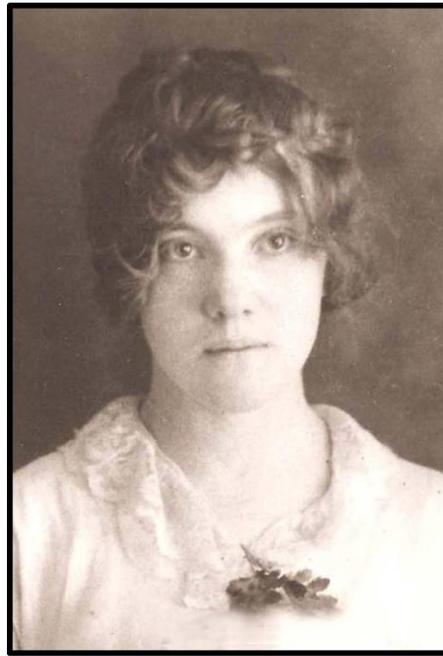


Ammon Davis and RDeen (Reynolds) Davis



A Family History

by Shelley Dawson Davies

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Chapter 1

Ammon

Growing Up in Garfield County



Ammon was dressed according the fashion of the day in a ruffled shirt, quilted skirt and patent leather shoes.

Seventeen miles south of spectacular Bryce Canyon on the remote Colorado Plateau of southern Utah lies the town Cannonville, a settlement so small it has been humorously called “Shotgun” by local wags, since it was “too small for a cannon.”¹ Located “between two strings of white hills to the east and west,”² on the edge of red rock country’s Kodachrome basin, Cannonville was isolated from its very beginnings when a handful of pioneers were sent from Salt Lake City to settle the area in 1874. Even today the town remains relatively remote and the population hovers around a scant one hundred and fifty people.³

Although “Cannonville was one of the sorriest places where a young man might have set up a business for himself,”⁴ by 1895 there was a general store to provide townsfolk with basic supplies, an LDS church and a dance hall for Friday night get-togethers. At the end of the dusty, poplar-lined street stood two identical homes built on a barren lot for his plural wives by John Henry Davis.⁵ “Needless to say, all is not a bed of roses in rearing a family, especially a polygamous family,” wrote John, and when he ruffled the feathers of one or both of his wives, he found himself sleeping alone in the root cellar dug in between the frame houses.⁶

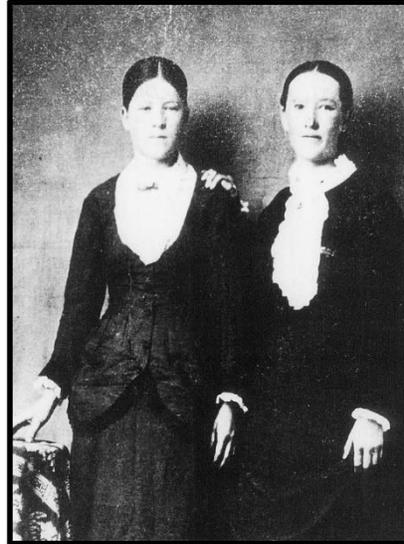
John, who was “a cowboy, farmer and stockman,”⁷ did his best to provide equally for his two families, making sure the two-story residences were mirror images of each other, right down to the carved railings on each front porch.⁸ Inside the homes a parlor opened up to the left of the entry, warmed by sunlight streaming through a large bay window framed with airy lace curtains. The furnishings included a set of horsehair stuffed chairs and a sofa, with an ornate foot-pumped organ against the papered wall. A forest green window shade could be drawn to protect the patterned rug from fading. It was in one of these twin houses where Ammon⁹ was born to John’s second wife, Laura Jane,¹⁰ on 5 October, 1895.¹¹

Ammon’s father, married to sisters Mary Annie¹² and Laura Jane Henderson, had spent six years in hiding during the late 1880s to escape the federal marshals patrolling the southern Utah badlands for polygamists. Once amnesty was granted by the government in 1893, John turned himself in to stand trial, but the charges were dismissed due to lack of evidence, and John returned to Cannonville, where he continued to live in peace with both of his wives.

The Davis households were decidedly feminine by the time Ammon was born. Although both Annie and Laura Jane had given birth to sons, little John¹³ died as an infant and Jeff was killed in an accident at the age of two. Ammon’s birth was not only greeted by two mothers, but also by half-sisters Laura,¹⁴ eight, Emily,¹⁵ six, Dicy,¹⁶ four, Lois,¹⁷ one year old, and his full sister Allie,¹⁸ who was seven years old. Three more daughters and three sons were born into the plural household over the next sixteen years.¹⁹

Davis or Davies?

*Ammon's grandfather, John Johnson Davies (1831-1906), had immigrated to Utah from Wales where the Davies name was pronounced as "Davis," but in Utah many people pronounced the name as "Davies." This misunderstanding apparently didn't bother John J. very much, but his son John Henry finally tired of the confusion and dropped the "e" from his name. Ammon kept the "Davis" moniker, while others in the family adopted "Davies." John H. is buried under the name of Davis, between his two wives. Mary Anne's stone reads Davies, while Laura Jane's stone reads Davis. The controversy continues among John's decedents. Of Mary Anne's seven surviving children, only Vernon later reverted to the Davies name, while three of Laura Jane's six children changed their name to Davies later in life: Mary Alvira, Ethel and Byron. Reta Davis Baldwin and Laura Jane Davis Auble, compilers, *Davis Family History 1831-1947* (self-published, Ogden, Utah, 1982), page 340-341.*



John Henry Davis and his two wives, sisters Laura Jane and Mary Annie (Henderson) Davis.

A Full-Sized Family

A family of thirteen children was not a remarkably large one at the time, nor was it unusual to have extended family members living in a home. Added to the double Davis household were Ammon's grandfather, John J. Davies,²⁰ and his father's mentally disabled brother, Phillip,²¹ "who lived in the granary."²² John found it "a great responsibility to provide for two large families. This undertaking has occupied almost my whole time and attention ever since," he wrote. He was constantly working with his sheep, a "small herd of cattle, some horses and a little land," on which he farmed and grew orchards to provide for the family.²³

If John found it sometimes difficult to manage his large brood, the children themselves seem to have enjoyed growing up in one big, happy family. "Many failed to live polygamy properly, but I am happy to say that our two families lived as I felt it was intended to be lived," said Laura's daughter Mary Alvira, who was known as Allie. "Our two families lived side by side and Father showed no partiality. Both of our families shared alike, each woman working for the interest of the family as a whole."²⁴

The children also contributed toward the family's support with chores assigned by age and capability. Little Ammon ran errands for his mother and "Aunt Annie" between the two homes and was occasionally sent to the small store on Main Street where Grandfather Henderson²⁵ stocked spices, sugar, raisins, nails, wire, pans and knives, cloth and sewing notions, pencils, slates and even candy and gum.²⁶

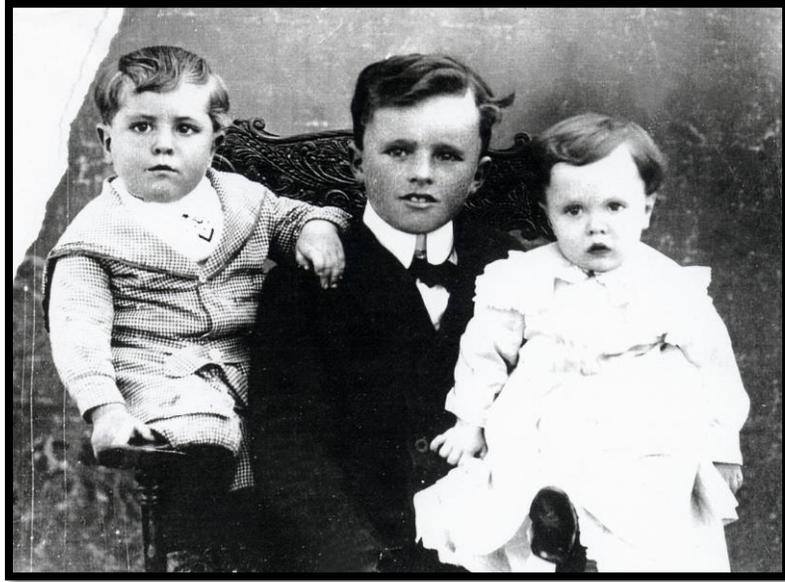
Until Ammon was mature enough to handle heavy jobs, the older girls were charged with hauling water to the house from the nearby creek. During the winter months, Ammon scooped up buckets of snow to melt for culinary water and the girls "would hitch old Queen or Kate to the sleigh and off we would go, often joined by others going to the creek for water," said Allie. "To keep the water from spilling over we had to stretch a canvas cloth over the top of the barrel and hold it on with a steel hoop. Many a cold night the water in the barrel would freeze nearly solid. It would have to be cut out with an axe or hatchet and then melted on the stove."²⁷ Ammon later helped irrigate the fields and chop wood, which he and his father hauled in by wagon from the nearby hills. "Some of it would be pitch pine and what a lovely blaze it would make in our fireplaces," Allie recalled.²⁸

The entire family tended a kitchen garden with “the sweetest melons, the biggest winter squash and more carrots than could possibly be used. Aunt Annie and her family took care of the fruit from the orchard in town and the garden stuff while Mother looked after the butter and cheese for the winter,” said Allie. “Our family cellar was just half way between the two homes. It was always well stocked for the winter due to the combined efforts of both families”²⁹

There were always cows to be milked, hay to stack and rows of corn to hoe, but the results of the family’s work were worth the effort. Fresh vegetables from the garden were always a treat. “The long green ears of corn always looked good to us. Spread with ranch butter, it was a real treat,” according to Allie. “Mother would make buttermilk biscuits that would melt in your mouth.”³⁰

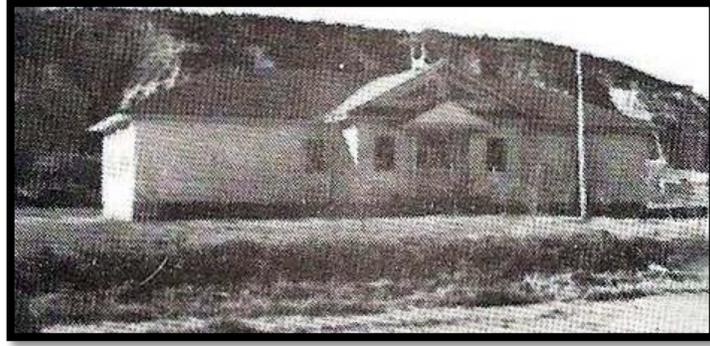


The John Henry Davis home in Cannonville, Utah.



*The Davis Boys: Douglas, Ammon and Vernon pose for a formal portrait around 1907. Below:
Laura with Douglas and Ethyl.*





Cannonville's new school house in the early twentieth century.

School Days

All the children looked forward to the few hours of fun that came in the summer when the chores were done. Ammon accompanied his older sisters on fishing excursions to “the clear stream of mountain water that flowed down through the beautiful green valley,” remembered Allie. “We roamed over the nearby hills and mountains, picked gum from the pine trees, rode horseback for the cows in the early evenings. We enjoyed our lives, free from cares and worries.”³¹ When Ammon wasn't joining the other boys his age in “climbing boulder-stewn hills, searching for arrowheads and hunting small animals with a ‘flipper,’ or slingshot,”³² he could be found attending class at the small frame school house in town.

Cannonville's school was held for one term a year with an uneven attendance, thanks to the scattered population and the demands of family ranches. Under-qualified teachers were not afraid of using harsh discipline to control the group of students, some who were almost as large as the teachers themselves. Ammon was apparently fortunate enough to enter school just after Cannonville's oldest teacher had retired, hanging up his “twelve-tail switch in the corner of the room which aided materially in his discipline.”³³

By the time Ammon reached school age in 1901, attendance was compulsory for children from six through fourteen years for “at least twenty weeks out of each school year,”³⁴ but Ammon enjoyed classes so much he didn't have to be forced to attend. In a letter to his sister, twelve-year old Ammon wrote, “I wish school could keep up all summer and wouldn't quit until next summer.” Ammon grew up as “an avid reader of good books, enjoying especially exploration, true adventure and biographies,” according to his daughter Reta Baldwin.³⁵

Ammon graduated from school in June, 1911, at the age of sixteen. Even though Ammon “had a brilliant mind that eagerly grasped at facts and concepts,”³⁶ furthering his education was not an option. Not only was there no high school in Cannonville at the time, but “the prevailing view was that any young man, regardless of his training, could get married, become the father of children and get jobs here and there and make enough money to support his family,” said his half-brother Vernon, who later earned a doctorate of philosophy from the University of Utah. “It is my considered view that Ammon’s mind was superior to mine. I played checker games with him, requiring most of all mental skill, countless times and he managed to beat me two games out of three. I also had many conversations with him and I am firmly convinced that, given the proper chance, he could have become an excellent doctor, lawyer or other professional person, but it did not happen.”³⁷

It was the death of Ammon’s mother a month after his graduation that ended any hope he may have had to pursue advanced learning. When Laura Jane died 18 July, 1911,³⁸ she left behind one month-old Elda Maude, two-year old Byron, and eight-year old Douglas³⁹ in addition to her older children. Mary Annie stepped in to raise the two youngest children, while Ammon was expected take over the sheep herd. “Father was responsible for meeting the material needs of two large families involving thirteen children, a wife and a disabled brother. During the time Ammon should have been going to high school he was given the task by Dad of going out on the range and herding sheep, so the gifted talents with which the boy and young man was endowed largely went to waste,” Vernon explained.⁴⁰

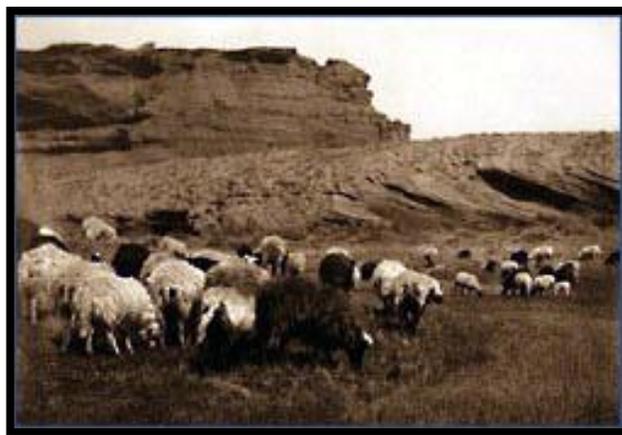
Red Rock Shepherd

Ammon soon became familiar with the seasonal rhythm of running the herd, beginning with outfitting the sheep wagon. The wagon itself was eleven feet long by seven feet wide, topped with triple-layered canvas stretched over hickory bows. Winter insulation was provided by adding woolen blankets to the canvas sheets. Opening the small window over the bunk bed and the Dutch door at the tongue created cross ventilation during the warmer months. Boxes attached to the sides held bags of beans, flour and coffee; a few cans of corn, tomatoes, and a slab of salt pork rounded out the provisions. The inside was outfitted with a cook stove, wash basin, bunk bed and a variety of drawers for clothing and equipment. Built-in benches along the side and a fold-out table completed the furnishings.⁴¹

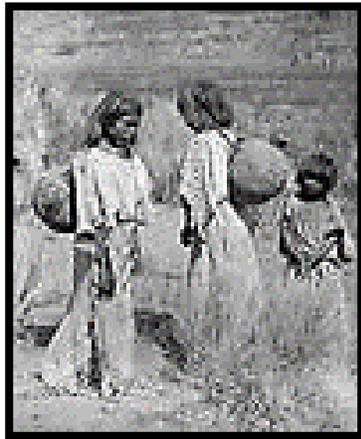
How many sheep made up the Davis herd is not known, but a good sized ranch of the time might run between from twenty-five thousand to forty thousand head on the range; one man with a dog was capable of herding twenty-five hundred, and with a horse he could care for five thousand sheep.⁴² Ammon took advantage of grazing rights in the Bryce Canyon area and camped with the sheep for several months on open pasturage owned by the family. Selecting a spot near water for a camp, Ammon drove his sheep out several miles from camp each morning to graze, then led them back at night. Once the sheep had exhausted the grass in one pasture, the flock and camp would be moved to another area until the season was over.

