

# Alexander Dawson and Elizabeth Jane Fowle



A Family History

by Shelley Dawson Davies

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# Chapter 1

## Coming of Age

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Alexander



*Looking down a busy street in Wick, Scotland.*

On the northern tip of Scotland's rugged eastern coast, in an area of dramatic coastline and ocean cliffs, lies the thriving estuary town of Wick, a community that even now revolves around its harbor and seafaring traditions. In the 1800s, hundreds of fishing boats made port in Wick's harbor, netting so much herring during the season that sailors could smell the docks long before they saw them. Although the local economy turned on the "silver darlings," there was plenty of money to be made in supporting businesses such as rope making and ship building. There were at one time four saw mills furnishing lumber for the dozen ship yards along the river, at least one of which was owned by William Dawson.<sup>1</sup>

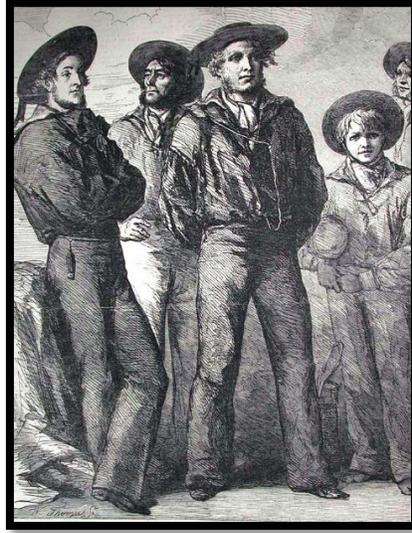
William was a prosperous young man who also held title to property in Fife Keith, a small town about seventy-five miles south down the coast, which had been given to him by the Duke of Gordon for faithful service to the English government.<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Harper<sup>3</sup> was a few months shy of turning eighteen years old when she married William on a clear spring day in May, 1836. William, although only twenty-one years old, was in the position to set up a lovely household for his new bride in Wick, where the newlyweds wasted little time starting a family of their own. With the exception of the earliest months, Elizabeth spent the initial year of her marriage anticipating

the birth of her first child. It was in the middle of July, 1837, when the boy was born. He was christened Alexander,<sup>4</sup> after William's brother.<sup>5</sup>

Alexander was joined by a sister, Lizzie,<sup>6</sup> the next September, and a brother Will,<sup>7</sup> in the spring of 1839. For a few brief months, the Dawsons enjoyed caring for and playing with their three children, dressing them up for visits with their grandparents and church on Sundays. Then, for what reason William and Elizabeth could not understand, the shadow of death fell over their household. They lost baby Will in September, 1839, at the age of five months. A son, David,<sup>8</sup> was born in June the next year, but died three months later, only weeks after two-year old Lizzie passed away in September, 1840.<sup>9</sup>

Elizabeth was inconsolable, so emotionally devastated that she found it difficult to attend to Alexander, who spent more and more time under the care of his great aunt Margaret<sup>10</sup> and great uncle Alexander Milne.<sup>11</sup> The Milnes, childless after twenty-five years of marriage, had become very attached to Alex, and appealed to William and Elizabeth to let them raise the boy. "His [great] aunt and uncle wanted Alex's mother give him to them, but she didn't want to," Alex's daughter, Emma Simpson<sup>12</sup> related. "She said she would let him live with them, but she wouldn't give him away, so he went as a little child and lived with his aunt and uncle,"<sup>13</sup> where he was loved and raised as the Milne's own son for the next ten years.

By the time Alexander was fourteen years old, he was as rebellious as any other teenager, and began to chafe under the duties required of him at home. He watched as other young men joined sailing crews headed for what he imagined to be great adventures on the sea, and determined that he, too, would escape the confines of Wick. "His aunt sent him to the laundry with a basket of clothes each week. He thought he was too big to do this and it embarrassed him," said Emma, who heard the story from her father. "One morning he went with the clothes down to the laundry and from there he went to the dock and asked the captain of a ship if he would take him on as a cabin boy. The captain said, 'Laddy, how old are you?' Father said, 'I'm sixteen,' The captain said, 'You're a small lad for sixteen, but I'll take you on and try you.' So Father went on as a cabin boy and from that time his uncle and aunt didn't know what happened to him. They never did find out until he came home several years later.



*English sailors in the 1850s.*

“One day, as Father was standing on the deck of his ship watching the ocean, his aunt came and stood by his side as plain as he had ever seen anything. It astonished him. He said when he turned around to speak to her she was gone, so he took his little book out of his pocket and wrote down the hour and the day and the date. When he got back to Scotland, he went home and found that was the very hour and day that she had passed away.<sup>14</sup> From then on it made him have a realization what life was,” said Emma.<sup>15</sup> Alex still had a taste for adventure, and soon left Wick again for the high seas. “He followed the life of a seaman for eight years, until he was twenty-one,” said Emma. “He went on as a cabin boy and when he left he was an able seaman. He visited every port of any size in the whole world during that time.”<sup>16</sup>

Excitement didn’t always come as pleasant experiences, of course. There was always an element of danger present in any voyage on a sailing ship. Emma remembered hearing her father describe crossings when “it was pump ship or sink”, water right up to their waists the biggest part of the time.”<sup>17</sup> On one occasion, Alexander’s boastful captain made a wager of ten pounds<sup>18</sup> with another captain that his ship would be first to return back to England on a journey to South Africa. “Father’s captain went out to mid-ocean, figuring he would get a gale to blow him straight into England. They lay there, never moved a length of the ship for six weeks. They ate all of the food they had on board for the voyage and all they had left was tea and vinegar. They planned to kill the captain’s old nanny goat the next day when they sighted the ship with which they had made the wager. She was on her way back to South Africa [from England] and happened to spy Father’s ship and came to their rescue,” recounted Emma.<sup>19</sup>

