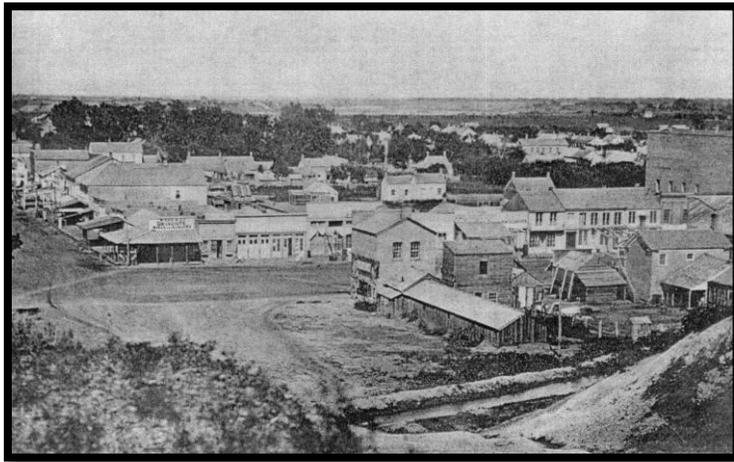
geography mere deserts. Discipline [was] by rule or strap. If learning [was] low, discipline was high by painful application,” according to one former pupil.¹⁷

Despite sometime painful school days, Aaron grew up taking pleasure in reading, debating and performing in plays with his classmates. The young men enjoyed making their own entertainment so much they made their gatherings official by forming a “Young Men’s Club”¹⁸ to host their get-togethers, and constructed a small stone building dubbed “Elkhorn Hall” for the impressive set of antlers hung over the entrance.¹⁹ It was the perfect place to discuss a variety of interesting topics and the growing collection of books purchased through club dues. They even constructed a stage at one end of the building, complete with painted scenery and curtains.²⁰ Aaron enjoyed being on stage, except for one performance in which he choked on a chicken bone when the script called for a meal, causing one of the other players to pound on his back in an impromptu rescue effort the audience slowly realized was not part of the script.²¹



The Young Men’s hall built in Centerville by Aaron and his friends.

Through hard work and careful management the Porter family prospered, with a number of healthy livestock and “well filled barns and granaries and splendid fields of grain and hay” according to one of Aaron’s sisters, Amelia Walton.²² When the Centerville Coop opened in 1869, Nathan became one of the officers in charge of operations. Twenty-one year old Aaron took over many of his father’s responsibilities on both the farm and with the coop when Nathan was called to the Eastern States Mission in 1869 and again in 1872.²³ By the time he met the pretty woman he would marry, Aaron was a well-versed, well-rounded man who was more than ready to support a family.



Ogden in 1876, not far from Fifth Street, where Rebecca spent her childhood.

Rebecca’s Childhood

Red-headed Rebecca Poole²⁴ was also prepared to shoulder family responsibilities, being one of the oldest daughters in the large polygamous household of John Rawlston Poole.²⁵ John’s plural wives, sisters Jane²⁶ and Harriett,²⁷ had ten children between them, added to first wife Jeanette’s²⁸ three sons, five daughters, including Rebecca.²⁹ Each wife lived within hailing distance of each other in separate houses on a Fifth Street lot, five blocks east of the rail station in Ogden, Utah.³⁰ With all the traffic generated by the arrival of the railroad in 1869, it was the perfect place to operate a boarding house and grocery store, businesses John Poole depended on his large family to run.³¹

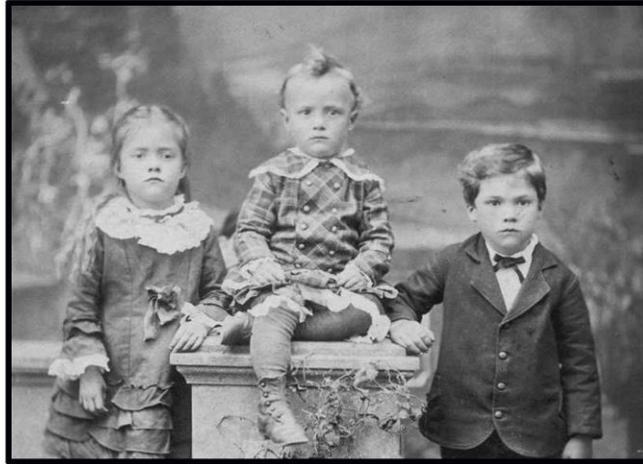
Hard work was part of Rebecca's childhood. Any child in the Poole family who was big enough to do simple chores pitched in to keep the guest rooms and kitchen clean, but it was Rebecca and her older sister Ada³² who did most of the heavy labor. Breakfast was expected to be on the table by five a.m., which was followed by a large sink of dirty dishes and general cleaning, including a good scrubbing with fine sand to keep the wood floors fresh and smooth. Rebecca and Ada spent hours over a steaming laundry tub, scrubbing family clothing and soiled guest linens. The girls often found themselves stretching sheets across on the clothesline out back into the middle of the night and spent the next day ironing baskets full of linens with heavy sad irons heated on the kitchen stove.³³ At the age of sixteen, Rebecca worked harder than ever when her father was called on a mission to Iowa, leaving her mother with a business to run and eight children to care for, including a young baby.