The life of a herder was extremely lonely, with only a dog and horse for companionship. Months might go by without Ammon seeing another human being. He filled the long hours with reading and target shooting, honing his skills to become an excellent marksman while defending the sheep herd. “No deer was safe in his vicinity,” Vernon declared.⁴³

He also spent many hours reading *The Book of Mormon*. Ammon may have been denied advanced schooling, but his informal, self-taught education continued throughout his life. He made use of the vast amount of solitude and time the sheep herd provided with “a serious study of the *Book of Mormon* and became quite a scholar,” according to Reta. “He could quote most any passage and give its source. More important, he gained a testimony of the truthfulness of this great book.”⁴⁴



One of the many shepherds grazing the red rock country of southern Utah in the early 1900s.



Native Neighbors

The Davis family became accustomed to sharing their delicious bounty with local Native Americans. "There was a tribe of about two hundred and fifty [Paiutes] living in the section south and east of Bryce Canyon. I came to be well acquainted with their culture," said John, who often brought a native friend home for dinner with the family. "Father was real fond of one old Indian we called Jim," according to Laura. "Often on his trips to and from the ranch he would bring Jim along. He would say to Mother, 'Now Laura, I'll have Jim wash good with warm water and soap and I want him to sit with us at the table,' and he always did," said Allie.

*John's good rapport with the Native Americans was well known among the tribes who followed the well-worn trail between Utah and Arizona. Many Paiutes and Navajos camped on the Davis ranch on their journey to Lee's Ferry, Arizona, one hundred seventy miles from Cannonville and the only crossing of the Colorado for miles, giving Ammon a chance to grow up having a close relationship with them. The family occasionally acquired trade items such as mats, rugs, blankets and even mustang ponies they caught from wild herds. "One of the great joys of my childhood was when the Indians would come to Gramp's," said one of the grandchildren. "If two people get into heaven for befriending the Indians it will be my grandparents. The Indians loved and trusted them." Reta Davis Baldwin and Laura Jane Davis Auble, compilers, *Davis Family History 1831-1947* (self-published, Ogden, Utah, 1982), page 321.*

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- ⁶ John H. Davis, *Among My Memories*, (self-published, undated), page 49, 55.
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- ¹⁸ Mary Alvira "Allie" (Davis) Caffall (1888-1980), #KWZY-B4B, www.familysearch.org
- ¹⁹ Children born to Mary Anne: John Henderson Davis (1885-1885), Laura Maria (Davis) Mangum (1887-1971), Emily Arilla (Davis) Pollock (1889-1974), Dicy (Davis) Hickman (1891-1927), Lois (Davis) Johnson (1894-1966), Maggie (Davis) Baldwin (1897-1986), Vernon Davies (1906-1981), Sherman Davis (1908-1976). Children born to Laura Jane: Mary Alvira "Allie" (Davies) Caffall (1888-1980), Hyrum Jefferson Davies (1891-1892), Ammon Davis (1895-1960), Ethel (Davies) Johnson (1899-1981), Wales Douglas Davis (1903-1932), Byron Davies (1909-1981), Elda Maude (Davis) Wheatly (1911-2003). Baldwin and Auble, compilers, *Davis Family History 1831-1947*, page 340-341.
- ²⁰ John Johnson Davies (1831-1906), #KWJD-869, www.familysearch.org John J., 68, widowed, father-in-law, gardener. Laura Davis household, 1900 U.S. census, Garfield county, Utah, Cannonville precinct, enumeration district 95, supervisors district 273, page 24 B. Roll T623-1683.
- ²¹ Phillip David Davies (1864-1935), #KWVP-W31, www.familysearch.org
- ²² Interview with Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ²³ Davis, *Among My Memories*, page 51.
- ²⁴ Baldwin and Auble, compilers, *Davis Family History 1831-1947*, page 320.
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- ³⁰ *Ibid*.

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- ³¹ *Ibid*, page 320.
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- ³³ *Ibid*, page 177.
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- ³⁵ Reta (Davis) Baldwin (1921-2005). Interview with Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ³⁶ Davis, "A Tribute to Ammon by His Brother Vernon," undated typescript.
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Chapter 2

RDeen

Desert Flower



Travelers in the late 1800s found it difficult to navigate the rough terrain in Garfield County's canyons, as seen here on the Escalante Road.

“**W**hat kind of God forsaken country are you taking us to?” cried fourteen-year old Ethel⁴⁵ as the Reynolds family wagon rolled out of the barren white cliffs a few miles north of what is now Cannonville, Utah.⁴⁶ Desert and rock stretched across the valley to a blue strip of mountains on the far horizon, with only a handful of scattered scrub and knee-high sage brush dotting the landscape. There wasn't a patch of green along the dusty, rutted trail and the wind was so dry it parched a slice of wheat bread before half of it could be eaten.

The Reynolds family had enjoyed a comfortable lifestyle in the Garfield County seat of Panguitch for twenty years by the time Enoch⁴⁷ decided to try his luck in the newly formed settlement of Clifton, named for the rough pink cliffs surrounding the rag-tag collection of log cabins in the valley.⁴⁸ Not only had the family left

behind a lovely brick home in the center of town for this new venture, but also a rambling ranch on the shores of Panguitch Lake, where Mary Elizabeth⁴⁹ and the children spent summers fishing and making butter to sell in other towns, some as far away as St. George, Utah, and Pioche, Nevada.⁵⁰ Now the Reynolds were starting over in one of the most inhospitable areas of the west, with eight children⁵¹ ranging in age from nineteen year old James to one year old RDeen,⁵² who had been born in Panguitch the previous April.⁵³

The Reynolds wasted no time in making a home in the valley as Mary Elizabeth was expecting the birth of her eleventh child at the end of the summer. Enoch and the older boys quickly built a log cabin where little Fern was born on 27 August, 1899,⁵⁴ with Ethel acting as midwife. “It was Sunday morning and we were almost all ready to leave for Sunday school [ten miles away] in Tropic,” recalled Ethel, who was also in charge of toddlers Cliff and RDeen. “Mother told me I had better stay home because Dad was down to the Copper Mountain hauling ore and she didn’t want to be left alone. The kids had only been gone a short time when Mother started into labor. With what help I could give her, she labored about two hours until the baby was born.”⁵⁵

RDeen and Fern, only two years apart in age, were always together, an adorable pair of tow-headed toddlers who were doted on their older sisters. The little girls tagged behind the older members of the family as they planted, hoed and cultivated rows of “lovely melons, peanuts, grapes, and all kinds of vegetables and fruits”⁵⁶ in the large kitchen garden Mary Elizabeth established next to the cabin. “The alfalfa was also beautiful,” said Ethel of her father’s fields, meant to support both the family and their stock.⁵⁷

The settlement’s success was short lived, however. A few years after the Reynolds’ arrival in Clifton, the town was drained of its residents when ongoing water shortages forced the settlers to seek greener pastures in nearby settlements such as Tropic, where a canal had been built to channel water from the Sevier River.⁵⁸ Among those relocating to Tropic were the Reynolds, who were attracted by the town’s inexpensive lots⁵⁹ and its central location between summer and winter grazing ranges. “We all felt terrible about moving out of the valley because of the drought,” said Ethel, who recalled the hardships of starting over yet again.⁶⁰



Members of the Tropic LDS Ward gather outside their newly constructed chapel in 1896.

Tropic

Tropic was named in 1891 for its slightly milder climate than nearby Panguitch, which was said to have “two seasons: the Fourth of July and winter.” Despite its name, Tropic received the brunt of harsh winter conditions, including the surprising out-of-season storm which dumped three feet of snow across the valley in May of 1900.

The landscape surrounding Tropic was as rugged and remote as the Clifton countryside had been. Just over the ridge were the spectacular hoodoos and goblins of Bryce Canyon, and it was not uncommon to see mountain lions and other wild animals near the small town. Fern later recalled how “terrifying” the landscape was at night, with its isolation and “eerie sounds. One summer I was herding cows up East Canyon on my horse with our faithful dog when a big mountain lion spooked the horse and it ran all the way home. A week later my brother killed the animal in a trap,” she said.⁶¹

Tropic was an isolated, close-knit community, the very definition of small town America,⁶² with one general merchandise store, a meeting house and a stream-run saw mill along its unpaved main street.⁶³ Despite its out-of-the-way location, Tropic also boasted a brick library financed in the 1890s by philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, where RDeen may have been among the children who not only checked out books, but sought the librarian to “charm their warts off.”⁶⁴ The nearest telephone was installed twenty-eight miles away in

Panguitch in 1906, giving the county its first modern communication with the outside world. ⁶⁵ Even though Tropic remained a remote community, residents wanted to make certain their children stayed out of trouble, supporting a curfew requiring unaccompanied children under the age of sixteen to be off the streets by 8:00 p.m. ⁶⁶

Enoch had looked forward to the move to Tropic as a chance to retire from some of the more demanding duties of ranching. “Father was persuaded by some of his would-be friends to let them take the cattle down the Colorado River, stating that he wouldn’t have to feed them in the winter,” according to one of the Reynolds children. “Mother was opposed to it, but Father insisted that he move us to Tropic and let the cattlemen run the cattle. Father let them take the cattle and, to their sorrow, Father and Mother lost every head of cattle they owned. To top this off, not long after they moved to Tropic, their home caught fire and burned to the ground.” ⁶⁷

The Reynolds family was forced to rebuild their lives almost from scratch after these stunning losses. Enoch constructed another log cabin on their town lot and took advantage of Tropic’s slightly milder climate to plant a large fruit orchard of apple and cherry trees, many of which had been brought into town by “the Jolley brothers from Long Valley to trade for horses.” ⁶⁸ By necessity, RDeen grew up with a strict work ethic, learning to “waste not” and “make do” with very little. There were many lean years and for a while the family “was very poor. Some days all they had to eat was a slice of bread and butter with a big cucumber,” according to Ard’s wife Jennie (Cope) Reynolds. ⁶⁹

High Jinks

Being the second to the youngest in a family of so many children, RDeen was often the target of her older brother’s pranks. Cliff was especially “full of vinegar” and loved to “aggravate the girls in the community by throwing rocks at the outside toilets occupied by girls and teachers, and even tipping them over while occupied. Winter snow brought constant bombardment of snowballs upon any girl who came within distance.”

Enoch scraped together his resources and continued to run sheep in the area. “Mother and my older sisters took care of the ranch and Tropic home while Dad was away,” Jero remembered.⁷⁰ “We had a large family and there were always chores to do,” said Ethel.⁷¹ The older children rose by 4 a.m. to begin the milking, followed by feeding the pigs and chickens. Often there would be work in the garden until breakfast was served, before the sun became too hot. The Reynolds family became as self-sufficient as possible. Manufactured goods and services were difficult to find in badlands of southern Utah, and when available were more expensive due to the high cost of shipping. Almost everything the family used was either grown or made by hand, including soap, furniture and medicines.⁷²

Medical Care

There were no hospitals in Garfield County, but residents did have access to monthly clinics set up by visiting doctors, usually held at the church. In between clinics, Tropic residents depended on several local residents who did not have formal medical training, but were experienced enough to set a broken bone or pull a bad tooth with a set of forceps.

Isolation and limited access to medical services meant Tropic residents were particularly vulnerable to disease. The town experienced a devastating diphtheria epidemic during the winter of 1902-03, in which fourteen children died, followed by a scarlet fever epidemic in the winter of 1905, claiming an unknown number of children.

The unbroken hard work paid off and eventually the Reynolds had one of finest orchards under “the dump,” complete with “fifteen stands [hives] of bees throughout the trees” to assist in pollination.⁷³ “Each summer we would have a huge garden and orchard of the best fruits,” said Fern.⁷⁴ RDeen worked alongside her mother and sisters to harvest and dry the fruit to sell locally and in Salt Lake City. The women also processed their own honey for home use and for sale.⁷⁵

The family cow furnished milk for the table and enough extra for the girls to make cheese and butter, which was churned from the cream. Without refrigeration, any leftover milk was preserved by placing it in a pan on the back of the wood burning cook stove to clabber and separate the solids from the whey, making a delicious cottage cheese. RDeen also became skilled at canning and cooking the foods produced from the fields and orchards. “We would store as much as possible for winter by drying and canning it in bottles. In the garden Dad grew many varieties of corn and in the fall, after harvest, he would store them for the Indians who came into town in the winter,” Fern said.⁷⁶ Mary Elizabeth, who “was a marvelous cook, and always had something in the oven,” taught her daughters to prepare large meals on the wood burning stove that included “fresh, hot biscuits made each morning for breakfast,” and delicious cakes and pies for daily deserts.⁷⁷

“Though things were tight in those days and we didn’t have the many things and comforts of today, we always felt good about coming home and were always welcomed,” recalled Scott. “Dad and Mother were always with their family. Their whole life was centered around them and they were always good providers.”⁷⁸ We were always taught to have family prayers and to thank the Lord for the blessings that we always had.”⁷⁹

“The Dump”

Local residents referred to Tropic as being located “under the dump,” due, some say, to the “dumping” of the East Fork of the Sevier River into the channel of Water Canyon, which falls 1,000 feet in less than two miles. Others maintain that it was stockmen who coined the term as they drove their animals over the rim of the plateau to the winter ranges.

From RDeen's Album

*Panguitch July 15/18?, 1917
Miss RDeen, dear sister,
When rocks and hills divide us,
And you no more I see,
Just take your pen and paper,
And write a letter to me.*

Your loving sister, Minerva Worthen

.....

*Feb 14, 1917
Dear Daughter,
A life on earth is now before you.
May you ever use it well,
and at its close the Lord restore you,
that your heart with joy may swell.*

Your loving father age 70.

.....

*Tropic Jan 30, 1917
Miss RDeen
Dear Daughter,
Oh some times in thy hour of ease,
When pleasures are forgot,
Just give one hasty glance at this,
And read forget me not.
Your loving mother,*

Mary E. Reynolds

.....

*Tropic, Utah Mar. 12, 1910
Miss RDeen Reynolds
Dear Sister,
Remember me miss RDeen when on these lines you look,
Remember that it was Jero who scribbled on your book.
Your brother, Jero Reynolds*

Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History* (1979), page 99-100.



Jan. 10. 1910 Tropic Utah
 Miss. RDeen Reynolds
 When the golden sun is setting.
 And from care, your mind is free
 And your thinking of your true friends,
 wont you sometimes think of me.
 From your brother
 Scott Reynolds

Jan 10 1910 Tropic Utah
 Miss RDeen Reynolds
 Always be happy never be sad
 If you come get married stay with
 your dad.
 L. J. Reynolds

Tropic Jan 11 1910
 Miss RDeen Reynolds
 Dear Sister
 Summer may change for winter
 Colors may fade and die
 But I shall always love thee.
 While I can breathe a sigh.
 From your sis. Matilda.