## Kith and Kin

*Birth and death visited William and Elizabeth Dawson often. While Elizabeth eventually became the mother of fourteen children, only five of them survived to adulthood. Two years after Alex was sent to live with the Milnes, the Dawsons began their family again with a baby girl, Elizabeth (1843-), named after their first daughter. Five sons and four daughters followed over the next nineteen years: John (1845-1855), Ann (Dawson) Gordon (1847-), Donald (1848-1848), Mary (1850-), William David (1852-1855), Margaret (1854-1854), John Harper (1856-1934), Isabella (1860-1861), David (1862-1863).*

*Three of the children died in 1855, all within weeks of one another. Not long after two-year old William died of pneumonia on 9 February, typhus claimed ten-year old John during the first week of March, followed by nine-month old Margaret on 5 April. Three more children died as infants: Donald (1848), Isabella at ten months of measles (1860), and David at five months (1863) from “debility from birth.”*

*Of the surviving Dawson siblings, only Alexander left Scotland. He kept up a correspondence with his family for many years. In 1874, Alex received word of his father’s death, and as the oldest child, his inheritance of the Dawson estate in Scotland valued at fifty thousand dollars. “He gave this property to his younger brother, John, if he would look after the needs of his three sisters, Elizabeth, Ann and Mary. John’s only child, a daughter named Janet, later fell heir to this property,” according to Emma.*

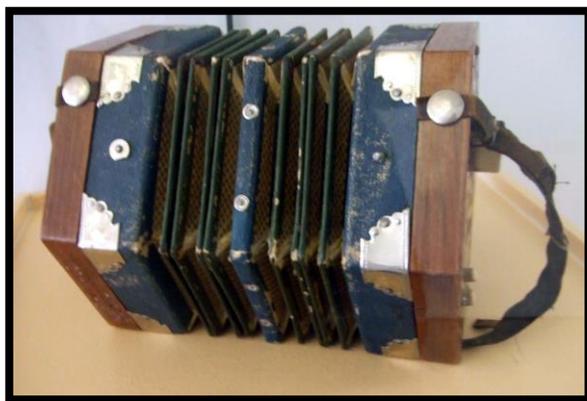


*Elizabeth Harper Dawson*

## Hearing the Gospel

The true rescue in Alexander's life came about as he overheard a series of religious debates between the ship's carpenter, a Catholic nicknamed "Chips," and the ship's first mate, William Stokes, who happened to be an Elder in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.<sup>20</sup> "No matter what subject the Catholic would bring up, Mr. Stokes could down him," related Emma. "Father's bunk was right by the first mate's cabin, and he could hear the conversations. He thought there must be something to Mormonism, so he began to investigate. He asked Mr. Stokes if he would let him read his 'Mormon Bible,' which was of course the Book of Mormon. The more he read the more convinced he became that Mormonism was true."<sup>21</sup>

It was on one particular voyage to South Africa aboard the *Acorn* that Alex became close friends, "almost like brothers," with a trio of young men by the names of Rick, Stock and John Kenny.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, the captain of the *Acorn* was a "rough man" who was so harsh with his crew that Alex and his mates decided to jump ship as soon as they reached Port Elizabeth, South Africa.<sup>23</sup> The four young men immediately found work stowing ships at the docks,<sup>24</sup> where they became acquainted with Samuel N. Slaughter, a member of the local Mormon church. Samuel saw to it that the friends found their way to Sunday meetings and learned more about the gospel.<sup>25</sup> All of the men eventually joined the church, with Alexander's baptism taking place the first day of March, 1858.<sup>26</sup>



*Alexander's seafaring accordion.*

## Adventures in South Africa

Although he was now a member of the church and had friends in Port Elizabeth, Alexander wasn't sure where life would lead him next. One day as he was roaming around the docks, "there was a ship put up for bid and Father bid on this ship," said Emma. "The auctioneer knocked it down to him. He did not have a penny in his pocket and he did not know what to do. As he stood pondering, a man with whom he had made friends came up and said, 'Well done, Alex.' Father said, 'What do you mean, well done? I haven't any money to pay for it.' The man said, 'I will let you have all the money you need to pay for it.' He accepted the money and paid for the ship."<sup>27</sup>

This proved to be the beginning of Alexander's many successful business ventures. He broke down the ship and sold the parts for cash. "He got more than he paid for the whole ship for the brass bolts alone," related Emma. "On that deal Father cleared \$1,500.00.<sup>28</sup> That put him on his feet. He then took the three men who had deserted ship with him and hired others and started contracting stowing ships.

"The first ship he stowed, he got it half loaded and the captain came in and looked around and told him he would not get one third of the cargo of wool in that ship that had been gotten in at other times. He told the captain that if he did not get more wool in the ship it would not cost him a cent. When Father was through stowing the ship, he had five hundred more bales than had ever been loaded before. By doing this he got a chance to get more ships than he could stow," said Emma.