Even with so many obligations at home, Rebecca was allowed time to join friends at church activities and dances. She was especially fond of visiting her Bleasdale cousins, who lived a short train ride away in Centerville. It was while visiting the Bleasdales that Rebecca was introduced to handsome Aaron Porter.³⁴

An Eternal Covenant

Aaron and Rebecca were married in Salt Lake's endowment house on 26 October, 1874. Aaron built his new wife a two-story red brick house on Main Street and Second South in Centerville,³⁵ not far from his childhood home. No one was happier at the birth of the couple's first child than Grandmother Cherry, who looked forward to fussing over a large number of grandchildren from her only surviving son. Aaron and Rebecca did not disappoint. After baby Aaron's³⁶ birth in October, 1875, eleven more sons and daughters followed at a regular pace: Nettie³⁷ in 1877, William³⁸ two years later, followed by Ethel,³⁹ Susie,⁴⁰ Edna,⁴¹ Mary⁴² (who died as an infant), Ross,⁴³ Milt,⁴⁴ Dora,⁴⁵ Vera,⁴⁶ and Nathan.⁴⁷

Aaron's dairy farm and orchards not only provided a good living for his large family, but gave the children plenty of work to build their characters. When they weren't tending to the milking or pulling garden weeds, the children took turns manning the roadside fruit stand or taking extra butter to the coop to trade for goods or cash. The older boys often joined Aaron plowing fields and hauling fruit into Salt Lake City where they sold their crops at the farmer's market from the back of their wagon.



The Porter children. Above (left to right): Jeanette, William, Aaron Jr. Below: Ethel, Susie, Edna holding baby Rawlston.

Dusting, sweeping and making beds were among the many daily chores Rebecca assigned to the girls. Smaller children were not exempt from the work force; Ethel recalled washing the dishes when she was still so little she was placed on a box in order to reach the sink.⁴⁸ Rebecca's high standards of housekeeping required the girls to do all their chores "just right." Every woman was careful about how her wash was hung out on the line, as her laundry skills were on display to the entire neighborhood, but Rebecca was more strict than most homemakers. Not only did she expect her girls to neatly line up multiple pairs of cotton socks across the back fence, but to mate and match them toe-to-toe while doing so. If there was an item out of place, the girls were sent back to straighten things out.⁴⁹

Each Saturday night the children were required to line up his or her shoes in a row on the back porch where they were shined up for Sunday services with polish or a dab of Vaseline. Rebecca was quick to remind her children that even though they were somewhat poor and did not have new shoes, there was no excuse for not being clean and tidy.⁵⁰

Church Callings

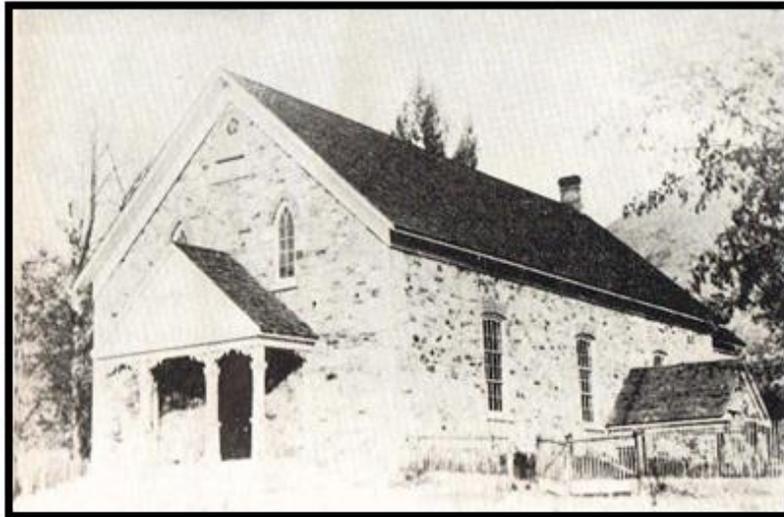
Being presentable at church was especially important when Aaron was ordained as Centerville's bishop in 1888. During the eleven years he served as head of the ward, Rebecca boarded and cooked for many general authorities of the church as they stopped by Centerville on their visits to settlements farther north.⁵¹ Even without men from Salt Lake City gathered around the table, the children were asked to set an extra place for Sunday dinner every week, since Aaron could be counted on to bring home someone who may have been lonely or in need of comfort that day.⁵²