Jan 11 1910
 Dear Miss Reynolds
 "Season may winter, colors
 may die, friends may go" -
 But never shall I
 from your sister
 L. J. Reynolds
 age 17

A selection of pages from RDeen's autograph album.

Scott and Teddy Tour Bryce Canyon

RDeen was with the family to hear about her brother Scott's encounter with some special visitors to the Tropic area around 1918, when the spectacular natural feature was beginning to attract national attention. Scott was herding sheep near Bryce Canyon as usual, not suspecting the remarkable event that was about to take place.

"The sheep were bedded down nearby and I was sitting under a tree reading a dime novel when I thought I heard something in the distance. I looked up and could see something that looked like a whirlwind, but it was following the buggy trail. As it got closer, I could see it was what had been described to me as an 'automobile.' It was a big Stanley Steamer car, the first car that I ever saw in my life. They spotted me sitting under the tree and stopped. The driver got out and came over to me and said that he wanted to introduce me to the other passengers. Out stepped a short, stocky gentleman, whom I at once recognized from pictures I have previously seen of him. He was introduced to me as Teddy Roosevelt, President of the United States. Other passengers were introduced to me as the governor of Utah and a senator from Utah. They asked me if I knew where Bryce Canyon was and I said that I did. Since the sheep were bedded down, they asked if I would go with them and show them where it was. I went with them by standing on the running board with one gentleman reaching his arm out the window and holding on to me. So I got to ride in (or on) the first car I had ever seen.

"They shared with me a boxed lunch they had with them, and I showed them the canyon from the trail that goes along the rim. President Roosevelt said that he had travelled the world over and had seen many scenic wonders, but that his canyon surpassed them all. He said that when he got back to Washington he was going to use his influence and connection with the Union Pacific Railroad to make Bryce Canyon a national park, which he did, the first park that Utah ever had.

"I was returned to my sheep herd some two or three hours later and was thanked for going with them. As I watched them drive off, I thought to myself how a young, insignificant boy of sixteen in a remote southern Utah area, could have had such an experience as I had enjoyed. When my brother came to relieve me the next day, I told him of the experience and he said that I had been up there too long and was having 'pipe dreams.' When I got home to Tropic, my parents and the rest of the family hardly believed me either, but when the weekly newspaper came out from Panguitch and included an article about the visit, then I had fun proving it had actually happened."

Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History (1979), page 75-76.

ENDNOTES

- ⁴⁵ Ethel (Reynolds) Hatch (1884-1976), #KWZY-8YF, www.familysearch.org
- ⁴⁶ Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History* (1979), page 42.
- ⁴⁷ Enoch Reynolds (1847-1927), #KWZX-F1B, www.familysearch.org
- ⁴⁸ The Reynolds moved to Loseeville in 1898. Originally named Clifton, the name was changed to Loseeville to avoid confusion with another town by the same name. Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History*, page 62.
- ⁴⁹ Mary Elizabeth (Shakespear) Reynolds (1856-1943), #KWZX-NMM, www.familysearch.org
- ⁵⁰ Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History*, page 15-16, 26.
- ⁵¹ By the time the family moved to Clifton in 1898, the oldest child Hannah Minerva "Nerve" had married. James was the oldest remaining child (19), followed by Ethel (14), Jero (12), Leonard "Ard" (10), Mahala "Mae" (8), Scott (6), and Cliff (3). Little Rhoda Dee had died at the age of six in 1888. Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History*, page 25: Hannah Minerva "Nerve" (Reynolds) Worden (1877-1967), James Franklin Reynolds (1879-1938), Rhoda Dee Reynolds (1881-1888), Ethel (Reynolds) Hatch (1884-1976), Enoch Jero Reynolds (1886-1970), Leonard "Ard" Reynolds (1888-1968), Mahala "Mae" (Reynolds) Johnson (1890-1987), Scott Reynolds (1892-1982), Cliff Reynolds (1895-1963), RDeen (Reynolds) Davis (1897-1927), Fern (Reynolds) Harris (1899-1993).
- ⁵² RDeen (Reynolds) Davis, #KWCT-ZPZ, www.familysearch.org The correct spelling of RDeen's name is one word with no period according to her daughter Reta (Davis) Baldwin. Interview with Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ⁵³ RDeen was born 24 April, 1897. "Enoch Reynolds- Mary Elizabeth Shakespear family group sheet," supplied 1997 by Monte "J" Davies. This sheet offers only a generic list of materials consulted.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁵ Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History*, page 42.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁸ Linda King Newell and Vivian Linford Talbot, *A History of Garfield County* (Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, 1998), page 143-146.
- ⁵⁹ Lots in Tropic measured one and one quarter acres and sold for \$7.50, a low price meant to attract settlers. Newell and Talbot, *A History of Garfield County*, page 143-146.
- ⁶⁰ Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History*, page 42.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, page 102.
- ⁶² By 1900, Tropic's had grown to 370 people. Newell and Talbot, *A History of Garfield County*, page 385.
- ⁶³ Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History*, page 116.
- ⁶⁴ Newell and Talbot, *A History of Garfield County*, page 209.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, page 220.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, page 206.

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- ⁶⁷ Reta Baldwin compiled information on Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear from their children Maye, Scott and Fern: “Without trying to identify as to who said what, I’ll just try to list it just as they gave it to me.” Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History*, page 15.
- ⁶⁸ June Shakespear, “Tropic: The Town that Changed a River,” undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ⁶⁹ Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History*, page 62.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid*, page 53.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid*, page 42.
- ⁷² Reta Davis Baldwin, “RDeen Reynolds: Child, Wife, Mother,” 1979, typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ⁷³ Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History*, page 16.
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid*, page 102.
- ⁷⁵ Especially popular fruits grown in the area were apples and plums. Newell and Talbot, *A History of Garfield County*, page 201-202.
- ⁷⁶ Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History*, page 102.
- ⁷⁷ Reta Davis Baldwin and Laura Jane Davis Auble, compilers, *Davis Family History 1831-1947* (self-published, Ogden, Utah, 1982), page 18.
- ⁷⁸ Reta Baldwin compiled information on Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear from their children Mae, Scott and Fern: “Without trying to identify as to who said what, I’ll just try to list it just as they gave it to me.” Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History*, page 15.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibid*, page 78.

Chapter 3

Red Rock Romance

Ammon and RDeen



Ammon had dark hair, blue eyes and was the tallest of his brothers. RDeen was mild-mannered, but had a steely will.

Survival in the rough red rock country meant there was always work to be done, but taking a break from everyday toils for a little fun in was important, too. Residents of Garfield County's small towns created their own entertainment with organized baseball and basketball teams, picnics at local beauty spots, concerts and school recitations. Cannonville sponsored its own dramatic club, which "put on some good plays in the town hall and displayed the resident's talents."⁸⁰ In the winter, rabbit drives and sleigh rides in the deep snow were popular. Oddities were also entertaining. Ethel remembered travelling "in a big white-topped buggy to see a monkey that a lady had brought from up north."⁸¹

A young man like Ammon was hungry for human contact after spending months alone with the sheep herd, and was happy to attend the outings to nearby Panguitch Lake that were part of every summer season. He enjoyed competing in the foot races, prize fighting and wrestling matches held on the Fourth of July and Pioneer Day on the 24th of July.⁸² Among the most anticipated activities were the dances held on a floating pavilion which had been constructed on the lake's south shore. Local musicians played during afternoon dances for the youth. Evening dances for the adults featured an "orchestra" of a violin and an accordion.⁸³

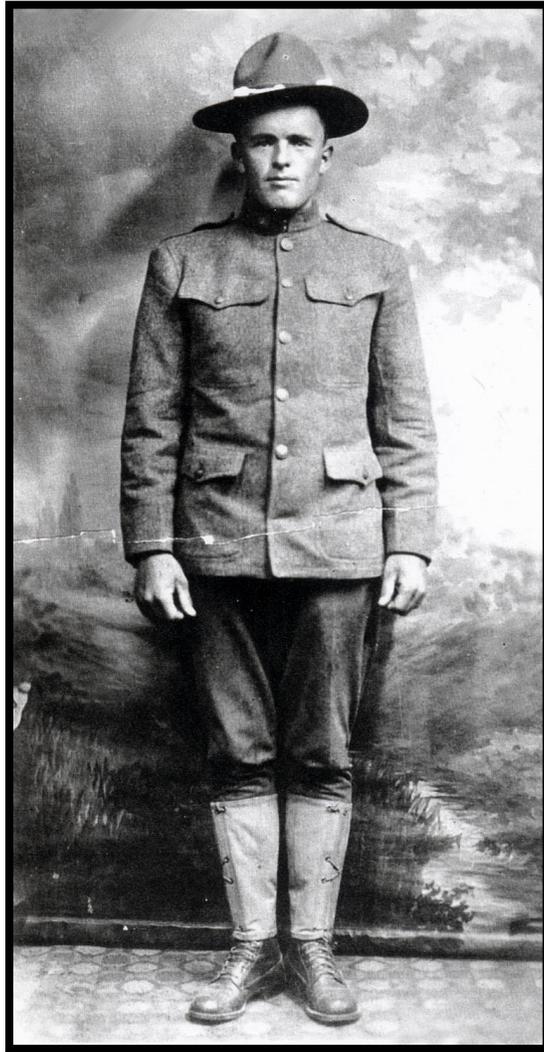
Box-lunch auctions were held before many of the dances, during which meals prepared by the girls were bid on by the boys. "Who bought which box was supposed to be a secret, but somehow there seemed to be a means of understanding among the young folks so the right couples got paired together," according to one local resident.⁸⁴ It was probably at one of these popular events where Ammon first met RDeen, a petite young lady with fair complexion, blue eyes and curly auburn hair.⁸⁵

Dough Boy

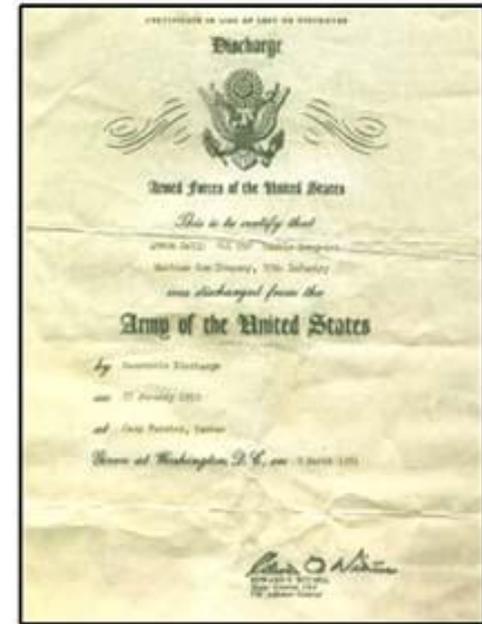
Ammon was twenty-two years old when the United States declared war on Germany on 6 April, 1917. The Conscription Act was passed a month later on 4 May, requiring young men between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-one to register for the draft. Qualifying men across Garfield County either signed up voluntarily or were pressed into duty.

Ammon chose not to wait for the draft, enlisting in the U.S. Army a month after the Conscription Act, on 5 June, 1917. He soon found himself on a train to Camp Funston, located southwest of Manhattan, Kansas. Camp Funston was one of the largest of sixteen divisional training camps established during World War I, a huge complex of 1,400 buildings built across 20,000 acres where nearly 50,000 recruits trained before being deployed to fight in the fields of Europe. The horseshoe shaped camp included training grounds for the infantry, artillery and the Quartermaster Remount Service, where over 500,00 horses and mules were readied for use in the war.

Luckily for Ammon, he was singled out of the ranks for his skill with animals and was assigned the task of training army mules for combat duty.⁸⁶ At the time, horses and mules were still the primary power source for moving heavy field artillery, supply wagons and ambulances across the battlefield. Ammon was kept busy caring for and training the many animals required by the departing troops instead of being sent overseas himself.⁸⁷ He was eventually promoted to the rank of Stable Sergeant in the 70th Infantry.⁸⁸



Ammon in his U.S. Army uniform.



Above: Views of Camp Funston, Fort Riley, Kansas. Center: Drilling new recruits and soldiers at rest. Below: Training mules at Camp Funston; Ammon's discharge certificate.

War Bride

A year after his enlistment, Ammon arranged to meet RDeen in Provo, Utah, while he was on leave. They were married there by a local LDS elder, L.T. Epperson, 22 June, 1918, in a small, private ceremony.⁸⁹ Ammon proudly wore his uniform for the occasion; RDeen had made a pretty new dress.⁹⁰ After a brief honeymoon in Provo, Ammon returned to his duties at Camp Funston, while RDeen boarded the train back to Tropic where she busied herself with daily chores and doing her part supporting the war on the home front.

RDeen was particularly interested in contributing to the welfare of the troops; not only was her new husband in the army, but her brother Cliff had also enlisted.⁹¹ She joined the other Relief Society ladies in gathering and preparing contributions for the Red Cross: socks, sweaters, pajamas, pillows, wash cloths, crutch pads, bandages, ice bags and hot water bottle covers. “White-haired grandmothers, whose fingers have not forgotten their skill, are using all their spare moments to knit warm socks and sweaters for the soldier boys; busy mothers are leaving their home duties undone to go to work rooms and sew on hospital supplies; school girls are turning out surprising quantities of Red Cross garments; even the tiny tots are begging to be allowed to clip rags or make wash clothes, or do something to help win the war,” reported the local newspaper.⁹² Other war efforts included fund raising, saving tin foil and rationing meat, milk, fats, sugar and fuel.

The Flu Pandemic

One of the most devastating consequences of the war began with an outbreak of flu at Camp Funston in March, 1918. The Spanish Flu, as it came to be known, eventually spread across the globe from Kansas, causing an estimated fifty million deaths worldwide.⁹³ On the morning of 17 March, a soldier with high fever, aches and body shakes was admitted to the infirmary; by midday there were one hundred and seven men with “fevers of 104 degrees, blue faces and horrendous coughs.” Over one thousand cases were reported by the first of April.⁹⁴ Many of the troops departing Camp Funston spread the disease as they travelled across Europe and over the next seven months “la grippe” had mutated into a more virulent form that was then transferred back to the United States that autumn.

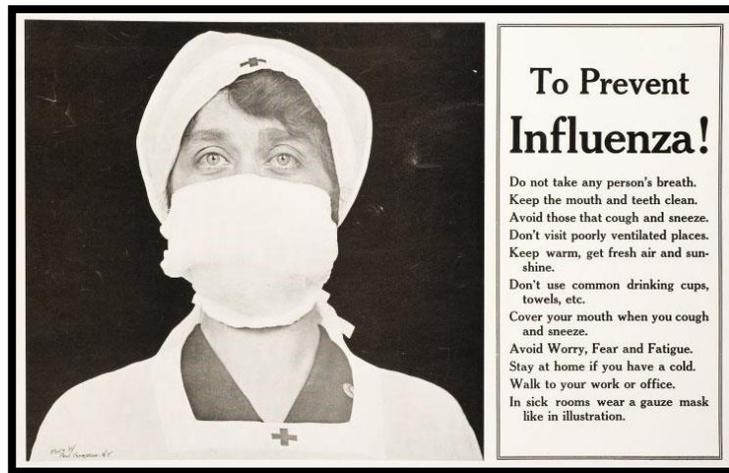
By October, 1918, the situation at Camp Funston was catastrophic, where 14,000 cases of flu and 861 deaths were reported during the first three weeks alone. “The soldiers were going so fast they were piling them up in a warehouse until they could get coffins for them,” recalled one of the camp nurses. When morticians couldn’t keep up with the demand for coffins, bodies were eventually wrapped and placed outside where they froze and were stacked “like cord wood.”⁹⁵

Ammon found himself in the camp hospital at the same time the deadly pandemic was making its return visit to Kansas. He wrote his sister Allie on 10 October, 1918, mentioning “lots of sickness in camp. Everybody is getting Spanish influenza and pneumonia.” He himself had come down with pneumonia while recovering from an appendix operation, but reported his recovery was progressing well. “It was a good operation,” he wrote. “The doctor says that there won’t be hardly a scar left in a year or two. I had acute appendicitis and the doctor said [it] would of busted in two or more hours if they had not operated on me just when they did so I think I got lucky.”⁹⁶ He was also very fortunate that he escaped coming down with the flu. He eventually recovered from his operation and was restored to his duties.