Meanwhile, Alex and his friends pushed the fact that they had deserted their ship into the back of their minds, until "one day, as he and his men were stowing a ship, Father looked out at sea and said to his companions, 'Here comes the old *Acorn!*' the ship they had deserted. They dropped everything they were doing and beat it, because they knew they would be arrested if they were found. They ran up town into a bar and had not been there more than half an hour when the captain came up with an officer of the law and said, 'Here is Dawson, Kenny, Rich and Stock,' so they locked them up in jail."<sup>29</sup>

It was bad enough to have been arrested, but to make matters worse, the jailer was an ardent Catholic who was determined to make life even more miserable than usual for his Mormon chargers. Fed only rice and water, the men were forced to sleep on the floor and were given the worst jobs possible.<sup>30</sup> "Father said of all the dirty jobs that were to be done, they had to do them," according to Emma. "Often times there would be bodies washed up on the shore that were

decomposed, and they had to take care of them. He especially remembered one time there was a Negro on the shore, and it was so terrible and he never could get it out of his mind. Then, three weeks after they were locked up, the jailer suddenly died. The next jailer was different. Nothing was too good for the boys.”<sup>31</sup>

The sympathetic jailer allowed members from the local LDS church to bring packets of provisions in to the young men, who were not only hungry for homemade cooking, but righteous company, as well. While all four men were grateful for the provisions so kindly donated to them, they were also delighted by Annie Huey and Elizabeth Jane Fowle,<sup>32</sup> the two young ladies who were sent to deliver the food. Alexander was especially taken with Elizabeth. “It turned out to be a romance,” said Emma.<sup>33</sup>



*Main Street in Port Elizabeth, South Africa.*

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> William Dawson (1815-1874), #LZPP-5CT, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) where verification of all vital dates can be found. Also see family group sheets at [www.DaviesDawsonHistory.weebly.com](http://www.DaviesDawsonHistory.weebly.com)
- <sup>2</sup> Emma (Dawson) Simpson, "Historical Sketch of Alexander Dawson," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>3</sup> Elizabeth (Harper) Dawson (1818-1899), #KNZC-Y7L, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>4</sup> Alexander Dawson (1837-1918), #KWJC-GLL, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org).
- <sup>5</sup> Alexander Dawson (1818-1830), #KFGL-WM2, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Dawson (1838-1840), #2MKX-WQZ, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>7</sup> William Dawson (1839-1839), #KNZC-YML, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>8</sup> David Dawson (1840-1840), #KC76-CQH, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>9</sup> "William Dawson-Elizabeth Harper family group sheet," supplied in 1979, by Richard Rex Dawson. This sheet offers only a generic list of materials consulted.
- <sup>10</sup> Margaret (Sellar) Milne (1786-1856), #KN8N-QT9, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>11</sup> Alexander Milne (1787-1891), #KN8K-MPB, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>12</sup> Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson (1883-1969), #KWC5-71R, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)  
Interview with Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965. Transcript held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>13</sup> According to Emma, Alex was four years old when he moved in with the Milnes. Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>14</sup> Margaret died around 1856, according to [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org), which has no other information available.
- <sup>15</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>18</sup> Ten pounds is worth approximately \$2,500 dollars in 2010.  
<http://www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/>
- <sup>19</sup> Simpson, "Historical Sketch of Alexander Dawson," undated typescript, unknown author. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>20</sup> "Some History of John Kenney and His Friends, Dawson and Talbot", undated typescript, unknown author. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>21</sup> Simpson, "Historical Sketch of Alexander Dawson," undated typescript.
- <sup>22</sup> "Some History of John Kenney and His Friends, Dawson and Talbot", undated typescript, unknown author.
- <sup>23</sup> The young men jumped ship in 1858.
- <sup>24</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>25</sup> "Some History of John Kenney and His Friends, Dawson and Talbot", undated typescript, unknown author.
- <sup>26</sup> "Alexander Dawson-Elizabeth Jane Fowle family group sheet," supplied in 1979 by Richard R. Dawson. This sheet offers only a generic list of materials consulted. Also see Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, North Davis Stake, Layton Ward Membership Records, 1904-1943, FHL #00260066.
- <sup>27</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>28</sup> Approximately \$40,000 in 2011 dollars.
- <sup>29</sup> Simpson, "Historical Sketch of Alexander Dawson," undated typescript.
- <sup>30</sup> "Some History of John Kenney and His Friends, Dawson and Talbot", undated typescript, unknown author.
- <sup>31</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>32</sup> Elizabeth Jane (Fowle) Dawson (1839-1908), #KWJJ-T3B, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

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<sup>33</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.

## Chapter 2

# Early Years

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### Elizabeth



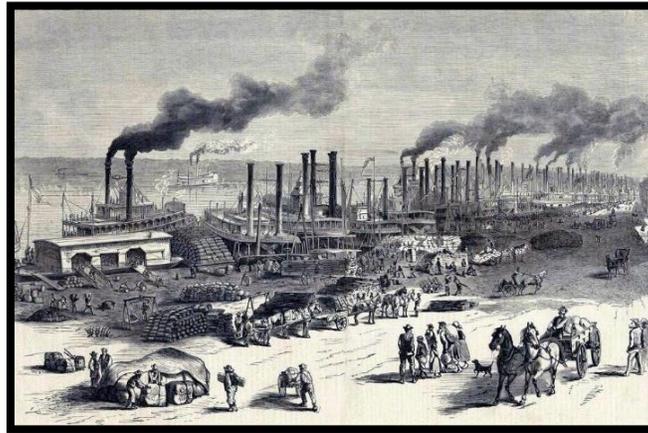
*The city of Cardiganshire, Wales in the late 1800s.*

Elizabeth Jane’s childhood was anything but typical for a young girl in the mid-nineteenth century. In an age when most people rarely ventured beyond their birthplace, Elizabeth had journeyed thousands of miles between three continents by the time she was thirteen years old. She would travel thousands of miles more before she settled into a home of her own to raise a family.