Among those needing help from Bishop Porter in the 1880s were local polygamist men being hunted by federal agents for "unlawful cohabitation." No one was more sympathetic to their cause than Aaron and Rebecca, whose own family members were under the same scrutiny across Utah Territory. They became instrumental in hiding a number of men from federal agents until the Manifesto officially ended polygamy in 1890.⁵³

As faithful as Aaron was to his religious responsibilities, he was "not too anxious" when he accepted a mission call to settle Arizona in 1876, according to his son Nathan. Joining the company sent to pioneer those desert lands meant leaving Rebecca and baby Aaron, "but he did not want to refuse. He had a four horse outfit and wagon

ready to go, when one of his uncles said, ‘I wish I had an outfit like that and I would go to Arizona.’ Dad said, ‘You can have this one if you go in my place.’”⁵⁴ Aaron was only too happy to transfer ownership of his horses and wagon and his uncle took his spot in the Arizona settlement mission.⁵⁵

It was almost as difficult for Aaron to part with his horses as it would have been to leave his family behind. No one loved horses more than Aaron, who always took great pride in having the best animals he could afford. Many years later Aaron owned a particularly fine team of sorrels he was very attached to, even though they were so hard to handle few men could manage the pair. One friend was tempted by their beauty, however, asking if he could have a turn at driving them. “Dad told him they would run away with him, but the fellow wouldn’t believe him and had to try them out,” said Nathan. “Of course, the horses ran away with him.” Aaron eventually sold the team when he became afraid they would run away with his boys. “Dad saw the team some time later,” said Nathan. “He walked up to them and spoke to them and the horses laid their heads on his shoulder. Dad walked away wiping the tears out of his eyes.”⁵⁶



The Centerville church where Aaron served many years as bishop of the ward.

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- ¹ Nathan Tanner Porter, *The Village* (self-published, 1947), page 3. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ² Aaron Benjamin Porter (1852-1904), #KWCT-DNK, www.familysearch.org where verification of all vital dates can be found. Also see family group sheets at www.DaviesDawsonHistory.weebly.com
- ³ Nathan Tanner Porter (1820-1897), #KWCV-XNL, www.familysearch.org
- ⁴ Rebecca Ann (Cherry) Porter (1830-1922), #KWV9-F82, www.familysearch.org
- ⁵ Aaron Benjamin Cherry (1801-1861), #KWJR-FDX, www.familysearch.org
- ⁶ Mary Margaret (Yelton) Cherry (1811-1898), #KWJR-FD6, www.familysearch.org
- ⁷ John President Porter (1818-1895), #KWJV-9J6, www.familysearch.org
- ⁸ Sanford Porter (1790-1873), #KWJT-VMZ, www.familysearch.org
- ⁹ Nathan Tanner Porter, *Autobiography of Nathan Tanner Porter* (Porter Family Organization, 2000). Online at <<http://www.boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/NTPorter.html>>
- ¹⁰ Sarah Jane Porter (1849-1860), #K2MH-QZB, www.familysearch.org
- ¹¹ Porter, *Autobiography of Nathan Tanner Porter*, <http://www.boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/NTPorter.html>
- ¹² Mary Ellen Smooth and Marilyn Sheriff, *The City In-between: History of Centerville, Utah* (Bountiful: Carr Printing, 1975), page 191.
- ¹³ Eliza (Ford) Porter (1841-1912), #KWCV-XN2, www.familysearch.org
- ¹⁴ Amelia Porter Walton, "Eliza Ford Porter," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ¹⁵ Cleo H. Page, "Aaron Benjamin Porter," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ¹⁶ Annie Call Carr, editor, *East of Antelope Island* (Salt Lake City: Publisher's Press, 1948), page 67-68.
- ¹⁷ Porter, *The Village*, page 3.
- ¹⁸ This organization later became the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association under LDS church leadership.
- ¹⁹ The building, located at 85 South 300 East, was remolded into a residence in 1920.
- ²⁰ Carr, editor, *East of Antelope Island*, page 68.
- ²¹ Truman G. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith: The B. H. Roberts Story* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1980), page 402.
- ²² Amelia Ford (Porter) Walton (1883-1973), #KWCL-725, www.familysearch.org; Walton, "Nathan Tanner Porter," undated typescript.
- ²³ Porter, *Autobiography of Nathan Tanner Porter*, <http://www.boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/NTPorter.html>
- ²⁴ Rebecca Margaret (Poole) Porter (1855-1935), #KWCT-DNG, www.familysearch.org
- ²⁵ John Rawlston Poole (1829-1894), #KWNK-31C, www.familysearch.org
- ²⁶ Jane Evington (Bitton) Poole (1836-1921), #KWJZ-4PJ, www.familysearch.org
- ²⁷ Harriett (Bitton) Poole (1846-1929), #K2MQ-VR2, www.familysearch.org
- ²⁸ Jeanette (Bleasdale) Poole (1826-1921), #L412-WYC, www.familysearch.org
- ²⁹ This number reflects the children born to the Poole family by the time Rebecca was old enough to marry and have children of her own. John Poole's offspring eventually totaled twenty-eight.
- ³⁰ Elaine Brinton Poole, *Ancestors of John Rawlston Poole* (self-published, 1989), page 58.
- ³¹ Susana Poole Lawson, "John Rawlston Poole," *An Enduring Legacy*. Vol. I-XII. Daughters of Utah Pioneers, Salt Lake City, UT: Utah Printing Company, 1978. See also: *McKenny's Gazetteer, Utah 1872* (H.M. McKenny Publishing Company, 1872), page 621.