Less than a month after Ammon was released from the hospital, the war was over. On the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month (11 November, 1918), the Allies and Germans signed an armistice as a prelude to peace negotiations. America began the process of bringing home the troops and by January, 1919, Sergeant Ammon Davis was honorably discharged from Camp Funston.⁹⁷



The flu ward at Camp Funston.



What Caused the Flu?

No one knows for certain what caused the deadly flu outbreak at Camp Funston during the spring of 1918. Camp officials at the time thought it may have been due to the combination of a vicious prairie dust storm and the putrid black ash created by burning tons of horse and mule manure, which created stinging yellow haze that blocked out the sun completely on 9 March. Today, some health officials think it more likely that the countless number of swine and poultry in proximity to the soldiers in camp were responsible for the disease, as pigs are susceptible to avian influenza, which can then mutate and be transferred to humans.

The Flu in Tropic

*Tropic took advantage of its isolation during the flu epidemic to curtail the spread of disease. Transients were barred from entering the town and all private and public gatherings were banned, including school. For a time, these policies seemed effective, but during 1919, almost everyone in town came down with the flu at the same time. The few residents not affected offered what assistance they could by chopping wood and delivering groceries to porch doors. Linda King Newell and Vivian Linford Talbot, *A History of Garfield County* (Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, 1998), page 257.*



Ammon built this small, comfortable home at the corner of 500 West and Center Street in Tropic.

Making a Home in Tropic

Ammon was only too happy to rejoin his wife and family in Cannonville, where his homecoming was celebrated with a dinner party at the Davis home. “When Uncle Ammon came home from the first World War we all went to Grandma’s for the best and greatest family gathering that I remember. It was good to have him home,” said one of Ammon’s nephews. “Phillip sang some beautiful songs in his silver, heavenly voice, then Granddad got up to the old pump organ. He began in his deep bass voice, ‘Home on the Range.’ The beautiful Welch came out in a happy cadency with his children. I was asleep in my grandmother’s arms. It was truly my home on the range.”

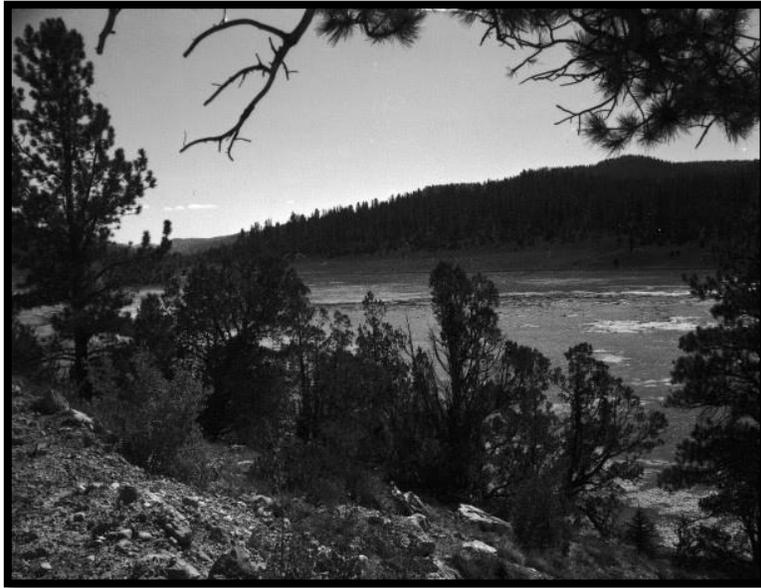
Ammon and RDeen purchased property in Tropic where they built a house across the street and to the south of the Reynolds home, near enough for RDeen to visit her parents whenever she wished.⁹⁸ There were no street addresses in such a small town, recalled Reta. “It was just Tropic, Utah, and everyone knew where everyone lived. There may not be any street addresses now.”⁹⁹ It was the perfect place to raise a family, and the young couple wasted no time getting started.

Three days after Ammon's twenty-fourth birthday, 8 October, 1919, RDeen presented him with their first child, a baby daughter they named LaFaye.¹⁰⁰ Another daughter, Reta, followed 18 June, 1921. Ammon was away when news reached him of Reta's impending birth; he rode a mule all night in order to be at RDeen's side when Reta was born.¹⁰¹ Little John Ammon,¹⁰² who was always called John A., arrived 17 December, 1922, and was introduced as "an early present from Santa Claus," said Reta.¹⁰³ Two more sons followed: Wells,¹⁰⁴ 19 April, 1925, and Monte,¹⁰⁵ 30 January, 1927.

All of the children were born in the home Ammon built on the northwest corner of their lot, where a patch of grass and a lovely clump of variegated ribbon grass grew next to the porch. The kitchen boasted a large wood burning cook stove, a cupboard, table and chairs. "We didn't have any services that would have made life better like we do now. There was no refrigeration, for instance," said Reta. "I remember a shelf behind the pantry where Dad hung up a little tub with tiny holes in the bottom so water could leak down some gunny sacks that were arranged around our milk. The cooling from the evaporation was as close as we came to having refrigeration."¹⁰⁶

Since there was also no running water, buckets were filled from the nearby well and hauled into the kitchen for daily use. Once a week, water was heated on the wood stove for bathing. "The babies were washed in the dish pan, but the rest of us took turns bathing behind the stove in a number three tin tub. Who went first? Usually it was the oldest, the one who could speak the loudest. We had to take turns in the same water; we just poured in a little more hot water when it was needed," recalled Reta.¹⁰⁷

The larger of the two rooms served as a living room and sometimes a bedroom. It was furnished with an old treadle organ, a treadle sewing machine, several chairs, a big double bed and a potbellied wood stove. "We had a woodpile and we had to go chop wood to heat the house," said Reta.¹⁰⁸ A small stairway behind the cook stove led up to the attic, where Ammon "fix up a bedroom for us kids. Sometimes the window had glass in it and sometimes it didn't. We just nailed a pasteboard box up in the window to keep the wind out if the glass was broken."¹⁰⁹



Looking south on the shore of Tropic's reservoir.

Scenic Setting

The Davis lot was large and the surroundings spectacular. Bryce Canyon's scenic cliffs rimmed the horizon on the west and the magnificent Escalante Mountains loomed to the east. A barn stood in the southwest corner where there was always a large stack of pine and cedar wood logs to feed the stoves. Town roads bordered the north and west sides, while a wash [creek] ran across the south end of the property. Ammon located the two-hole outhouse over hanging the creek, providing an occasional automatic flush when the rains came. "We had a can to use in the middle of the night, which we had to empty in the outhouse the next morning," Reta remembered. "Sometimes that can got pretty full, and carrying it out was task beyond compare."¹¹⁰

A small orchard of apple and cherry trees grew along the north east. A pasture to the southeast was planted with hay for Ammon's horse, Old Blue, and the family cow, who "kept a wary eye on the path leading to the outhouse. She seemed to guard it jealously and to take delight in chasing anyone venturing down that path. The children never dared to go to the privy alone, and even then they had to run fast to make it. Sometimes after a hard chase there was no longer a need to go inside," according to Reta. "That mean old cow could scare the living daylight out of anyone."¹¹¹

Cow Pies

“One day, knowing that Ammon was due in from the herd, Fern baked some pies to please him. She placed the warm pies on the kitchen table to cool and, leaving the door open for a good breeze, went across the street for a short time. She returned to find the much hated cow half way through the door eating the pies. Fern was “fit to be tied.” Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History* (1979), page 96.

Ammon built two cellars to store surplus food over the winter. “The cellar out by the blacksmith shop was just a big hole in the ground where we kept vegetables like beets, squash and potatoes,” said Reta. “Then we had an underground cellar about eight feet deep with steps leading down to it where we put bushels of apples, onions and bottles of fruit.”¹¹²

Everything stored in the cellar had been grown by the family. “We had to grow almost everything we ate. We bottled most of our food, boiling first on the wood burning stove. What we didn’t boil we dried. There was no other way to preserve food,” Reta recounted. “Dad had a big garden out behind the barn, and we kids had to go out and hoe the garden to keep it free of weeds, bugs and worms. Sometimes we would play hide and seek and hide behind the corn stalks. We had fun as we worked, but we all worked, every one of us. As soon as we got big enough to do anything we had little tasks assigned to us.”¹¹³

Creepy Crawlers

One summer day as Reta was going to the cellar to retrieve a bottle of fruit, she spotted a huge snake sunning itself just above the door. The reptile frightened the children and RDeen, too, who called Ammon to the scene. He snorted at the “harmless blow snake that was only doing its job of killing mice,” but since no one dared go into the cellar as long as the snake was around, Ammon had to kill it. “There were lots of snakes in that country,” said Reta. “I remember holding long ones by the tail after we had killed them by stepping on their heads. Once we took the insides out of the snakes and tanned their hides, we had a snakeskin belt to wear.” Interview with Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.

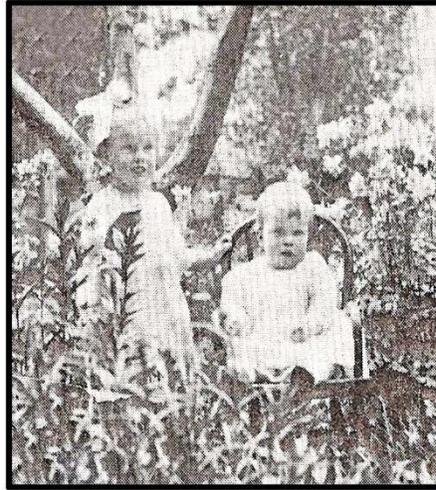


A day at the cedar grove: RDeen holding John A. with LaFaye and Reta in tow.

Little Darlings

With few other options to make a living, Ammon resumed managing the combined Davis sheep herds. “Ammon and his father had sheep in the lower county,” said Tropic resident Obie Shakespear. “Things were tight and they put their herds together.”¹¹⁴ Running sheep was not easy for a married man. Ammon was forced to spend a great deal of time away from his family.¹¹⁵ “He might have gone into business,” Vernon wrote, “but there was no businessman with whom he was acquainted that he might have held up as an ideal. Moreover, Cannonville was one of the sorriest places where a young man might have set up a business for himself.”¹¹⁶

During the “long spells” when Ammon was on the range, RDeen took full responsibility for running the home operations. She was a good manager and was careful enough with the family finances that “the family had some money,” according to Ethel. “She kept Ammon in line, and really made him jump through the hoops.”¹¹⁷ RDeen was a force to be reckoned with, “a tiny, tiny little woman, and feisty as feisty,” said Monte’s wife, Toni Davies.¹¹⁸ “Ethyl said one time, I don’t think she hit a hundred pounds when she was pregnant.”¹¹⁹



*Left: RDeen posing with babies LaFay and McVoy Johnson.
Right: LaFay and Reta in Grandma Reynold's flower garden.*

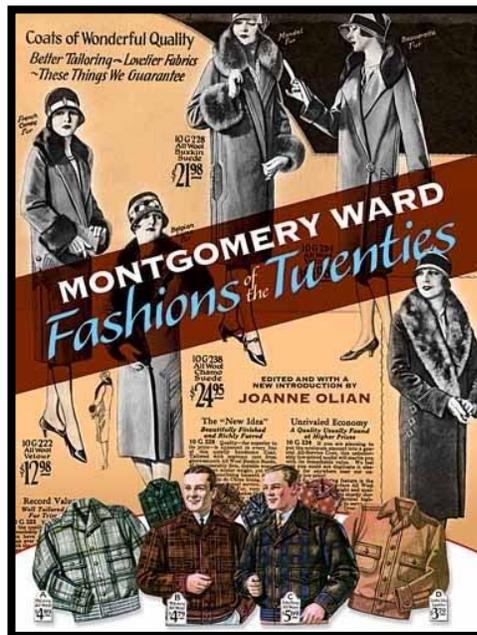
RDeen applied the same rigor to her housekeeping as she did to keeping track of the family funds. She was considered a spotless housekeeper by Ethel, who remembered how “RDeen could scrub a large washing by hand on a washboard and never get a spot on her apron.”¹²⁰ Cleanliness in the early part of the twentieth century equaled whiteness, even in red rock country, and Ethel also claimed that anyone could have wiped down RDeen’s home with a white cloth and not find a speck of Tropic’s red dust.¹²¹

RDeen’s homemaking skills also included braiding and hooking rugs, making soap, turning perishable milk into butter and cheese and bottling fruit. She was a good cook and prepared nourishing meals for her family. She usually complied when the children would beg for a taste of honey, sugar or jam. Using table manners, eating what was prepared and cleaning up one’s plate was the family rule.¹²²

Proper dress was also important to RDeen, as she considered clothing her children well one of the hallmarks of a good mother. After she spent the afternoon watching Ethel’s twin girls one day, RDeen had tired of pulling up the girl’s knee socks. “If they were my kids and they couldn’t keep those socks up, they wouldn’t be wearing them,” she told Ethel.¹²³ RDeen took charge of her own children’s wardrobes with the same attention to detail and thrift. Although she sewed most of the family’s clothing, RDeen decided to teach the children money management one year by offering them chance to earn enough cash to order shoes and winter coats from the *Montgomery Ward* catalogue. Each child was given a small metal bank that held five dollars’ worth of dimes and the goal was made to fill the banks by autumn. The children enjoyed counting out their dimes until they had enough to order the clothing.¹²⁴

The Wish Book

The first mail order catalogue business was founded by Aaron Montgomery Ward in 1872, when Mr. Ward provided rural families access by mail to a wide range of goods unavailable in the local country stores. By 1900, when Sears introduced a competing catalogue weighing in at four pounds, almost every rural family looked forward to the arrival of the spring and fall "wish book." Many evenings were spent paging through an amazing range of items from kitchen ware, books, tools, farm equipment, furniture and the latest fashions.