Elizabeth began life in Owmystwith, Cardiganshire, South Wales, on 15 August, 1839, the daughter of William<sup>34</sup> and Elizabeth Jane Fowle.<sup>35</sup> William was described as “a harsh man,” a temperament that likely resulted from his difficult upbringing by a widowed mother “in poor circumstances.”<sup>36</sup> Due to his mother’s poverty, William “was put out to learn gardening on an estate garden. He was not fond of [the] work, so did not follow it,” according to William’s nephew Edward T. King.<sup>37</sup> William eventually had the opportunity to pursue another livelihood after his marriage to Elizabeth Fowle, on 19 April, 1834, in Teston, Kent.<sup>38</sup> Because Elizabeth had “inherited some financial means from her father”<sup>39</sup> both William and his new bride were able to travel to London “where they entered a training school for teachers... They each got their certificate and were successful in getting a school on the Duke of Newcastle’s estate in Cardiganshire, Wales, where they resided some few years,” according to Mr. King.<sup>40</sup>

William and Elizabeth welcomed three more children after Elizabeth's birth: William (1842),<sup>41</sup> Isabelle (1844),<sup>42</sup> and Ellen (1846),<sup>43</sup> all at their comfortable home near the beautifully landscaped woods in the Ystwyth valley.<sup>44</sup>

It was while the Fowles were living in Cardiganshire that they became acquainted with a local doctor and his wife, who happened to own a sugar plantation in the West Indies. Tales of the doctor's adventures in the Caribbean islands sparked the Fowle's interest in travelling to America and "they gave up the school and sailed from Liverpool. My father and uncles went to Liverpool to see them off," said Mr. King.<sup>45</sup> The Fowles made the crossing in early 1849,<sup>46</sup> leaving behind the graves of little Ellen, who had died at the age of nine months, and four-year old Isabelle who died the previous spring.<sup>47</sup>



*The docks at St. Louis, Missouri, in the mid-1800s.*

## St. Louis, Missouri

William settled his family in St. Louis, Missouri, where both he and his wife found positions as school teachers. While in St. Louis, the family suffered an unidentified financial disaster, according to Edward King, who wrote about William losing money "through some business transaction, in partnership."<sup>48</sup> Even worse, a small pox epidemic broke out several years later and forty-nine year old Elizabeth contracted the disease. She died on 29 March, 1849.<sup>49</sup> In only a few months, William had given up a comfortable life in Wales and lost his wife and a great deal of money. He found himself alone in a foreign country with two small children to raise.

Distraught and unsure how to manage the family without his wife, William became distant and unreasonable. He made it clear that ten-year old Elizabeth was expected to take over all of the household duties, including cooking for the family and caring for her seven-year old brother. Elizabeth did the best she could, but the work was far too much for her. Although she managed to prepare simple meals, wash the dishes and sweep the house, Elizabeth found it impossible to shake out the heavy feather bed ticks every morning. In order to avoid her father's wrath, she paid a neighbor lady with skeins of her mother's embroidery silk to make the bed. Unfortunately, the neighbor refused to help Elizabeth once all the silk had been given away and she was forced to tell her father what had happened. She often told how angry he was with her.

William, who was also very particular, required that everything be in order, which made Elizabeth's work even more of a burden. He refused to accept any sort of excuse if the work was left undone. One of Elizabeth's chores was to make sure a series of wooden pipes was correctly positioned between the roof and water barrel whenever it rained. She was terribly frightened by the severe mid-western thunderstorms, but William was unmoved by her fear, insisting that she go about her work of collecting the water despite the lightening and crashing thunder around her.

Elizabeth and Willie were routinely left alone for hours while their father was away, with the children often falling asleep on the couch as they looked out of the window, waiting for their father's return. "Many times she would become so frightened and lonely she would cry and pray," wrote Emma. "One night as she was praying, her mother came and stood beside her. From then on she was never afraid to stay alone again."<sup>50</sup>

## Stepmother

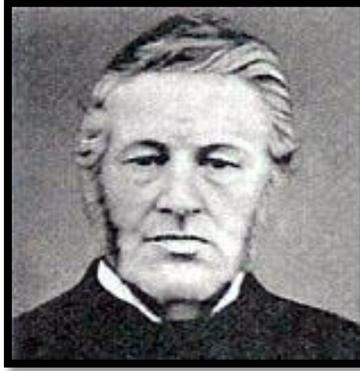
Fortunately, Elizabeth was not left to run the household alone for very long. Eleven months after the death of his first wife, William married Isabella Parks<sup>51</sup> in February, 1850, in St. Louis.<sup>52</sup> Isabella was "very kind and good to them," Emma was told, and Elizabeth and little Will were happy to have someone to mother them once again.<sup>53</sup> A new daughter, Bella,<sup>54</sup> was soon born to the family, and all was well until Isabella suddenly died in 1851. William tried to make a life for himself and his children in St. Louis, but finally returned to England in 1853.<sup>55</sup>

William may have remarried by the time he brought his family back to Kent, as Mr. King recalled “one day in September, a conveyance with passengers and baggage arrived—a woman and two children—which Uncle introduced as his wife and family.”<sup>56</sup> The Fowles stayed at the King house for several months until “Uncle Fowle decided to go to the Cape [South Africa],” according to Mr. King, who was a nine-year old boy at the time. “I recollect their leaving. It was a very cold morning. They hired a conveyance to take them to Gravesend, about twenty miles. They landed at Port Elizabeth in South Africa, then went on to Uitenhage [a few miles north of Port Elizabeth]. They did not stay in South Africa long. Mrs. Fowle, a rather delicate woman, just faded away and died. We never had particulars. I suppose Uncle felt he could not stay after that, but with William and Bella decided to return to England, leaving Elizabeth with friends at the Cape.”<sup>57</sup>

## The Huey Family

Fourteen-year old Elizabeth found a home with the Robert and Clara Huey family, longtime Port Elizabeth residents whose oldest daughter, Annie, became fast friends with Elizabeth. Mrs. Huey became “mother to her,” according to Emma.<sup>58</sup> Elizabeth quickly fit in with the household, caring for the younger children, attending school, doing housework and helping run the Huey’s family owned store, which supplied local residents with many items shipped in from locations around the world.<sup>59</sup> The harbor was one of the major seaports in South Africa at the time, where from the rocky hillside above town “one could look down at the ships laying in the bay at anchor,” said family friend Robert Bodily. “It was a beautiful sight to see. They were all sailing vessels as steam was but little used then.”<sup>60</sup>

Among the passengers of the ships docked in South Africa during the spring of 1853, were three LDS missionaries sent from Salt Lake City to establish the church in the Cape of Good Hope. Although they met with hostility from most local residents, who pelted them with rocks and eggs, six small branches with a total of 176 members were scattered around the southern tip of the continent by the time the Hueys, including Elizabeth, were converted two years later. It was a commitment that would change all of their lives forever.