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- ³² Adaline “Ada” Malinda (Poole) Yearsley (1852-1936), #KWZM-CYD, www.familysearch.org
- ³³ Dora G. Jensen, “A History of Jeanette Bleasdale Poole,” June, 1968, typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies. See also: Elaine Brinton Poole, *Ancestors of John Rawlston Poole* (self-published, 1989), page 19.
- ³⁴ Page, “Aaron Benjamin Porter,” undated typescript.
- ³⁵ 281 South Main Street. Page, “Aaron Benjamin Porter,” undated typescript.
- ³⁶ Aaron Benjamin Porter (1875-1964), #KWCX-QGF, www.familysearch.org
- ³⁷ Jeanette “Nettie” Rebecca (Porter) Hales (1877-1951), #KWCX-P7W, www.familysearch.org
- ³⁸ William LeRoy Porter (1879-1947), #KW CJ-84J, www.familysearch.org
- ³⁹ Ethel Sarah (Porter) Johnson (1881-1969), #KWZW-R1M, www.familysearch.org
- ⁴⁰ Susie Adaline (Porter) Clegg (1884-1940), #KWVC-SWL, www.familysearch.org
- ⁴¹ Edna Margaret (Porter) Hegstead (1886-1959), #KWVC-SWJ, www.familysearch.org
- ⁴² Mary Porter (1888-1888), #KWVC-SW5, www.familysearch.org
- ⁴³ Rawlston John “Ross” Porter (1891-1970), #KWVC-SWJ, www.familysearch.org
- ⁴⁴ Milburn “Milt” Wyatt Porter (1891-1970), #KWZV-31Y, www.familysearch.org
- ⁴⁵ Dora (Porter) O’Brien (1893-1975), #KW63-51G, www.familysearch.org
- ⁴⁶ Vera Leona (Porter) Taylor (1895-1978), #KWCR-JPN, www.familysearch.org
- ⁴⁷ Nathan Tanner Porter (1899-1993), #KWCT-DNC, www.familysearch.org
- ⁴⁸ Elaine Brinton Poole, *Ancestors of John Rawlston Poole* (self-published, 1989), page 30.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁵¹ Page, “Aaron Benjamin Porter,” undated typescript.
- ⁵² Poole, *Ancestors of John Rawlston Poole*, page 30.
- ⁵³ Page, “Aaron Benjamin Porter,” undated typescript.
- ⁵⁴ Letter from Nathan Tanner Porter to Cleo H. Page, undated. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ⁵⁵ According to an entry in The Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia, Aaron was among those “who helped locate the settlement of Sunset on the Little Colorado River” in 1876, but this reference may have been taken from a list of names requested by the church, not an actual roster of those who went on the mission. See: Henry Nelson Pugmire, *Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia, Volume 3* (The Deseret News, 1941), page 199.
- ⁵⁶ Letter from Nathan Tanner Porter to Cleo H. Page, undated. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.