RDeen did fine embroidery and crochet work and was skilled at using the old treadle sewing machine in the corner of the living room, one of her “most prized possessions,” said Reta. “Several times she cautioned the children not to play with the sewing machine, but one day LaFaye wanted to sew like her mother. She put a piece of cloth under the needle and began to work the treadle with her foot, but forgot to remove her finger from the cloth. The needle went completely through the end of her finger and RDeen had ‘the dickens of a time’ getting it out.”¹²⁵

RDeen was very active in her church callings, and was especially fond of her position as theology instructor in the Tropic Relief Society. Her fellow Relief Society sisters were impressed not only with “the lessons she has taught, but by her attitude in life, which after all teaches the greatest lessons for others to follow.” She was also praised for her attention to “donations, dues and fees, which were always gladly and willingly paid as though it were a privilege to contribute to such a cause.”¹²⁶

As a mother, RDeen never missed an opportunity to teach her little ones the same principles she herself found so important. One day, little LaFaye came home from school with a handful of crayons hidden in her pocket. RDeen noticed the crayons when LaFaye began coloring with them later that evening and made her take them right back to the teacher with an apology.¹²⁷ Reta received a lesson in appropriate language one day when she used “some pretty heavy words” she had learned while visiting relatives. RDeen promptly washed her mouth out with soap and “promised that if soap didn’t work, a generous sprinkling of cayenne pepper on the tongue would be the next remedy. The soap worked.”¹²⁸

In From the Herd

Ammon’s return from the range was always a joyous occasion for the family, who ran to greet him as he rode his horse back to the barn. “One day as he returned and was leading his horse to the corral, Reta ran excitedly ahead of him. Evidently, he had arrived at a rather inopportune time, at least as far as she was concerned, for he said, ‘For hells sake Reta, button up your barn door!’ meaning the flap on her long-handled underwear was hanging open, revealing a bare bottom.”¹²⁹

Ammon was certain to make the rounds in Tropic and Panguitch as soon as he was settled at home, swapping stories with other ranchers and catching up on local gossip. “Ammon Davis of Tropic called at the *News* Tuesday and laid two of the best looking dollars on our desk that we have seen in a long time, and said, ‘Keep the news coming.’ He came over with D. Riding and Bernard Johnson, who were successfully operated on,” reported *The Garfield County News*.¹³⁰ Obie Shakespear recalled visits with Ammon, who he described as “quite a character. John H. said, ‘What’s the news in town?’ Ammon had been to the bakery where two men named Jody and John worked. Jody had scraggly teeth and John had only one tooth in his mouth. Ammon said, ‘Jody crimps the pie crust and John puts the holes in the donuts.’”¹³¹

When shearing time arrived, there was more work for the men, but some fun for the children. “The sheep were sheared down below Cannonville near Promise Rock in what we called the old shearing corral. The shearers would come from all over southern Utah to shear their sheep there,” said Reta. “There must have been twenty-four or more booths in that old corral. The men would get on either side of the pens and shear the sheep, then put the wool in huge sacks, which were stacked four or five deep out in the yard. We children would bounce back and forth on the sacks of wool all afternoon.”¹³²

Other ways to find a bit of fun included an occasional dip in the irrigation pond “up by Escalante,” Reta remembered. “There was a little swimming pool across the creek made from the water damned up for irrigation. The water was let down the canal ditches dug around the town. In those days there were floods that came down the creek. If you heard a flood coming when you were swimming in that pond, boy, you got out of there and you ran! That was the fun part, trying to keep ahead of the flood, running bare footed down the creek bed. It was a dangerous challenge, but it was always to be enjoyed when we could beat the flood.”¹³³

One memorable occasion was an Easter picnic at Bryce Canyon. RDeen and her brothers and sisters gathered their families for the event. One of the men volunteered to haul everyone up the “dump” road on his flatbed truck, but the road became so steep the truck could go no further. The women and children walked to the top of the hill while the men pushed the truck up the incline. The walk was a bit frightening, but the picnic and the first ride in a motor driven vehicle was a never to be forgotten experience.¹³⁴

“We worked so hard and yet I don’t remember a day when there wasn’t pleasure and happiness because we could hide and climb the mountains and go up on the red rock. It was a very happy life,” said Reta, who recalled going bare footed all summer long and having feet

so rough she could walk through prickly weeds and rock covered ground without feeling a thing.¹³⁵ Reta also recalled how cheerful her parents were. “Dad was high-spirited and he smiled a lot. Mother was a wonderful woman. We knew they loved us and were glad to be with us. It wasn’t like now where parents are always hugging their children and tickling their chins. I don’t remember any father in those days that were affectionate like that, it just wasn’t done; but we knew that they loved us even without so much outward affection like we have nowadays.”¹³⁶

RDeen took pleasure in playing the organ and often strummed out guitar chords to accompany herself and others while singing. She taught LaFaye and RDeen to sing together and volunteered them to perform at a program in the town hall when she felt they were ready for their debut. As Reta stepped from behind the stage curtain she became frightened and ducked back, refusing to go on. “No amount of coaxing or bribing worked, not even a spanking,” said Reta, who recalled she and her sister eventually enjoyed singing duos as they grew up.¹³⁷

LaFaye and Reta loved playing house with the small table, chairs and china cupboard Ammon had made for them. The set of child-sized white china dishes decorated with tiny blue birds were so special that RDeen kept them in her own cupboard when the children weren’t playing with them. The girls had their own dolls, but if they were good, they were sometimes allowed to play with Aunt Fay’s buggy and her very precious china doll.

Occasionally Ammon and RDeen took time away from the children to attend a dance or party with friends. Reta remembered not being happy about to being left behind one evening and she set up quite a howl as her parents were leaving. In an effort to pacify her, Ammon gave her permission to play with his pocket knife if she would promise not to open the blades. Of course, as soon as her parents left, Reta pried open the biggest blade and braced the knife against her chest so she could open the rest of them. She pulled so hard that the big blade entered her chest and the wound began bleeding profusely. Ammon and RDeen were sent for and “while that ended their outing, the scar still remains,” said Reta.¹³⁸

On another occasion, a local girl had been called over to baby sit and delighted in telling the children scary stories to keep them entertained. As the evening wore on, the sitter became frightened herself, and didn’t dare go out into the dark to use the outhouse. Since all the children were too afraid to go with her, the sitter pulled the big double bed away from the wall, wet on the floor, then pushed the bed back over it. “The children couldn’t wait for their parents to return so they could tell,” Reta remembered.¹³⁹



RDeen (center) and her sisters Mae, Minerva and Ethel.

Life and Death

There was no doctor or drug store in the small community of Tropic; still, the people seemed fairly free of disease, “perhaps due to the lack of diagnosis,” noted Reta. One common childhood ailment was rickets, caused from a lack of vitamin D. To protect her children from this disease, RDeen would regularly lift down from the cupboard a bottle of cod liver oil, measuring out a portion for each child. If the supply grew short before it could be replenished, she saved the remainder for LaFaye since she was “considered the puny one of the bunch.”¹⁴⁰

Home treatments and herbal remedies were acceptable for minor health concerns, but more serious medical problems required the attention of Dr. Bigelow, thirty miles away in Panguitch. It was a rare occasion when anyone had the time or money to consult with a doctor, so events such as a baby’s birth almost always took place at home. Midwife-assisted births were so routine that when RDeen went into labor with her fifth child, no one thought twice about not having a doctor in attendance. “The hospital in Panguitch was a long way away by wagon and if you were having birth pains you probably couldn’t get there in time, anyway,” said Reta.

Little Monte was born on 30 January, 1927, in the big double bed in the living room, just like his brother and sisters had been. This time, however, RDeen developed complications and after several days of home care, she was taken to Panguitch to stay with her sister, Minerva, who was a registered nurse.¹⁴¹ RDeen eventually contracted

a case of “la grippe” and Dr. Bigelow did what he could for her, but her case was complicated by a severe kidney infection which could not be controlled. She died in the early morning of 25 February, 1928, at the age of thirty.¹⁴²

Later that same grey morning, RDeen’s family sat around the table eating the breakfast their Aunt Fern, who was staying at the home to help, had prepared. The children watched from the window as Austin Cope, a family friend, walked up the street, crossed over the ditch and came toward the house. He entered and sadly told them about RDeen’s death.¹⁴³

Without a mortuary in the county, RDeen’s body was prepared and laid out in the living room where she had given birth a little less than one month before. Family and friends from the Relief Society took turns packing her body with ice in preparation for the funeral. Minerva, who held a church calling to care for the dead, sewed her sister’s burial clothing.¹⁴⁴ Walking by the open casket in the living room, six-year old Reta noticed one of her mother’s eyes was partially open. She excitedly ran to tell everyone that “Mother is waking up!” Her Aunt Minerva took the little girl aside and helped her understand her mother would not be waking up again.¹⁴⁵

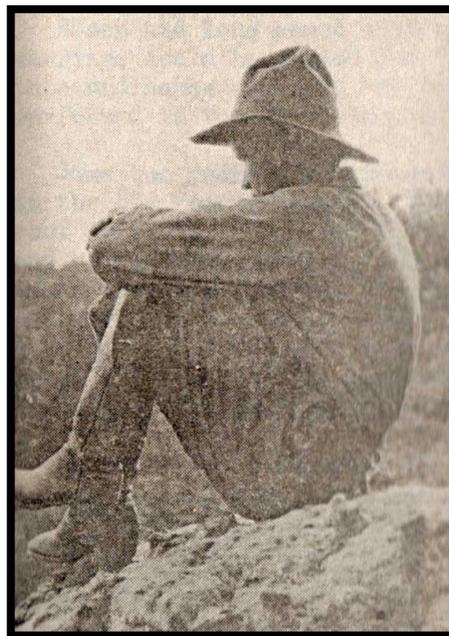
Bad road conditions due to heavy storms failed to deter the many friends and relatives who gathered at the Davis home to pay their respects. “A large crowd from Henrieville and Cannonville were here and the house was crowded to overflowing,” reported *The Garfield County News*. In attendance were RDeen’s siblings, including Jero, Mahala, James, Cliff and Scott, who had travelled to Tropic from their homes in northern Utah.¹⁴⁶

Services were held at the Tropic meeting house, with eulogies given by the bishop, friends and members of the Relief Society, who expressed “appreciation for the willing service she has rendered, for the lessons she has taught, not only by the words she had uttered but by her attitude in life, which after all teaches the greatest lessons for others to follow. We find by our records that no other member in her circumstances (having so many little children to care for) has attended to her meetings more regularly or spent more time on lesson preparation.”¹⁴⁷

RDeen’s children were very young at her death¹⁴⁸ and their recollections of the funeral were dim. LaFaye remembered singing “O My Father,” thinking it was a strange song to sing for a mother. While only the older girls had many memories of their mother, all of

the children “deemed it a privilege to have been born to such a noble woman. RDeen lived but a brief thirty years, yet by her exemplary life and through her solid teachings, she left a rich legacy for her children,” said Reta. ¹⁴⁹

“A beautiful floral tribute was offered and a long line of cars followed the body to its last resting place,” noted *The Garfield County News*. Ammon chose a lot in the Tropic Cemetery¹⁵⁰ where the family gathered for a grave side service. As the first shovel full of dirt was thrown onto the grave, he abruptly turned and walked away.¹⁵¹



Ammon often spent time alone after RDeen's death.

Breaking Apart the Family

“Death is something that we have all got to face sooner or later and we should face it with the thoughts that we will see our loved ones somewhere else,” Ammon wrote to his sister when he was a young man of twenty-three. “I don’t think grieving and worrying too much will help matters much, but that is something that we will do more or less; we should look on the cheery side of life always, but it is hard to do sometimes.”¹⁵² Ammon discovered for himself how just hard it was to face death nine years later when it knocked at his own door. Ammon’s grief over RDeen’s death was deep. Reta remembered seeing her father sitting on his heels by the side of the house openly weeping as he struggled to come to terms with the loss of his life companion.¹⁵³

Running the household and caring for the children was not something Ammon could do alone. During the first few weeks after her sister’s death, Fern stayed on at the Davis home to lend a hand until more permanent arrangements could be made. Later that spring when the demands of the sheep herd took Ammon back to the desert,¹⁵⁴ Ammon arranged for the children to live with his sisters. Baby Monte remained in Panguitch with Minerva,¹⁵⁵ who had been caring for him during his mother’s illness. Minerva watched over the infant for six months, until her husband developed serious health problems and was no longer able to care for himself.¹⁵⁶ Ethel and her husband Howard Johnson then volunteered to add John A. and Monte to their family of three daughters in Monroe, seventy miles to the north.¹⁵⁷

Several months later John A. was taken to Cannonville to live with his Grandpa and Grandma Davis for two years. LaFaye, Reta and Wells also found a place in Cannonville with Allie and her husband, Thomas Caffall, boosting the number of children in their home to six. Ammon told himself it was best for the children to live with relatives, but he later regretted his decision to split up the family.¹⁵⁸

Ammon dwelt upon his loss during the many lonely hours on the range, deciding to make good on a promise he had made to RDeen to be sealed in the temple. “Since much of his early life was spent with the sheep herd, his formal religious training had been minimal and he picked up some Word of Wisdom problems,” said Reta. His wife’s death motivated Ammon to give up these bad habits and seven months later he was sealed to RDeen and the children in the Manti temple.¹⁵⁹



RDeen was buried in the Tropic Cemetery.

ENDNOTES

⁸⁰ Reta Davis Baldwin and Laura Jane Davis Auble, compilers, *Davis Family History 1831-1947* (self-published, Ogden, Utah, 1982), page 322.

⁸¹ Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History* (1979), page 43.

⁸² Interview with Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.

⁸³ Linda King Newell and Vivian Linford Talbot, *A History of Garfield County* (Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, 1998), page 204.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, page 149.

⁸⁵ Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History*, page 90

⁸⁶ Vernon Davis, "A Tribute to Ammon by His Brother Vernon," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.

⁸⁷ A Multi Media History of World War One, <http://www.firstworldwar.com/features/forgottenarmy.htm>

⁸⁸ Ammon Davies discharge certificate, 27 January, 1919: Camp Funston, Army of the United States. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.

⁸⁹ Davis-Reynolds marriage, 22 June, 1918, Utah County, Utah. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.

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- ⁹⁰ Reta Davis Baldwin, "RDeen Reynolds: Child, Wife, Mother," 1979, typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ⁹¹ Clifford Reynolds, Utah Military Records, 1861-1970, at www.ancestry.com. Also, Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History*, page 85.
- ⁹² Kerry William Bate, "Kanarraville Fights World War I," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, Vol 63 (1995): page 41.
- ⁹³ The 1918 Flu Pandemic, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1918_flu_pandemic
- ⁹⁴ Jackie Rosenhek, "The So-Called 'Spanish Flu,'" <http://www.doctorsreview.com/history/nov05-history/>
- ⁹⁵ <http://pages.suddenlink.net/tjohnston7/wwIhist/flu.html> as of 14 January, 2012.
- ⁹⁶ Letter from Ammon Davis (Camp Funston, Kansas) to Mrs. Allie Caffall (no address survives), 10 October, 1918. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ⁹⁷ Ammon Davies discharge certificate, 27 January, 1919: Camp Funston, Army of the United States. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ⁹⁸ Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History*, page 92.
- ⁹⁹ Interview, Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005.
- ¹⁰⁰ LaFaye (Davis) Mulberry (1919-2000), #KWC1-B96, www.familysearch.org
- ¹⁰¹ Cherie Baldwin Scoffield, "Reta Davis Baldwin Funeral Address," 21 November, 2005, typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ¹⁰² John Ammon Davis (1922-1990), #KW8M-QP7, www.familysearch.org
- ¹⁰³ Reta Davis Baldwin, "RDeen Reynolds: Child, Wife, Mother," 1979, typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ¹⁰⁴ Wells "R" Davis (1925-1957), #KWJV-D6N, www.familysearch.org The "R" probably stands for Reynolds.
- ¹⁰⁵ Monte "J" Davies (1927-present), #LNDN-58M, www.familysearch.org Monte changed his name to Davies and added the initial "J" for Johnson when he enlisted in the military in 1944.
- ¹⁰⁶ Interview, Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰⁸ Baldwin, "RDeen Reynolds: Child, Wife, Mother," 1979, typescript. Also see Interview, Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005.
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹¹ Baldwin, "RDeen Reynolds: Child, Wife, Mother," 1979, typescript.
- ¹¹² Interview, Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005.
- ¹¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹¹⁴ Interview with Obie Shakespear, July 1998. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ¹¹⁵ Ammon, 24, married, is listed as boarding with other laborers in the 1920 U.S. census, Piute County, Utah, Precinct A1, enumeration district 87, super district 1, page 6A: roll T625-1863, image 472. www.ancestry.com Also, see *The Garfield County News*, 2 February, 1922, Tropic: "Ammon Davis left for the lower country Wednesday," 28 November 28, 1924, Tropic: "Ammon Davis is home after an absence of several weeks," 23 January, 1925, Tropic: "Ammon Davis, after a long absence from home, returned Thursday of last week," 7 January, 1927, Tropic: "Ammon Davis came home from the shepherd during the week."
- ¹¹⁶ Vernon Davis, "A Tribute to Ammon by His Brother Vernon," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ¹¹⁷ Interview with Afton (Mecham) Davies, July 1998. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ¹¹⁸ Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies (1925-present), #LNDN-5FS, www.familysearch.org
- ¹¹⁹ Interview, Afton "D" (Mecham) Davies, July 1998.
- ¹²⁰ Baldwin, "RDeen Reynolds: Child, Wife, Mother," 1979, typescript.
- ¹²¹ Interview, Afton "D" (Mecham) Davies, July 1998.