*William Bernard Fowle*

## What Became of Elizabeth's Family

*William Fowle returned to England with Will and Bella around 1853. "Meantime, his friend the doctor died, and his wife returned to England, with an allowance from the sugar plantation for her support while she remained a widow. It seemed Uncle Fowle corresponded with her about a year after returning from the Cape," according to Edward King. "They were married and William and Bella were what we call put out, to keep, William to learn cricket ball making, and Bella, just a child, was left with his cousin, a Mrs. Mills at East Farleigh. Uncle got a scripture reader's position at a village called Brenchley, from there he was moved to Ashley-de-la-Zouch in Leicestershire. He occupied that position for about eight years and died there after a short illness, about 1867.*

*"During the time of travel, the children's education was very much neglected. Sometime before he died, he had William and Bella home, and I think his wife helped to remedy that past neglect. William was almost too old to benefit from early impressions, but Bella seemed to have made good progress. When her father died she went to her mother's friends, the second wife, in Ohio, U.S.A., and became a school teacher." Letter from E.T. King, Bracken Hill, Bairnsdale, Victoria, Australia, to George Bennett, Jr., 4 March, 1925.*

*Emma's account of Isabell differs slightly: "The half-sister, Isabell, born in Missouri, and left here when her father returned with the other two children to England, after married a man by the name of John Campbell. They lived in Virginia. Isabell had three children: Hattie, Lee and Eva. They corresponded with mother and my sister Effie until Aunt Isabell died about the year 1900."*

*Elizabeth's brother, William, "having been left in London with his mother's people, later married Pricilla [Owen]," according to Emma. William and Pricilla became the parents of six children. Emma (Dawson) Simpson, "Historical Sketch of Elizabeth Jane (Fowle) Dawson," undated typescript.*

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>34</sup> William Bernard Fowle (1806-1867), #LZP6-D2T, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>35</sup> Elizabeth Jane (King) Fowle (1810-1849), #LZGM-SXG, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>36</sup> William's mother was Jane (Pearson) Fowle (1782-1844), #LZKY-D9F, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) Letter from E.T. King (Bracken Hill, Bairnsdale, Victoria, Australia) to George Bennett, Jr., 4 March, 1925. Mr. King was a first cousin to Elizabeth Jane (Fowle) Dawson. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>37</sup> Edward Thomas King, (1844-1937), #KP3K-PF5. Mr. King was the son of John King (1816-1849), brother to Elizabeth Jane King. Letter from E.T. King (Bracken Hill, Bairnsdale, Victoria, Australia) to George Bennett, Jr., 4 March, 1925.
- <sup>38</sup> "William Bernard Fowle-Elizabeth Jane King family group sheet," supplied in 1979 by Richard R. Dawson. This sheet offers only a generic list of materials consulted.
- <sup>39</sup> Letter from E.T. King (Bracken Hill, Bairnsdale, Victoria, Australia) to George Bennett, Jr., 4 March, 1925.
- <sup>40</sup> E.T. King received this information from his "grandmother-in-law, who occupied the cottage where Mrs. Fowle had lived." Letter from E.T. King (Bracken Hill, Bairnsdale, Victoria, Australia) to George Bennett, Jr., 4 March, 1925. Note: All children born in Owymstwith, Cardiganshire, South Wales, not North Wales.
- <sup>41</sup> William Fowle (1842-1911), #KNH2-8BH, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>42</sup> Isabelle Fowle (1844-1848), K4GJ-K8K, #K4GJ-H8K, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>43</sup> Ellen Fowle (1846-1847), #KNHG-L5G, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>44</sup> "William Bernard Fowle-Elizabeth Jane King family group sheet," supplied in 1979 by Richard R. Dawson.
- <sup>45</sup> Letter from E.T. King (Bracken Hill, Bairnsdale, Victoria, Australia) to George Bennett, Jr., 4 March, 1925.
- <sup>46</sup> William Fowle entry, Passenger and Immigration Lists Index, 1500s-1900s, page 61. [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)
- <sup>47</sup> "William Bernard Fowle-Elizabeth Jane King family group sheet," supplied in 1979, by Richard Rex Dawson.
- <sup>48</sup> Letter from E.T. King (Bracken Hill, Bairnsdale, Victoria, Australia) to George Bennett, Jr., 4 March, 1925.
- <sup>49</sup> Letter from Charles F. Rehkopf, Diocesan Archivist, Protestant Episcopal Church, Diocese of Missouri (1210 Locust Street, St. Louis, Missouri 63103) to Mrs. Donna L. Patterson (Rt. 2, Nampa, Idaho 83651), 12 June, 1976. Copy held Shelley Dawson Davies. "The register of Christ Church Cemetery, under date of March 29, 1849, has the name of ELIZABETH FOWLE, age 41, died of small pox, and was interred in Range 3, Number 9, of the Strangers Department of the cemetery. Physician's name—Moore. The name FOWLE might be FOULE. There seem to have been three sections in the cemetery, Family Lots, Strangers Department and Public Ground. I do not understand the difference between the last two. Christ Church Cemetery was apparently not used after 1854, and somewhere around 1885 some bodies were removed to the New Wesleyan Cemetery. Others probably went to Bellefontaine Cemetery. Wesleyan Cemetery, in turn, was abandoned about twenty years ago and many of the bodies reinterred in Memorial Park Cemetery. I have no way of ascertaining just where Mrs. Fowle might have gone. You might address Bellefontaine Cemetery, 4947 west Florissant, St. Louis, Missouri 63115."
- <sup>50</sup> Emma (Dawson) Simpson, "Historical Sketch of Elizabeth Jane (Fowle) Dawson," August, 1951, typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>51</sup> Isabella (Parks) Fowle (1806-1851), #LZP6-6V9, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