Chapter 2

Idaho

Isolated Country



Aaron and Rebecca Porter

Aaron's well-deserved reputation for responsibility and honesty led to his election as both a judge and justice of the peace for Centerville.⁵⁷ He also took the reins as president of the Fissure Vein Mining Company in 1896, a group of hopeful businessmen who put a series of claims on a "main fissure vein" of gold ore in Morgan County's Hardscrabble Canyon. Aaron made several trips to the mines as work progressed, inspecting a new treatment process the company was using, as well as a four hundred foot tunnel being dug into the rock, but after an initial burst of promising production, none of the mines proved to be a commercial success.⁵⁸

Working with the citizens of Centerville in both business, church and local government positions gave Aaron a certain compassion toward his fellowman, especially those who were in financial need. As bishop, he often helped tide over a family who needed a bit of extra cash, sometimes even contributing some of his personal funds. Aaron found himself in an uncertain financial position himself after his investment with the gold mine failed to earn profits, but he cosigned a loan for a struggling neighbor anyway. When the loan came due in August, 1899, the neighbor was unable to pay, leaving Aaron to assume the debt himself.⁵⁹

The timing couldn't have been worse. Rebecca had just given birth to her twelfth child, Nathan. Without any reserve cash in the bank, Aaron was forced to sell his land, his farm and the home he had built with his own hands. The entire family was devastated. Where they would go or how they would be able to support the eight children still at home, no one was sure. Finally, after some consideration, the Porters decided to join Nettie and her husband John Hales,⁶⁰ who by then were successfully farming just outside of Rexburg, Idaho, in the small town of Burton. Rebecca was somewhat comforted by knowing her mother, two stepmothers and their families were not far away in Menan,⁶¹ seventeen miles southwest of Burton, but it was still hard to give up her life and lovely home at the foot of the Wasatch mountains.

A large congregation from the Centerville ward gathered in honor of their beloved bishop "to bid him Godspeed" with "speeches, songs, music and recitations" when the Porters were ready to leave in August, 1899. Family friend B.H. Roberts⁶² presented Aaron with "a handsome watch and chain. Mr. Roberts in making the presentation speech, expressed it as his opinion that Bishop Porter as a bishop, was rather out of his element," reported the local newspaper. "'He,' said the speaker, 'should have been a seventy, a preacher of the gospel; in my opinion no one ever possessed in a higher degree these qualities of mind and action that would make a public speaker.'"⁶³

Many tears were shed later that evening as Aaron and Rebecca began packing up their family and belongings. When they were finally ready to leave, Aaron looked around the empty house, wondering if they had everything, "Everything dear, except the little fingerprints on the wall that we must leave behind," replied Rebecca.⁶⁴ The Porters, accompanied to the Centerville rail depot by family, friends and a band that played "Farewell to Thee," boarded the train to "the wilds of Idaho" on the last day of August.⁶⁵

September was a good time to arrive in Madison County, when the countryside was covered with crops ready to harvest and the sky was bright and blue. The weather would turn cold soon enough, but for now, the Porters could ease into their new life before the first frost left the fields bare, dry and brittle. Ethel recalled the family spending their first winter in a dugout,⁶⁶ but by summer, Aaron was able to buy a farm in Burton with a two-story white frame house. Rebecca went to work planting flowers, climbing vines and shade trees around the yard, trying her best to recapture the charm of the beloved home she left behind.⁶⁷ There wasn't one member of the family who wasn't homesick for Utah, and with every strong wind that gusted across the flat Idaho terrain, Ethel would sigh, "I'll bet there is an East wind blowing this morning in Centerville."⁶⁸



*Above: The Porter home before Rebecca planted her gardens.
Below: Rebecca, her son Nathan (left) and Aaron Osmer Porter.*

Aaron's initial success in farming his new property was so encouraging he decided to file a claim on 160 acres of dry farming land twenty miles to the east of Burton on the Rexburg Bench.⁶⁹ The land itself was rich, but without easy access to irrigation streams, it had been ignored until recently. Aaron was one of the many farmers who now hoped to profit from planting drought-resistant wheat which required little rain. At the same time, Aaron was anxious enough about the supply of irrigation water in the area that he accepted a position on the Consolidated Feeder Canal Company's board of directors during its first year of operation in 1902.⁷⁰

Untimely Death

The loneliness and isolation Rebecca felt overwhelmed her at first, but she slowly adjusted by keeping busy with her housekeeping duties and managing the children.⁷¹ The girls were quickly becoming lovely young women, and it wasn't long until there were two weddings to plan with the engagements of Ethel and Susie in 1903. There was no reason to suspect the coming year would be different than any other; the remaining six children still demanded 'round the clock mothering, and the gardens required constant nurture, so Rebecca carried on with the cooking, cleaning and clothing care as she always did.