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- ¹²² Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History*, page 94.
- ¹²³ Interview, Afton “D” (Mecham) Davies, July 1998.
- ¹²⁴ Baldwin, “RDeen Reynolds: Child, Wife, Mother,” 1979, typescript.
- ¹²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹²⁶ Tropic Relief Society, “A Tribute of Respect to Sister RDeen Davis,” 1927, typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ¹²⁷ Baldwin, “RDeen Reynolds: Child, Wife, Mother,” 1979, typescript.
- ¹²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹²⁹ Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History*, page 94.
- ¹³⁰ *The Garfield County News*, July 30, 1926, Local.
- ¹³¹ Interview, Obie Shakespear, July 1998.
- ¹³² Interview. Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005.
- ¹³³ *Ibid.*
- ¹³⁴ Baldwin, “RDeen Reynolds: Child, Wife, Mother,” 1979, typescript.
- ¹³⁵ Scoffield, “Reta Davis Baldwin Funeral Address,” 21 November, 2005, typescript.
- ¹³⁶ Interview, Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005.
- ¹³⁷ Baldwin, “RDeen Reynolds: Child, Wife, Mother,” 1979, typescript.
- ¹³⁸ Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History*, page 95.
- ¹³⁹ Baldwin, “RDeen Reynolds: Child, Wife, Mother,” 1979, typescript.
- ¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴¹ Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History*, page 28.
- ¹⁴² RDeen Davis death certificate no. 8, Garfield County (1927), Utah Department of Health, Salt Lake City.
- ¹⁴³ Baldwin, “RDeen Reynolds: Child, Wife, Mother,” 1979, typescript.
- ¹⁴⁴ Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History*, page 28.
- ¹⁴⁵ Baldwin, “RDeen Reynolds: Child, Wife, Mother,” 1979, typescript.
- ¹⁴⁶ Jero and Mrs. Mahala Johnson, Farmington, Utah; James and Cliff, Brigham, Utah; Scott, Centerville, Utah; RDeen Davis obituary, *The Garfield County News*, 4 March, 1927 .
- ¹⁴⁷ Tropic Relief Society, “A Tribute of Respect to Sister RDeen Davis,” 1927, typescript.
- ¹⁴⁸ LaFaye was eight, Reta six, John A. four and Wells was only two years of age. Baby Monte was a little less than one month old.
- ¹⁴⁹ Baldwin, “RDeen Reynolds: Child, Wife, Mother,” 1979, typescript.
- ¹⁵⁰ RDeen is buried in the Tropic cemetery, Block 51, Plot 1. Utah State Historical Society Internment Index, www.ancestry.com
- ¹⁵¹ Baldwin, “RDeen Reynolds: Child, Wife, Mother,” 1979, typescript. .
- ¹⁵² Letter from Ammon Davis (Camp Funston, Kansas) to Mrs. Allie Caffall, 10 October, 1918.
- ¹⁵³ Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History*, page 96.
- ¹⁵⁴ *The Garfield County News* reported many of Ammon’s departures and arrivals from the range: April 1, 1927; Oct 28, 1927; Sep 28, 1928; March 8, 1929, among other dates.
- ¹⁵⁵ As a registered nurse, Minerva was considered the best qualified family member to care for baby Monte.
- ¹⁵⁶ Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History*, page 27.
- ¹⁵⁷ Howard and Ethel Johnson’s family consisted of twins Claone and Ione (born in 1920) and Gloria (born in 1923). A fourth daughter, Jae Nell, was born in 1932. “Howard Maine Johnson and Ethel Davis Family Group Sheet,” supplied 11 1997 by Monte “J” Davies. This sheet offers only a generic list of materials consulted.

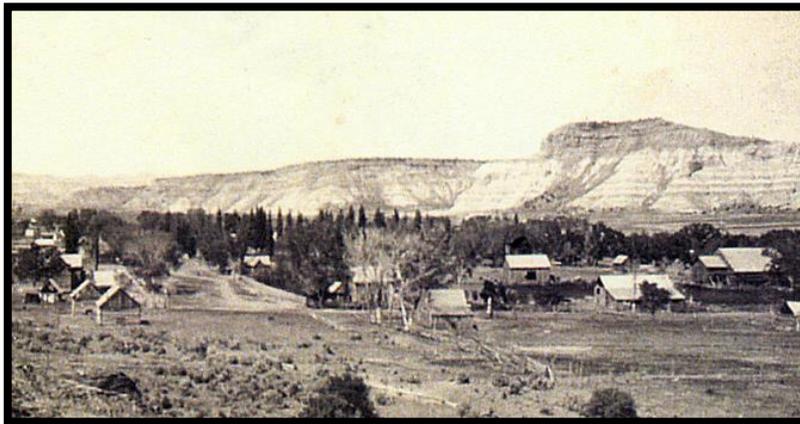
¹⁵⁸ Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History*, page 96.

¹⁵⁹ Ammon and RDeen were sealed on 15 September, 1927. “Ammon Davis-RDeen Reynolds family group sheet,” supplied 1997 by Monte “J” Davies. This sheet offers only a generic list of materials consulted.

Chapter 4

At Home in Cannonville

Ammon and Millie



A view of Cannonville with the red and white cliffs of the Escalante Mountains as a backdrop.

Even though automobiles were becoming more common in larger communities during the late 1920s, few people had the resources to purchase such a luxury; most families in Cannonville still used horse-drawn wagons or buggies for transportation. Fortunately for Ammon, the profits from his sheep herd in 1929 were enough to allow him to purchase a brand new Essex automobile, something he was quite proud to own.¹⁶⁰ Ammon undoubtedly bought the new car with his upcoming marriage in mind.

Two years after RDeen's death, Ammon had relocated to Cannonville where he moved into his Grandfather Henderson's old home, a white framed house a block north of his father's residence. "It was very old and it had probably been painted at one time, but it was falling apart," recalled Reta.¹⁶¹ Living in Cannonville made it possible to spend more time with both his parents and his children when he wasn't running the sheep herd. The pain from RDeen's loss had begun to dull, and Ammon was ready to fill the void she had left. It was while he was in from the range one day that his eye was taken by a twenty-year old young lady by the name of Mildred Crawford.¹⁶²

Millie was born 16 April, 1909, in Emery, Utah,¹⁶³ to Adelbert Crawford¹⁶⁴ and Sarah (DeLange).¹⁶⁵ Her oldest sister, Leona,¹⁶⁶ had left to start her own family when Millie was a year old, and her sister Adell¹⁶⁷ married when Millie was seven, leaving only brother Feneth,¹⁶⁸ Millie and her younger sister Rodna¹⁶⁹ at home. Their mother had lost four infants¹⁷⁰ in the ten years between the births of Feneth and Millie, so the pair of little girls became the center of their mother's attentions. Because Millie and Rodna were close in age and in spirit, they were always doing things together. *The Garfield County News* social column noted their attendance at many local events and announced their return to Cannonville at the end of their seasonal employment at Bryce Canyon in the fall of 1928.¹⁷¹

The News also noted a visit by the Crawford girls to their offices on 3 May, 1929. "Mrs. A.D. Crawford and two charming daughters, the Misses Mildred and Ronda, paid *The News* a pleasant visit Monday afternoon. They were at the county seat on a shopping tour," the editor wrote. "The ladies were accompanied by Ammon Davis. We heard a little bird whisper that Miss Mildred and Mr. Davis were up at the county clerk's office telling Mr. Partridge 'their true ages.' Well, in that case we offer congratulations."¹⁷²

Congratulations were in order, as directly after their visit to newspaper offices in Panguitch, Ammon and Millie travelled to the St. George temple where they were sealed that very day.¹⁷³ The newlyweds made their new home in Cannonville.¹⁷⁴ In July, Ammon "motored to Beaver to get his children" from Allie's house, reuniting LaFaye, Reta, John, Wells and Monte under one roof.¹⁷⁵



LaFaye, John "A" and Reta in Tropic.

With no previous experience in raising children, twenty-year old Millie became an instant mother to five children ranging in age from ten to two.¹⁷⁶ Reta often recalled that her stepmother was a courageous woman for taking on such a large, readymade family,¹⁷⁷ especially when Ammon's work on the range continued to keep him away from home for months at a time, leaving Millie to manage the children without him.¹⁷⁸ It was a difficult time for everyone. The children, who had left family and friends behind in Beaver, were forced to adjust to a new household, a new school and a stepmother they had never met. Reta remembered one sign of upheaval in the family. "Not long after the family moved to Cannonville, four-year old Wells decided to leave home on his tricycle," said Reta. "When asked where he was going, he replied, 'I'm going to see my Aunt Yallie.' Allie lived many miles away in Beaver and she was just as lonesome to see Wells as he was to see her."¹⁷⁹

Millie coped with the situation as well as she could. "Millie didn't radiate happiness. I can't remember her ever laughing out loud," said Reta. "She got along with all of us, she took care of us and I'm sure she loved us, but not affectionately, not hugging."¹⁸⁰ Fortunately for Millie, she had help from Rodna, who lived with the family for several years to lend a hand with the children. Rodna was also there to help Millie after the birth of her first child, Adelbert,¹⁸¹ shortened to "Dell," on 15 March, 1930.¹⁸²

It was probably around the time of Dell's birth when three-year old Monte was returned to live with the Ethel and Howard Johnson family in Monroe, who had become very attached to the little boy. It was "a decision which Ammon would live to regret," Reta observed.¹⁸³ Ammon had a change of heart about the arrangement a few years later and wrote to Ethel, asking her to send Monte back to him. What happened between the adults is unclear, but by then the Johnsons considered Monte part of their own family and were unhappy about letting him go. Six-year old Monte was also upset by the news that he was to be sent to live with a family he did not know. "I was down by the wood pile gathering wood in the evening," said Monte. "Mother came down bawling and told me, 'Mont, your real dad wants to take you back home to live with him.' Here I had lived with the Johnsons for six years and that was the only father and mother I knew. They told me they loved me and all that, but I wasn't theirs. I broke down crying. I got scared to death because I didn't want to leave them. It was horrible. All night I cried on that and prayed about it. Ammon never did show up the next day to get me."¹⁸⁴

Monte did not remember being given any explanation as to why his father hadn't come to take him back to Cannonville, or why he was allowed to continue living with the Johnsons. He was never given the opportunity to meet Ammon during his childhood, even though many visits by Howard and Ethel Johnson to the Davis family were reported in the newspaper over the ensuing years. Apparently neither Ammon nor Monte were present during these visits, either by choice or by circumstances. Monte recalled that he didn't meet his real father until many years later when he was a teenager living in Salt Lake City.¹⁸⁵

Making Ends Meet

Meanwhile, Ammon and Millie became the parents to two daughters, Laura Jane,¹⁸⁶ born 12 June, 1932, and Gaylene,¹⁸⁷ born 3 August, 1935.¹⁸⁸ With a household of six growing children, life in Cannonville during the depression of the 1930s was a struggle. "We lived a very meager life," according to Reta, who remembered scrubbing clothes on a wash board and trips to the "four-holer" outhouse, as there was little in the way of indoor plumbing available in town.¹⁸⁹ Only cold water was plumbed into the kitchen. Reta "mentioned she would scrub the wooden floor in the winter and have the water freeze before it could be wiped up," said Reta's daughter Cherrie (Baldwin) Scoffield.¹⁹⁰ The Davis home was not wired for electricity and heat was still provided by an old fashioned wood stove.

Ammon owned several acres of land and with the help of the family, crops and a garden were raised each year, supplemented by fruit from a few trees and milk from the cow. “Just beyond the property there was a ridge with a series of corrals and makeshift out buildings to store farm equipment and feed,” said Reta. “There was a dugout cellar with rough plank door on creaky hinges, lined with stones. It was well-stocked with the produce from our garden, cool in the summer, and it kept the frost off in the winter.”¹⁹¹

When he wasn't with the herd, Ammon worked hard in his forty-five acre hayfield outside of town. “Dad would cut the hay and make a big haystack, then pile it on the wagon to bring it back into town to put it in the barn,” said Reta. “I remember standing up on the hay and tromping it down so they could get more on the wagon.”¹⁹² Ammon also turned his cultivation skills toward the family garden, taking pride in winning second place in the Third Annual Garfield County Garden Contest in the summer of 1938.¹⁹³

Like all men who made a living from the land, Ammon spent time tending to a variety of other tasks necessary to ranch life, including traveling into the mountains to chop firewood. Reta remembered “a very narrow trail that led up on the mountain called Bulldog. This was where my father went with his wagon team to get wood for the cook stove. He had two horses to pull the wagon and one to ride. He was a good horseman and loved to race up the street very fast. Once when we were up at Bulldog cutting wood it started to rain. Everything turns to mud in southern Utah when it rains, so we had to unhook the team and walk home. That mountain was so sheer, you couldn't walk without almost falling off the side, and the rain made it all the more dangerous. I remember Dad having me go in front and him coming along behind with this team of horses to get us off this mountain.”¹⁹⁴

Ammon attended to other risky jobs around the property, such as eliminating a wild bee colony that had established itself nearby. “Ammon Davis has been trying to get rid of a swarm of bees that have been bothering him the past year or two,” reported *The Garfield County News*. “Recently he robbed them of ten or twelve gallons of honey, and says that he will endeavor to starve them out this winter, as hardly a day passes that some of the family doesn't get stung with them.”¹⁹⁵



Ammon watching the herd with his dog Old Shep.

Lost Sheep

Ammon was one of many local stockmen who grazed his sheep on the lands around Bryce Canyon, which eventually came under the control of the national park system. Stockmen were anxious for an agreement with the government to either allow continued grazing within park boundaries or to buy their grazing rights outright. A “field agreement” was drafted in 1930 which guaranteed no change in rights as long as there was not an increase in the number of stock grazed, and each permit holder would transfer twenty percent of his herd to other areas every year. This agreement was designed to eventually eliminate grazing within the park boundaries.