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- <sup>52</sup> William Fowls married Isabella Parks, 27 Feb 1850, St Louis. St Louis, Missouri Marriages, 1804-1876. Vol/page 04-47. St. Louis Genealogical Society. St. Louis Marriage Index, 1804-76. St. Louis, MO, USA: St. Louis Genealogical Society, 1999. [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)
- <sup>53</sup> Simpson, "Historical Sketch of Elizabeth Jane (Fowle) Dawson," undated typescript.
- <sup>54</sup> Isabell (Fowle) Campbell (1849-1898), #KNHG-LDJ, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>55</sup> Simpson, "Historical Sketch of Elizabeth Jane (Fowle) Dawson," undated typescript.
- <sup>56</sup> Letter from E.T. King (Bracken Hill, Bairnsdale, Victoria, Australia) to George Bennett, Jr., 4 March, 1925
- <sup>57</sup> Letter from E.T. King (Bracken Hill, Bairnsdale, Victoria, Australia) to George Bennett, Jr., 4 March, 1925. Emma related in a slightly different version of the story, in which William decided to join his first wife's brothers, Edward and Thomas King, who had already moved from Teston to Australia. According to Emma, William left his eleven- year old son with the King family in England and set sail for Australia with Elizabeth, who by then was fourteen years old. One of the ship's ports of call was Port Elizabeth, South Africa, and it was here that William stopped to visit the Robert Huey family, friends of his who happened to be living there at the time. The Huey's persuaded him to let Elizabeth stay with them until he had located his brother-in-laws in Australia. "So he consented and kissed his little daughter goodbye and set out on his journey," said Emma. "That was the last that was ever heard of her father." Simpson, "Historical Sketch of Elizabeth Jane Fowle Dawson," undated typescript.
- <sup>58</sup> Simpson, "Historical Sketch of Elizabeth Jane (Fowle) Dawson," August, 1951, typescript.
- <sup>59</sup> Simpson, "Historical Sketch of Elizabeth Jane (Fowle) Dawson," August, 1951, typescript.
- <sup>60</sup> Robert Bodily, "Journal,"  
[http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM\\_MII/t:account/id:10/keywords:robert+bodily](http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM_MII/t:account/id:10/keywords:robert+bodily)

## Chapter 3

# A New Life

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## Forsaking the World



*Elizabeth and Alexander on their wedding day.*

While new members of the church worldwide were encouraged to gather together for collective strength in Utah, South African Saints perhaps took the message to heart more than most. The Cape was an astonishing ten thousand miles from the center of the church in Salt Lake City, and the small branches felt their isolation to the core. Alexander had plenty of time while in jail to ponder the prevailing advice of the church leadership to gather to Zion without delay. He was a young man, full of the spirit and no stranger to adventure. He determined to set sail towards Utah at the first opportunity.

Three weeks after the new jailer was installed, Alexander and his friends were released from jail and resumed their work stowing ships. By this time, Alexander had a reputation on the docks for being able to stow cargo “so tight it almost burst the boat”<sup>61</sup> and he found more than enough work to earn his passage to Salt Lake City. “The day he was ready to quit, the man at the head of the docks came to him and said, ‘Dawson, if it is women you want, I will get you all the women you want here, without going to Utah after them. I will guarantee you

every ship that pulls into this harbor to load if you will stay, and I promise you that in a very short time you will be a millionaire.’ But Father had made up his mind that he was coming to Utah and there was nothing that could stop him. Father said, ‘I’m not going to Utah for women, I’m going for the gospel’s sake.’ He wanted to come to Utah so he could live the gospel the way he wanted to,” said Emma.<sup>62</sup>

Besides, there was only one woman in Alexander’s life, and that was Elizabeth. The pair was married on 22 February, 1860, at Port Elizabeth.<sup>63</sup> Elizabeth, an accomplished seamstress, sewed a beautiful white wool coat and silk vest for her husband to be married in, and with the help of Mrs. Huey, she sewed her own silk dress, all by hand.<sup>64</sup> Alexander and Elizabeth proudly posed for a wedding portrait in their fine new clothes only a month before they joined a group of family, friends and fellow church members bound for Zion on the *Alacrity*.<sup>65</sup>

Among those who joined the Dawsons on board the “old wooden vessel” as it sailed out of port that March were Robert Bodily, who kept a journal of the voyage; Bodily’s parents and seven siblings; Mrs. Huey and her five children;<sup>66</sup> and Alexander’s seafaring friends John Kenny and William Stokes.