By the late fall of 1904, it was Aaron who needed the most attention, as a simple cold he contracted while out in the fields quickly developed into shaking chills, shortness of breath and a heavy cough. With his health damaged eight years before during a severe attack of cholera,⁷² his weakened constitution was no match for another serious illness. He died suddenly from pneumonia on 15 November, 1904, at the age of fifty-two. Rebecca buried her husband of thirty years in the Burton cemetery⁷³ under a pearl gray sky.

The death of her companion was almost more than Rebecca could bear. Her future was as bleak as the brown winter fields without Aaron. With little to look forward to, Rebecca often gazed out of her kitchen window toward the line of poplar trees marking the distant cemetery, tears streaming down her face.⁷⁴ She had no choice but to carry on; after all, the dry farm needed to be claimed by working the land, and there were still young children at home. As soon as the spring thaw allowed, Rebecca drove up to the bench with Rawlston, Milburn and Nathan to clear sagebrush and begin plowing. It was back-breaking work, but Rebecca couldn't afford to lose the land, although she almost did when someone contested her claim, hoping "he would get a good farm for nothing, but Mother had some good neighbors which testified for her in court and she won the case," according to Nathan, who remembered the event well.⁷⁵

Nathan also recalled growing up with a childhood of hard work. “A boy that is raised on a farm learns to work early in life. It seems that I have always known how to milk cows and drive horses,” he said. “I remember the many times Mother and I came down to the irrigated farm to pick raspberries and dig vegetables. One time, we stayed a little late and were caught in a bad storm. It was so dark the only time we could use our horse was when the lightning flashed.”⁷⁶



The children of Aaron and Rebecca Porter (back, left to right): Edna, Will, Ethel, Aaron, Nettie, Rawlston, Susie. Front: Nathan, Milburn, Vera.



Rebecca and eight of her many grandchildren.

Grandmother Poole

Eventually life's storms and darkness passed, and with the exception of Rawlston, the children married, although most of them never moved very far away. Rebecca took pleasure in the resulting addition of grandchildren to the family, even briefly taking in her youngest granddaughters, three-year old Cleo⁷⁷ and year old Loa,⁷⁸ when their mother Nettie was admitted to a Salt Lake City hospital in 1909.⁷⁹

Rebecca was always available to welcome any and all of her grandchildren at the old farmhouse, especially on holidays. "I have a very clear picture of us, Daddy,⁸⁰ Mother, Jack,⁸¹ Barbara⁸² and I, going to Grandmother Porter's house in Burton one Thanksgiving," said Edna's son Mark Hegsted.⁸³ "The road went across the river, not too far from her place, and I remember the horse kicking up snow into our faces, the cold breeze, and all of us singing, 'Over the river, and through the woods, to Grandmother's house we go.'"⁸⁴ Ethel's daughter Opal Wood⁸⁵ also recalled spending many happy hours with Grandmother Porter on the farm, where she found the house "always clean and cool. Her sweet voice and jolly laughter is something I will always remember. She taught and trained all her children so well. She was a gracious and lovely person and devoted mother."⁸⁶

Rebecca never stopped working hard to make the most of her limited circumstances. “Sometimes when we lost a sheep the carcass would lie in the field. When it was sufficiently ‘ripe’ and stinky so the wool could be pulled off, Grandmother would go out and collect the wool,” said Mark. “Then she boiled it, carded it, made yarn on the spinning wheel, dyed it black, and knitted us socks. In winter we wore the long black socks. The socks were better when, rarely, she could get wool from a black sheep. The dyes she used were not permanent. It didn’t take long for us to wear a hole in the heel, so Grandma also darned a lot of socks. Grandma also made soap. I don’t remember that we had any place to keep the waste fat from cooking but, however she accumulated it, the big blocks of brown soap were the usual laundry soap. I can recall her even collecting the ashes from her stove and leaching out the alkali for soap making, which was the original method.”⁸⁷

Great granddaughter Barbara Fickinger⁸⁸ remembered the many quilts pieced by Rebecca, and was fond of the pattern weaving her great grandmother accomplished on a loom. “She said she could weave ten yards a day. Her old shuttle must have flown back and forth, and since she was a ‘pattern weaver’, she must have been super woman.”⁸⁹



Rebecca Porter in the 1920s.