Ammon, like many other ranchers had taken out loans on the future of wool during the early 1930s, banking on an advantageous market. “In 1930 in the spring after the shearing, he only lost a few cents a pound on the wool,” said Monte. “That year they got less for the lambs, a little over half of what they were worth, so the story goes. In 1932, the bottom fell completely out of it. The banks went broke then, too. That’s when he lost his holdings and everything. I think he ended up with thirty-five acres in the second red rock hollow, and he was able to sell the sheep”¹⁹⁶

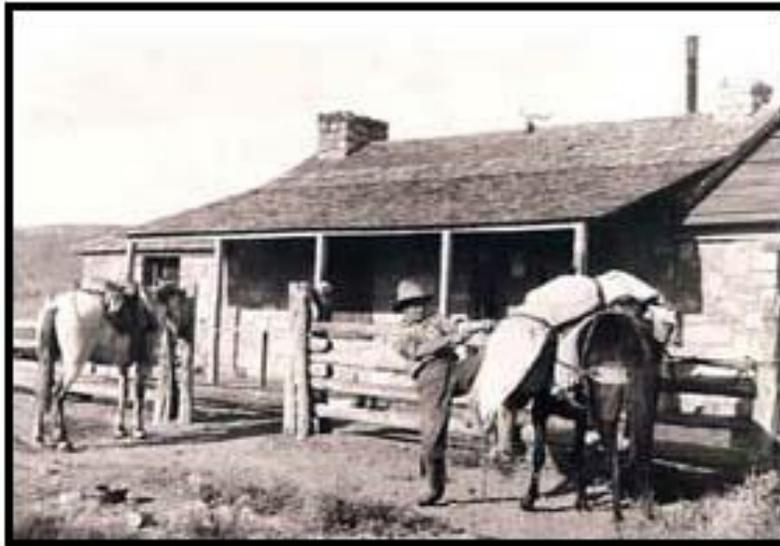
Without the sheep, providing for his family became very difficult for Ammon. Jobs, which had always been very limited in the small towns of southern Utah, were almost nonexistent. “You couldn’t just go to work like you can now, nor was there any relief for those who

couldn't work. If you couldn't work you either borrowed or stole, and there was a lot of that going on," said Reta. Making matters worse was a series of droughts in the area during the early 1930s. As if that were not enough, the single Garfield county bank shut its doors two years after the stock market crash, causing many residents to lose their savings.¹⁹⁷

These were lean years, but because most families had been farmers and ranchers for several generations, they were able to provide basic necessities out of habit. As formerly profitable markets for their products gradually dried up, people adopted a barter system to fulfill their needs locally. Ammon turned his hand to blacksmithing to make ends meet. "He had a natural talent at blacksmithing, but it was very hard work," according to Reta. "He put the iron around wagon wheels and made many wagons out of old car frames. These auto-tired wagons rolled much easier than the old large iron wheeled wagons. He made and repaired all kinds of farming equipment for the country around Cannonville. I remember going out to the blacksmith shop and turning the wheel on the bellows that caused the air to go up to the flame and make it hotter."¹⁹⁸



Left: Ammon cooking in camp. Right: Ammon "loved to wear boots and always had a cowboy hat," according to Reta.



*Above: Ammon packing a mule at Rock Ranch.
Below: Ammon, right, preparing to ride a bronco.*

Among the many ways Ammon sought to earn enough money for his family's support was acting as a guide through the red rock country for the increasing number of visitors attracted to Bryce Canyon. With the official designation of Bryce as a national park in 1928, roads were upgraded to allow automobile tourists easier access to its wonders. Cannonville became a natural base for travelers entering "Utah's New Wonderland."¹⁹⁹ Ammon was considered to be an expert on the local countryside, having spent most of his life travelling across the rough territory of Garfield County with his sheep herd. "He knew the red rock country like the back of his hand," said Reta. "He would stay with the sheep for months, going out by horseback and come back by horseback. He knew every trail in those mountains. At one time, Ammon served as a guide for an exploration group who were seeking the axe Father Escalante used to hew steps down the red sandstone cliffs to the Colorado River so the party could cross. Ammon actually found the axe, though Dr. Frazier, his friends and party head, received the honor."²⁰⁰

Ammon also taught himself to carve figures out of petrified wood he found in the countryside "especially pieces with many colors and knots in them," according to Monte. He sold these pieces to Bryce Canyon curio shops "for whatever he could get out of them to make a dollar here and there."²⁰¹

Bryce Becomes a National Treasure

The tourist value of Bryce Canyon had been under consideration by various parties since 1915, when efforts began to improve roads and promote the area to the outside world. National Forest Supervisor J.W. Humphrey took visiting dignitaries to Bryce and made possible the first descriptive articles appearing in tourist magazines. In the meantime, moving pictures and postcards began circulating and Bryce began to attract visitors from all parts of the nation. Congress eventually created Bryce National Monument in 1923, adding campgrounds, cabins, and a lodge in 1928.

Full of Fun

Cannonville was still a small town, without a theater or drug store, and it was only in the summer of 1930 that the “mail came through from Salt Lake City in one day.”²⁰² Not having a theater didn’t stop local residents from enjoying films, however. Residents who were able to travel headed for “the talking picture show at Panguitch,”²⁰³ and for locals who stayed in Cannonville, a weekly silent movie was shown “with a gas-powered projector. Admittance was a dime, but the donation of foods such as fruit, vegetable or freshly baked bread was also accepted.”²⁰⁴ Some of the more popular silent films of the day included *Borderline* with Kenneth Macpherson, *City Lights* and *Modern Times* with Charlie Chaplin, and *All Quiet on the Western Front*, directed by Lewis Milestone.

Another anticipated event was the Friday night dance at the town hall with bands such as ‘The Harmony Four’ furnishing the music.²⁰⁵ Attendees followed a set protocol in which “men went to the west side of the hall and the ladies to the east side. When the music started playing, the men came across to their wives and the single men to their girlfriends and started that way. Then they took turns dancing with everyone. There was a dance manager so everyone had to act just right or they were escorted outside. At the end of the dance the musicians started playing the ‘Home Waltz’ and the boys found their girlfriends and the married men their wives and always danced that dance together.”²⁰⁶

Children’s dances and ice cream socials were held in the afternoons for special occasions and holidays such as George Washington’s birthday, and groups of children rehearsed programs to be presented at school and church. Travelling entertainers occasionally toured through the county, as noted in the local paper when “Pete, Pat and Pop passed through here in their circus car Saturday enroute to Henrieville,”²⁰⁷ but there were “few professional musicians,” said Reta, who recalled “a Filipino band that travelled throughout the west, and if they were in the area they would play for a dance, but that’s the only music I remember.”²⁰⁸

One of the Davis family’s favorite activities was fishing on nearby Pine Lake, especially after Ammon teamed up with his uncle W.D. Henderson to build a boat for weekend excursions.²⁰⁹ “Saturday evening Mr. and Mrs. Ammon Davis and Mr. and Mrs. W. D. Henderson left for the fishing grounds to be on hand early in the morning of June 15, ready for business,” reported *The Kane County Standard*.²¹⁰ Even when the fishing was not successful, everyone “had a fine time boating and swimming.”²¹¹



Cannonville's LDS chapel in the 1930s.

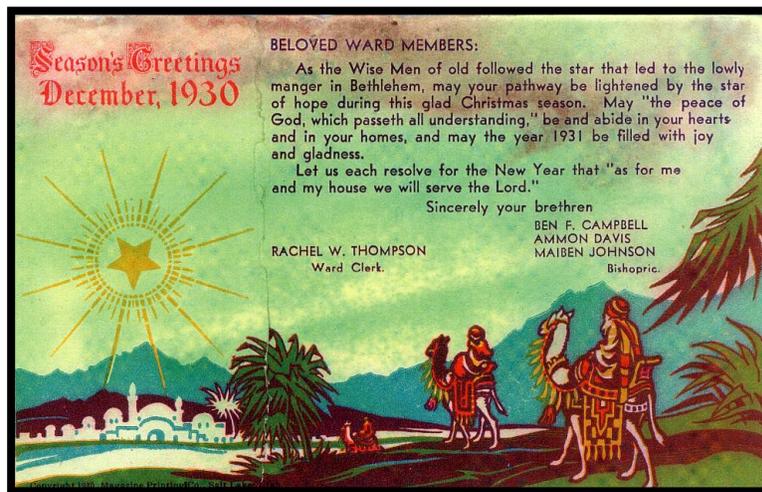
Crisis of Faith

Ammon was the most stable and content he had been in several years when he was called to serve as first counselor to Bishop Benjamin Campbell in November, 1929.²¹² The Cannonville ward remained small, with two hundred and twenty two members, fifty two of them children,²¹³ but there was enough work to keep the Davis family busy. Ammon was commissioned with building repairs, restoring the meeting house bell that “had been out of commission for a long time.”²¹⁴ Millie was called at the same time to serve as president of the Young Women’s Mutual Improvement Association (YMIA), becoming involved with the other officers in “outlining the winter’s course of lessons” and hosting Saturday evening parties for the youth at her home.²¹⁵

As a member of the bishopric with sons aged eight and six years old, Ammon participated in the church sponsored father-son outings held every August. The annual event was promoted by the LDS leadership as a chance to build stronger bonds in the “beauty spots” of the local mountains. “Fathers, do your sons know you in the friendly attitudes and imaginative contemplations produced by a visit to the mountains?” asked a piece in *The Garfield County News*. “Let every father and son in the stake join us on this outing. Let the women really run the town for a couple of days.”²¹⁶ Hiking, swimming, games and picking pin gum were followed by a bonfire and “historical talk by John H. Davis” at a camp site chosen by Ammon.

Reta remembered her father as “a very ardent church man at this time,” who made an effort to remain strong in the faith. “He had memorized *The Book of Mormon*. He read it over and over and over again. He bore his testimony to me years later on his death bed and he said, ‘*The Book of Mormon* is true and don’t you ever doubt it’s true because it is.’”²¹⁷

Unfortunately, it wasn’t long before Ammon faced several challenges that undermined his resolve to remain active in the church. He was shaken by the sudden death of his brother Douglas, who was shot and killed “by an outlaw and a coward without a chance to defend himself,”²¹⁸ in November, 1932.²¹⁹ Not long after Douglas’ death, Ammon discovered a betrayal of trust in the bishopric that, according to his daughter, caused him to distance himself from the church. “One day I was walking to church and here come Dad, walking home just as fast as he could,” said Reta. “He passed me by and I turned around and said, ‘Dad, aren’t you going to church?’ He said, ‘No! And I don’t give a damn if you do, either!’ I went on down to church and finished my duties and later I found out that the bishop had been taking the tithing money and spending it on food for his big family. So Dad left the church then and he never, ever went back because he didn’t want to inform on the bishop.”²²⁰ The greatest blow of all, however, was yet to come.



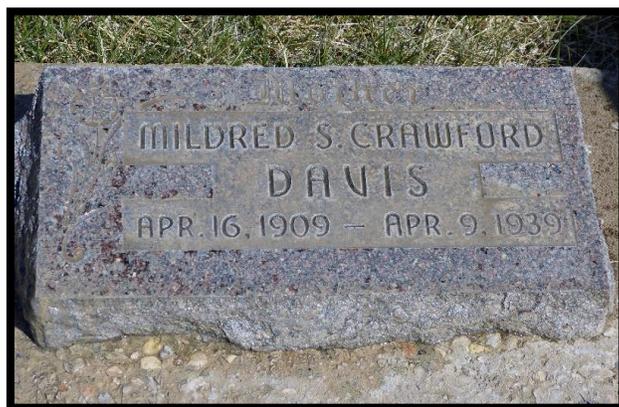
Christmas greetings in 1930 from Cannonville’s bishopric, with Ammon as first counselor.

The Final Blow

Ammon and Millie struggled on during the depression, managing their large family the best they could with their meager resources. LaFaye eventually left Cannonville for a job in Salt Lake City, while the older boys, John and Wells, continued their help on the farm and ranch.

In January, 1939, Millie gave birth to her fourth child, Stanley.²²¹ As usual, the birth occurred at home and Millie's recovery went well, but three months later, Millie came down with a case of influenza. This development was disturbingly similar to the circumstances surrounding RDeen's death twelve years earlier. Unfortunately, just when Millie seemed to be recovering, she had a sudden heart attack and died on 9 April.²²² Once again, Ammon was left alone to raise the younger children: Dell was nine, Laura Jane seven, Gaylene four, and Stanley three months old.²²³

Vernon recalled how distraught Ammon was over the death of his wife. "The morning after Mildred passed away he walked down to see me," wrote his brother Vernon. "I have never seen a person so broken down with grief. Unless a person has lived through similar harrowing experiences, he can scarcely realize the grief and heartache Ammon must have suffered during the years that followed. Never again was he to sit down and enjoy a dinner with a woman who was his wife. After years of marriage he was now destined to live out the rest of his life as a single person."²²⁴



Mildred's grave in the Cannonville Cemetery.

ENDNOTES

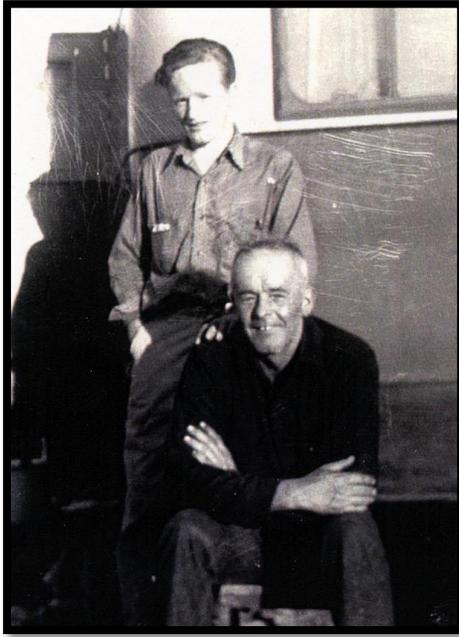
- ¹⁶⁰ *The Garfield County News*, 22 March, 1929, Cannonville.
- ¹⁶¹ Interview with Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ¹⁶² Sarah Mildred “Millie” Crawford (1909-1939), #KWDR-MN3, www.familysearch.org
- ¹⁶³ “Ammon Davis-Sarah Mildred Crawford family group sheet,” supplied 1997 by Monte “J” Davies. This sheet offers only a generic list of materials consulted.
- ¹⁶⁴ Adelbert Delos Crawford (1870-1945), #KWZP-HGF, www.familysearch.org
- ¹⁶⁵ Sarah Catherine (DeLange) Crawford (1871-1923), KWZP-HGN, www.familysearch.org
- ¹⁶⁶ Leona Arabell (Crawford) Peacock (1893-1967), #KWZ8-LK8, www.familysearch.org
- ¹⁶⁷ Mavoureen Adell (Crawford) Peterson (1897-1949), #KWC8-W56, www.familysearch.org
- ¹⁶⁸ Feneth Nathaniel Crawford (1899-1961), #KWVP-5GR, www.familysearch.org
- ¹⁶⁹ Rodna Gureenea (Crawford) Campbell (1911-1999), #KWC4-G1J, www.familysearch.org
- ¹⁷⁰ Elizabeth (1901-1901); Albert O. (1903-1903); John L. (1904-1904); Vontella (1905-1905). “Adelbert Delos Crawford -Sarah Catherine DeLange family group sheet,” prepared in 2012 by Shelley Dawson Davies. This sheet uses the sources found on www.new.familysearch.org
- ¹⁷¹ *The Garfield County News*, 19 Oct 1928.
- ¹⁷² *Ibid*, 3 May, 1929 Local News [Panguitch]. “Mr. Partridge” is a reference to the saying, “A little bird told me,” used when private information was being shared without divulging the source of the news.
- ¹⁷³ “Ammon Davis-Sarah Mildred Crawford family group sheet,” supplied 1997 by Monte “J” Davies.
- ¹⁷⁴ *The Garfield County News*, 5 July, 1929 Cannonville.
- ¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 19 July, 1929 Cannonville.
- ¹⁷⁶ All five of the Davis children were living with Ammon and Mildred at the time of the 1930 census: Ammon Davis household, 1930 U.S. census, Garfield County, Cannonville Precinct, enumeration district 9-3, supervisor’s district 6 page 2A. April 14. Roll 2416 Image 16.0.
- ¹⁷⁷ Cherie Baldwin Scoffield, “Reta Davis Baldwin Funeral Address,” 21 November, 2005, typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ¹⁷⁸ Two lines from *The Garfield County News* indicate the amount of time Ammon spent away from the family: 3 June, 1931, “Mr. Ammon Davis is home from the sheep her after being gone all winter;” 29 January, 1932, “Ammon Davis and Jasper Henderson came in from the sheep herd and spent several days with their families.”
- ¹⁷⁹ Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Reynolds Family Organization, *Enoch and Mary Elizabeth Shakespear Reynolds: A Family History* (1979), page 98.
- ¹⁸⁰ Interview with Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ¹⁸¹ Adelbert Delos Davis (1930-1982), #KWDR-MN9, www.familysearch.org Adelbert was born on his grandfather Crawford’s sixtieth birthday, 11 April, 1930. “Ammon Davis-Mildred Sara Crawford family group sheet,” supplied 1997 by Monte “J” Davies. This sheet offers only a generic list of materials consulted.
- ¹⁸² Rodna is shown living with the family in the 1930 U.S. Census (Ammon Davis household, Cannonville, Garfield County, Utah, Page 2A, Enumeration District 3; Roll 2416, Image 16.0). She returned home to Koosharem after visiting her sister “for some time,” according to the 5 June, 1931 issue of *The Garfield County News*. She was married the same year. “Adelbert Delos Crawford -Sarah Catherine DeLange family group sheet,” prepared in 2012 by Shelley Dawson Davies. This sheet uses the sources found on www.new.familysearch.org.
- ¹⁸³ Reta Davis Baldwin, “RDeen Reynolds: Child, Wife, Mother,” 1979, typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.