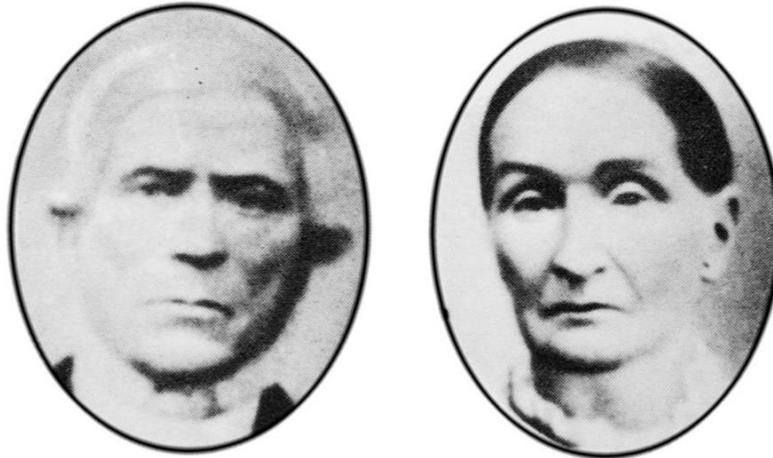
It took a few days for most of the company to find their sea legs. Many eventually recovered from their nausea, but Elizabeth, who was just one month pregnant when the voyage began, felt ill for quite some time. Alexander, on the other hand, found plenty to keep himself occupied during the voyage. John Kenney was asked by the captain to help work the rigging, choosing anyone he liked to help him.<sup>67</sup> He no doubt asked Alexander and William Stokes, since they were not only close friends, but had served on other ships together and knew the work.

Kenny told about one instance when he had to “take his turn at the wheel to steer the ship.” About noon, the captain ordered him to see that the ropes and rigging were fast against an approaching gale. “As he was working in the rigging a voice told him that when he took the wheel at two o’clock, the wind would change. A man by the name of John Rogers asked Kenny what he thought about the weather. He answered, ‘I don’t like to tell you.’ It seemed quite improbable at the time that he could be right in predicting fair weather, but advising Mr. Rogers to keep his answer to himself, told what he had heard. He took the wheel and the wind gradually changed and he soon had the *Alacrity* on the correct course.”<sup>68</sup>

Despite this turn of good weather, the *Alacrity* eventually sailed into darker waters. Emma was told by her mother of a “terrible storm at sea.” It was ferocious enough to unsettle the captain, who “asked if there were any Mormon Elders on board, and if so, would they please pray for the storm to cease. William Bodily and William Stokes together with my father and others knelt in prayer and the storm was calmed immediately. This was always a great testimony to Mother of the power of prayer.”<sup>69</sup>

The *Alacrity* continued on toward America, “a long, tedious journey for the old folk,” said Robert, “but the youngest did not care so much, for there was something new to be seen all the time: different kinds of water animals and birds and every little while the lookout would holler, ‘Ship ahoy!’ and we could see a small speck on the water. As time went on, the speck would grow larger and larger, until at last there was a great big ship close to us, and thus the time was spent until we reached Boston,” seventy-nine days after leaving Port Elizabeth.<sup>70</sup>

Elizabeth was four months pregnant by the time she and Alexander arrived in Boston, and the most difficult part of the journey was still ahead of them. “They went from Boston on the cars [railway] and got off at Quincy, Illinois, where they took passage down the Mississippi River to Hannibal, Missouri,” said Emma.<sup>71</sup>



*Robert and Jane Bodily*

“Railroads of those days were different from the railroads of today,” reminisced Robert many years later. “They were not so efficient, not so large, and not near as comfortable, and sometimes we had to wait for hours to make connections. But we kept on going until we struck a town on the Mississippi River. Here the boat laid for an hour or two and I recollect a thing that happened. Close beside us there lay another boat and a man was cleaning the paddle wheels. He seemed to know we were Mormons and of all the cursing you ever heard, that man was doing it, when all at once, he slipped off the wheel into the river and everything was quiet. When we pulled out, they were dragging the river to try and find him.

“We now went down the Mississippi River to the mouth of the Missouri River, then up the Missouri River some until we came to St. Joseph where we took a boat to Florence, the outfitting place of the LDS emigrants. Here we rested for some time, allowing time for more emigrants to arrive to form a company large enough to be safe against Indians, and for the emigrants to gather their outfits such as wagons, cattle, horses, cows, etc.”<sup>72</sup>

The group of friends from South Africa worked long and hard to gather supplies, buy wagons and assemble ox teams, but “by this time, some of our company began to run short of money, so much so that some could not proceed farther without assistance,” wrote Bodily.<sup>73</sup> Alexander was never one to stand by when others were in need, and he stepped in to help as best he could. “My father, having some money, assisted those who were in need, some five or six families,” Emma related.<sup>74</sup> This left Alexander and Elizabeth with very few funds for their own journey, but they were content knowing their friends would not be left behind.

Alexander and Elizabeth gathered their belongings and pooled what was left of their resources with the Bodily family. “Brother Bodily and Father rigged up a wagon,” said Emma. “Father bought a cow and Brother Bodily a horse and they hooked them together. They loaded what the wagon would hold, then built a handcart which the men took turns pulling from Florence to Salt Lake City.”<sup>75</sup>

## Crossing the Plains

The South African immigrants were among the four hundred members of the William Budge Company, which rolled out of Florence, Nebraska, 20 July, 1860.<sup>76</sup> “It sure was a comical looking outfit,” said Robert, who recalled the ox-drawn wagon driven by immigrants who “seemed to know less than the oxen about that kind of work. Often you would see a man on each side of the team herding them along, but as a general thing the land was level so we got along pretty well.”<sup>77</sup>