If there was one thing her grandchildren remembered about Rebecca, it was her long red hair. “She had such beautiful red hair,” recalled Opal. “I remember sitting watching her each night as she brushed and brushed it, then would braid it into one large braid.”⁹⁰ Barbara Fickinger had a different encounter with Grandmother Poole over hair. “Grandma Poole was a pretty smart cookie. I found out the hard way,” said Barbara. “I wanted to let my hair grow out and have a perm. She told me that under no circumstances was Mom⁹¹ to let me do this, that I had a perfect hairdo. I thought she was a mean old lady. She was old, so what did she know? Well, I went ahead and let my hair grow and had the perm. I shudder when I look at those pictures now. She was right, boy, was she right!”⁹²

Living so far out in the country finally became too difficult as Rebecca aged. Especially hard were the winters, when heavy snows and extreme temperatures made driving automobiles impossible. A shopping trip into town meant harnessing up the horse and sleigh, just like in the old days.⁹³ Rebecca, now in her late-sixties, was still living in the drafty old farmhouse and cooking on a wood stove. Rebecca finally agreed to sell the farm and move within easy visiting distance of Ethel, Edna and their families in Rexburg. It was there in her apartment on College Street⁹⁴ where she died at the age of eighty, on 11 January, 1935.

Family members streamed into Rexburg for her funeral services two days later, including her sisters Ada, Jeanette, Susie, Christina and brothers Mack and Milburn. All of her children surrounded her casket at the graveside services, where she was buried next to her husband under the shade of the rustling poplar trees.⁹⁵



The graves of Aaron and Rebecca Porter in Burton, Idaho.

ENDNOTES

- ⁵⁷ Janice P. Dawson, "Research Notes on Aaron Benjamin Porter, 1851-1904," undated typescript. Held by Shelley Dawson Davies. .
- ⁵⁸ *The Davis County Clipper*, 28 February, 1896; 22 October, 1897.
- ⁵⁹ Elaine Brinton Poole, *Ancestors of John Rawlston Poole* (self-published, 1989), page 30.
- ⁶⁰ John Knowles Hales (1874-1933), #KWCX-P77, www.familysearch.org
- ⁶¹ John Rawlston Poole had died five years before in 1894.
- ⁶² Brigham Henry Roberts, noted LDS historian, writer and general authority of the church, spent most of his childhood living with the Nathan Porter family, who took him in at the age of nine when he arrived in Utah from England.
- ⁶³ *The Davis County Clipper*, 1 September, 1899.
- ⁶⁴ Elaine Brinton Poole, *Ancestors of John Rawlston Poole* (self-published, 1989), page 30.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁹ Nathan Tanner Porter, "Aaron Benjamin Porter," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ⁷⁰ Verge A. Young, compiler, *Lyman Ward History* (self-published, 1975), page 15.
- ⁷¹ Letter from Barbara (Ashton) Fickinger to Janice P. Dawson, 7 February, 1995. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ⁷² *The Davis County Clipper*, 28 September, 1896.
- ⁷³ Plot BI 1, Lot 20, Grave 4.
- ⁷⁴ The Porter home, located at 3000 West 1000 South, was approximately two miles from the cemetery. Interview with Dorothy (Browning) Hegsted, by Anne (Dawson) Nace and Shelley Dawson Davies, July, 1998. Transcript held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ⁷⁵ Letter from Nathan Tanner Porter to Cleo H. Page, undated. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷⁷ Cleo (Hales) Page (1906-1989), #KWZ8-T4Z, www.familysearch.org
- ⁷⁸ Loa (Hales) Smith (1908-1944), #KWJZ1B4, www.familysearch.org
- ⁷⁹ *The Davis County Clipper*, October, 1909; 19 November, 1909.
- ⁸⁰ John Hegsted (1875-1930), #KWZ1-S1G, www.familysearch.org
- ⁸¹ Jack Porter Hegsted (1910-1972), #KWZW-LKC, www.familysearch.org
- ⁸² Barbara (Hegsted) Rasmussen (1917-2008), #KWC1-BN4, www.familysearch.org
- ⁸³ David Mark Hegsted (1914-2009), #KWZB-6XK, www.familysearch.org
- ⁸⁴ D. Mark Hegsted, "As I Remember," typescript, December, 1996. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ⁸⁵ Opal (Johnson) Wood (1907-2001), #KWZW-RB6, www.familysearch.org
- ⁸⁶ Poole, *Ancestors of John Rawlston Poole*, page 28.
- ⁸⁷ Hegsted, "As I Remember," typescript, December, 1996.
- ⁸⁸ Barbara (Ashton) Fickinger (1925-2000), #LWKM-6YG, www.familysearch.org
- ⁸⁹ Letter from Barbara (Ashton) Fickinger to Janice P. Dawson, January, 1995. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ⁹⁰ Poole, *Ancestors of John Rawlston Poole*, page 28.
- ⁹¹ Leona (Hales) Ashton (1902-1991), #KWCZ-3FJ, www.familysearch.org
- ⁹² Letter from Barbara (Ashton) Fickinger to Janice P. Dawson, 7 February, 1995.
- ⁹³ Interview with Dorothy (Browning) Hegsted, by Anne (Dawson) Nace and Shelley Dawson Davies, July, 1998.