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- ¹⁸⁴ Interview with Monte “J” Davies, July 1998. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸⁶ Laura Jane (Davis) Whitaker Auble (1932-2006), #LNDN-5XK, www.familysearch.org
- ¹⁸⁷ Gaylene (Davis) Veater (1935-).
- ¹⁸⁸ “Ammon Davis-Sarah Mildred Crawford family group sheet,” supplied 1997 by Monte “J” Davies.
- ¹⁸⁹ The William J. Henderson, Jr. home was the only house in town with an indoor toilet, according to Reta. Interview, Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005.
- ¹⁹⁰ Scoffield, “Reta Davis Baldwin Funeral Address,” 21 November, 2005, typescript.
- ¹⁹¹ Interview with Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ¹⁹² *Ibid.*
- ¹⁹³ The prize was seventy-five cents, according to *The Garfield County News*, 18 July, 1938.
- ¹⁹⁴ Interview, Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005.
- ¹⁹⁵ *The Garfield County News*, 7 November, 1930.
- ¹⁹⁶ Interview, Monte “J” Davies, July 1998.
- ¹⁹⁷ Linda King Newell and Vivian Linford Talbot, *A History of Garfield County* (Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, 1998), page 284-285.
- ¹⁹⁸ Interview, Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005.
- ¹⁹⁹ Newell and Talbot, *A History of Garfield County*, page 252.
- ²⁰⁰ Interview, Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005.
- ²⁰¹ Interview, Monte “J” Davies, July 1998.
- ²⁰² *The Garfield County News*, 11 July, 1930.
- ²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 16 May, 1930.
- ²⁰⁴ Newell and Talbot, *A History of Garfield County*, page 290.
- ²⁰⁵ Scoffield, “Reta Davis Baldwin Funeral Address,” 21 November, 2005, typescript.
- ²⁰⁶ Newell and Talbot, *A History of Garfield County*, page 289.
- ²⁰⁷ *The Garfield County News*, 25 May, 1928.
- ²⁰⁸ Interview, Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005.
- ²⁰⁹ *The Garfield County News*, 11 July, 1930, Cannonville.
- ²¹⁰ *The Kane County Standard*, 20 June, 1930.
- ²¹¹ *The Garfield County News*, 8 August, 1933.
- ²¹² *Ibid.*, 8 November, 1929.
- ²¹³ Andrew Jenson, *Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1941) page 114-115.
- ²¹⁴ *The Garfield County News*, 27 February, 1931.
- ²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 22 November and 28 November, 1930.
- ²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8 August, 1930.
- ²¹⁷ Interview, Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005.
- ²¹⁸ John H. Davis, *Among My Memories*, (self-published, undated), page 58.
- ²¹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ²²⁰ Interview, Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005.
- ²²¹ Stanley Douglas Davis (1939-1967), #KWDY-7RQ, www.familysearch.org
- ²²² Sarah Mildred (Crawford) Davis death certificate #12, Garfield County (1939), Utah Department of Health, Salt Lake City.
- ²²³ Baldwin, “RDeen Reynolds: Child, Wife, Mother,” 1979, typescript.
- ²²⁴ Vernon Davis, “A Tribute to Ammon by His Brother Vernon,” undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.

Chapter 5

A Sad Ending

Lasting Effects



Ammon and Wells in the desert during the late 1940s.

Ammon was a broken man. He had lost his sheep herd, his brother and both of his wives. Most importantly, he had lost his faith. He coped with this emotional devastation by “resorting to the massive intake of sedative that is alcohol,” according to Vernon.²²⁵ It was the beginning of the end for the family. “When his second wife died he fell apart and took to drinking,” said Monte. “He was a weak man; a good man, but a weak man. He had a weakness and the devil found it.”²²⁶

Twenty-year old LaFaye agreed to leave her job in Salt Lake and return home to manage the household. “Her task was not an easy one,” Reta noted. “LaFaye found herself in the same position as Millie had been a ten years before, responsible for the care of four

small children who were not her own, and trying to do so with meager resources and no modern conveniences at all.²²⁷ LaFaye took charge of Dell, Laura Jane, Gaylene, and baby Stanley, who was only three months old. Reta married that August, leaving fifteen-year old John A. and twelve –year old Wells, to fend for themselves. “My half siblings, they could be gone two or three weeks at a time and Ammon wouldn’t even know they were gone out of the house,” said Monte.²²⁸

The family limped along until LaFaye married a year and a half after Millie’s death and moved to Nevada with her new husband, Adam Mulberry.²²⁹ With both Reta and LaFaye gone, Ammon was forced to stay home with the children full time. “This likely was the most difficult period of his life. No wife, no job, no one to really care,” said Reta²³⁰. It was undoubtedly the most difficult time for the children, as well, who now had to navigate life with only an alcoholic father in the home.

There was still very little work to be found in Cannonville, no chance of regaining the sheep herds and the income from blacksmithing was not enough to cover the bills. Ammon found a way out of both his physical and emotional responsibility for the children at the beginning of World War II, when jobs began opening up all over the country in preparation for the coming conflict. He signed on to work as an ammunitions handler at the U.S. Navy Ammunition Depot in Hawthorn, Nevada.²³¹ Hawthorn happened to be one hundred thirty four miles south of Reno, where LaFaye and Adam were living, and five hundred miles away from his troubles in Cannonville.

Once again, Ammon had abandoned his children. “Father had some hard knocks, but he also had the responsibility of four children from one family and five children from another family and he didn’t accept responsibility for any of them,” remarked Reta.²³² Ammon arranged for a neighbor to care for his two youngest daughters, Laura and Gaylene, in exchange for his home, land and belongings. Ten-year old Dell was taken in by Ammon’s half-brother Sherman and his family, while little Stanley was sent to live with a nearby cousin.²³³ John and Wells probably found homes with friends until they each joined the service: John was inducted into the army, while Wells joined the navy.²³⁴

Ammon decided to accompany Wells to Salt Lake City for his enlistment into the military, and dropped by the Johnson home for a visit with his sister. It was the first time sixteen-year old Monte had met his father. “Ammon just took a look at me and said, ‘It looks like you’re doing all right,’ and he left. I didn’t see him for years after that,” said Monte.²³⁵ Monte’s first meeting with his half-brother didn’t go well, either. “Wells said, ‘C’mon Mont, let’s go downtown.’ We no sooner got started down that big, steep hill when he turned around

and busted me in the stomach as hard as he could, just like that. He said, 'I want you to know something, Mont. Don't you ever think you're better than I am.' I had a better life than he did, see. This is how my brothers and sisters were affected, because nobody wanted us, including our own father."²³⁶ Ammon never made an effort to contact Monte again.

Ammon continued on to Hawthorne, where he found housing near the ammunition depot on the main route between Las Vegas and Reno. He became one of the more than seven thousand armed forces and civilian workers employed there until the end of the war in 1945.²³⁷



Naval Ammunition Depot at Hawthorn, Nevada.

A Slow Death

When the ammunition boom ended along with the war, fifty-year old Ammon retired to Reno where LaFaye and her family were living. He moved into the Mulberry home at 480 Grove Street where he resided for the next fifteen years.²³⁸ He continued to sink deeper into alcoholism until he eventually destroyed his health, developing alcohol induced diabetes. Any injury on the legs or feet left untreated would have developed into a severe infection, since diabetes changes the body's ability to defend itself. Ammon was hospitalized with a serious infection in 1955.²³⁹ "He developed diabetes from heavy drinking and started losing his toes," said Monte. "He had operations to take his foot off on both legs. They started at the feet and ended at the hip sockets."²⁴⁰

Ammon apparently rallied for a while, as he felt well enough to work in the garden in 1959, according a letter written to Gaylene, in which he also talked about doing "some archeology work" with a friend who asked him to identify some "Indian writing he had found top of a hill. He asked if I would go out with him and look things over," he wrote." He and his wife came and got me in a jeep. We went out and it was kinda funny. We wasn't twenty feet until I saw the foundation of a ruin, then I found eleven more and they had walked through some of them and never saw them. The man said he just did not know what to look for. I think they are very ancient. We could not find any of their artifacts, no pieces of pottery or arrow heads, only pieces of fresh water clam shells."²⁴¹

However well he managed to walk around in the desert, it wasn't long until Ammon once again developed a life-threatening infection, which forced him to be hospitalized. "There they removed both legs in an extreme effort to save his life, but he never left the hospital again," said Reta, who visited her father in Reno several times. "Seeing him like that made me cry. I don't think they ever gave him any hope that he could ever recover."²⁴²

Ammon's emotional state had also deteriorated to the point where he lost all interest in family members. "Wells loved his dad, even after all the bad things he did. Wells went up to see his dad on the last operation when he had both his legs cut off and Ammon wouldn't have nothing to do with him," said Monte. "Wells never got over that; he was like a wounded animal. He became an alcoholic and ended up as a watchman out in the desert at a mine. One night, his cigarette started a fire and he was too drunk to save himself."²⁴³



Ammon spent his last years with LaFaye Mulberry and her family in Reno. Above: with an unidentified granddaughter. Below, left to right: John "A," Adam Mulberry, Ammon, Dennis Mulberry.

The Tyranny of Alcoholism

Alcoholism begins when an individual starts relying on alcohol to enhance his mood and escape from his problems. A person soon becomes obsessed about where his next drink will come from, abandoning responsibility for other aspects of his life. Relationships at home and work break down as the drinker may deny having a drinking problem. Hangovers, blackouts, stomach and other health-related problems are regular occurrences.

Physical and mental health degrades as the body's organs become increasingly damaged. Malnutrition also takes its toll as large amounts of alcohol interfere with the digestive process and inhibit the passage of nutrients to the bloodstream. Compounding the problem, a damaged liver from consumption prevents nutrients from being converted into a usable form that the body can assimilate. Physical health is quite poor by the time the alcoholic reaches the end alcoholism stages.

Doctors at the Veteran's Administration Hospital in Reno were unable to halt the deterioration of Ammon's body, even with the series of drastic amputations. Gangrene coupled with hypertensive heart disease eventually ended his life in the early morning of 6 November, 1960.²⁴⁴ "When he died he was only half a man," said Monte. "He had his legs cut off clear up to his pelvis from gangrene setting in from diabetes and hardening of the arteries. He had one operation, two operations, three operations. They just kept cutting his legs off until there was nothing left to cut. Alcohol killed him."

The family gathered for Ammon's funeral at Walton Funeral Home's Sierra Chapel on 9 November, 1960, where a local bishop conducted the services.²⁴⁵ Ammon was buried at the Mountain View Cemetery in Reno the same day.²⁴⁶

Monte, who hadn't seen his father for almost twenty years, decided to attend the funeral with his wife and children. It was the first time some of Ammon's children had ever met. "As we drove into Faye's yard, Dell came out," said Monte. "Dell took one look at me and said, 'You must be my brother Monte.'" Monte's wife, Toni, was "shocked that some of these brothers and sisters had never seen each other before this."²⁴⁷ Steps were taken to build a better bond between the siblings as they spent time together after the funeral, and in later years with visits to each other's homes.

Although Ammon left a legacy of pain and sorrow that his children spent the balance of their lives trying to overcome, Vernon sought reasons not to condemn his brother. "The rest of us who suffer lesser degrees of stress are all too prone to point the finger of shame toward those who feel driven to seek almost any means of releasing themselves from unbearable depression. I freely admit that in times past I have placed myself in the seat of judgment and resorted to this kind of censure of Ammon. At some future time, on some brighter shore, I hope to meet him once again and tender to him my profound apology. Like all the rest of us, he did numerous things that had better been left undone and, as is true of many of us, he paid a price for his mistakes many, many times over. Now he deserves in full measure our love, honor and respect for the kind of man he could have been if fate had only been kinder to him."²⁴⁸



*The Davis children gather at Ammon's funeral:
John "A," LaFaye, Reta and Monte.*

ENDNOTES

- ²²⁵ Vernon Davis, "A Tribute to Ammon by His Brother Vernon," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ²²⁶ Interview with Monte "J" Davies, July 1998. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ²²⁷ Interview with Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ²²⁸ Interview, Monte "J" Davies, July 1998.
- ²²⁹ Faye married Adam Mulberry (1913-2004), 16 August, 1940. "Ammon Davis-RDeen Reynolds family group sheet," supplied 1997 by Monte "J" Davies. This sheet offers only a generic list of materials consulted.
- ²³⁰ Interview, Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005.
- ²³¹ Ammon Davis death certificate, # 60-2401 (1960), Nevada Division of Health, Carson City.
- ²³² Interview, Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005.
- ²³³ *Ibid.*
- ²³⁴ Interview with Monte "J" Davies and Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 9 June, 2002. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ²³⁵ Interview, Monte "J" Davies and Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 9 June, 2002.
- ²³⁶ Interview with Monte "J" Davies and Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, December 1998. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ²³⁷ David W. Toll, "Description and History of Hawthorne," <http://www.nevadaweb.com/cnt/pio/hawth/>
- ²³⁸ Ammon Davis death certificate, #60-2401 (1960), Nevada Division of Health, Carson City.
- ²³⁹ Ammon mentioned being in the hospital four years earlier. Letter from Ammon Davis (no address survives) to Gaylene, Glen and Gary (no address survives), 22 February, 1959. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ²⁴⁰ Interview, Monte "J" Davies, July 1998.
- ²⁴¹ Letter from Ammon Davis (no address survives) to Gaylene, Glen and Gary, 22 February, 1959.
- ²⁴² Interview, Reta (Davis) Baldwin, 27 May, 2005.
- ²⁴³ Interview, Monte "J" Davies, July 1998.
- ²⁴⁴ Ammon Davis death certificate, #60-2401 (1960), Nevada Division of Health, Carson City.
- ²⁴⁵ Ammon Davis funeral program, 9 November, 1960. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ²⁴⁶ Ammon Davis death certificate, #60-2401 (1960), Nevada Division of Health, Carson City.
- ²⁴⁷ Interview, Monte "J" Davies and Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, December 1998.
- ²⁴⁸ Davis, "A Tribute to Ammon by His Brother Vernon," undated typescript.

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