⁹⁴ Rebecca's apartment was at 50 College Street, across from Porter's Book Store. The extensive Porter family in Rexburg is not related. Interview with Dorothy (Browning) Hegstead, by Anne (Dawson) Nace and Shelley Dawson Davies, July, 1998.

⁹⁵ *The Deseret News*, 12 January, 1925. Also see: Cleo H. Page, "Aaron Benjamin Porter," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.

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INDEX

This index lists the names of people related to Aaron Benjamin Porter and Rebecca Margaret (Poole) Porter. Women are listed under both their maiden names (in parentheses) and married names [in brackets].

A

ASHTON

Barbara [Fickinger], 20-21.

Leona (Hales), 19.

B

BITTON

Jane Evington [Poole], 7.

Harriett [Poole], 7.

BLEASDALE

Jeanette [Poole], 7, 21.

C

CHERRY

Aaron Benjamin (1801-1861), 4.

Mary Margaret (Yelton), 4.

Rebecca Ann [Porter], 4-5, 8.

CLEGG

Susie Adaline (Porter), 8-9, 17-18.

F

FICKINGER

Barbara (Ashton), 20-21.

FORD

Eliza [Porter], 5.

H

HALES

Cleo [Page], 19.

Jeanette "Nettie" Rebecca (Porter), 8-9, 15, 18-19.

John Knowles, 15.

Leona [Ashton], 19.

HEGSTED

Barbara [Rasmussen], 19.

David Mark, 19-20.

Edna Margaret (Porter), 8-9, 18-19, 21.

Jack Porter, 19.

John, 19.

J

JOHNSON

Ethel Sarah (Porter), 8-10, 15, 17-18, 21.

Opal [Wood], 19, 21.

O

O'BRIAN

Dora (Porter), 8.

P

PAGE

Cleo (Hales), 19.

POOLE

Adaline “Ada” Malinda [Yearley], 18, 21.

Harriet (Bitton), 7.

Jane Evington (Bitton), 7.

Jeanette (Bleasdale), 7, 21.

John Rawlston, 7.

Rebecca Margaret [Porter], 7-8, 10, 14-21.

PORTER

Aaron Benjamin (1852-1904), 4-8, 10-11, 14-15, 17-18, 21.

Aaron Benjamin (1875-1964), 8-10, 18.

Amelia [Walton], 7.

Dora [O’Brien], 8.

Edna Margaret [Hegstead], 8-9, 18-19, 21.

Eliza (Ford), 5.

Ethel Sarah [Johnson], 8-10, 15, 17-18, 21.

Jeanette “Nettie” Rebecca [Hales], 8-9, 15, 18-19.

John President, 4.

Mary, 8.

Milburn “Milt” Wyatt, 8, 17-18.

Nathan Tanner (1820-1897), 4-5.

Nathan Tanner (1899-1993), 8, 10-11, 15-18.

Rawlston John “Ross,” 9, 17.

Rebecca Ann (Cherry), 4-5, 8.

Rebecca Margaret (Poole), 7-8, 10, 14-21.

Sanford, 4-5.

Sarah Jane, 5.

Susie Adaline [Clegg], 8-9, 17-18.

Vera Leona [Taylor], 8, 18.

William, 8-9, 18.

R

RASMUSSEN

Barbara (Hegsted), 19.

T

TAYLOR

Vera Leona (Porter), 8, 18.

W

WALTON

Amelia (Porter), 7.

WOOD

Opal (Johnson), 19-20.

Y

YEARSLEY

Adaline “Ada” Malinda (Poole), 18, 21.

YELTON

Mary Margaret [Cherry], 4.