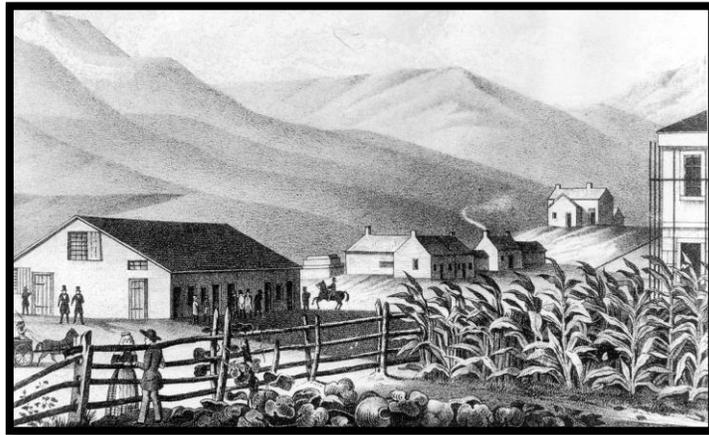
The long days were occasionally made interesting by events large and small, such as witnessing herds of buffalo so enormous they “forced the halt of the wagon train for three hours while they crossed the trail,” Emma was told,<sup>78</sup> or coming across “a piece of paper that some earlier train had left, telling when they had passed along... and sometimes you would see a new made grave where some poor soul had been laid to rest, caused from different hardships endured while on the way, for it surly was a trying time for all...”<sup>79</sup>

Crossing the plains was never easy, but it quickly became an outright ordeal for the Dawson and Bodily families. Their wagon had been built in haste from green lumber that dried and shrank as they traveled across the prairie under the burning sun. “Father said they thought the wagon would fall to pieces before they made it to Salt Lake,” said Emma. “The tires were shrinking up and they had to stop where ever they could and pour water on them so the wood could soak it up. They wondered if they would ever make it. Oh, they had an awful time!”<sup>80</sup>

Unreliable transportation wasn’t the only challenge the families faced as they made their way over the trail. Their limited food supply began to dwindle much too quickly “as every third day a band of Indians would come into their camp and demand food until they were down to just bed and rock,” recounted Emma. “Starvation almost overtook them. Mother said that all they had left to eat by the time they got to Salt Lake was bread and onions. Mother was pregnant and she was often so hungry she couldn’t wait for the bread to get fully done, but would take the top off the loaf and then return the remainder of the loaf to the fire to let it finish cooking.”<sup>81</sup>

Despite the privations of the journey, the group of friends and Saints “were joyful...we always laid over on Sundays and held meetings and all seemed to enjoy it looking anxiously for the time when they would arrive in Zion.”<sup>82</sup> The day finally came when the Budge wagons rolled into the Salt Lake Valley, on 5 October, 1860,<sup>83</sup> just as the

church was gathered for General Conference. “The next day we went to conference and heard that great man President Brigham Young and other good men whom we had never heard before,” wrote Robert Bodily.<sup>84</sup> It was thrilling not only to finally be gathered with such a large number of church members, but to hear the words of the Lord’s prophet directly from the pulpit, the perfect way to generate the strength each family would need as they faced new lives in the desert.



*An artist's depiction of Salt Lake City in the early days.*

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>61</sup> Interview with Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965. Transcript held by Shelley Dawson Davies.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> “Alexander Dawson-Elizabeth Jane Fowle family group sheet,” supplied 1979, by Richard Rex Dawson. This sheet offers only a generic list of materials consulted.

<sup>64</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.

<sup>65</sup> Although Alexander and Elizabeth are not on the Alacrity’s passenger manifest, they are assumed to have travelled with John Kenny, William Stokes and the Bodily and Huey families, all of who made the voyage together. See: Passenger list, *Alacrity*, Port Elizabeth to Boston, 5 April-18 June, 1860,

[http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM\\_MII/t:voyage/id:8/keywords:robert+bodily](http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM_MII/t:voyage/id:8/keywords:robert+bodily)

<sup>66</sup> Mr. Huey was lost at sea sometime before 1860.

<sup>67</sup> “Some History of John Kenney and His Friends, Dawson and Talbot,” undated typescript, unknown author; copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.

<sup>69</sup> Emma (Dawson) Simpson, “Historical Sketch of Elizabeth Jane (Fowle) Dawson,” August, 1951, typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.

<sup>70</sup> The Alacrity arrived in Boston 13, June, 1860. Robert Bodily, “Journal,”

[http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM\\_MII/t:account/id:10/keyword:s:robert+bodily](http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM_MII/t:account/id:10/keyword:s:robert+bodily)

<sup>71</sup> Simpson, “Historical Sketch of Elizabeth Jane (Fowle) Dawson,” August, 1951, typescript.

<sup>72</sup> Robert Bodily, “Journal,”

[http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM\\_MII/t:account/id:10/keyword:s:robert+bodily](http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM_MII/t:account/id:10/keyword:s:robert+bodily)

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Simpson, “Historical Sketch of Elizabeth Jane (Fowle) Dawson,” August, 1951, typescript.

<sup>76</sup> The William Budge Company, Florence, Nebraska, to Salt Lake City, Utah, 20 July-5

October, 1860, <https://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/companies/79/william-budge-company-1860> The wagon company in which Alexander and Elizabeth travelled cannot be officially confirmed, but according to contemporary accounts, they travelled with the rest of their friends in the William Budge company.

<sup>77</sup> Robert Bodily, “Journal,”

[http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM\\_MII/t:account/id:10/keyword:s:robert+bodily](http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM_MII/t:account/id:10/keyword:s:robert+bodily)

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.

<sup>81</sup> Simpson, “Historical Sketch of Elizabeth Jane (Fowle) Dawson,” August, 1951, typescript.

<sup>82</sup> Robert Bodily, “Journal,”

[http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM\\_MII/t:account/id:10/keyword:s:robert+bodily](http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM_MII/t:account/id:10/keyword:s:robert+bodily)

<sup>83</sup> Emma (Dawson) Simpson, “Historical Sketch of Alexander Dawson,” undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.

<sup>84</sup> Robert Bodily, “Journal,”

[http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM\\_MII/t:account/id:10/keyword:s:robert+bodily](http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM_MII/t:account/id:10/keyword:s:robert+bodily)

## Chapter 4

# Pioneering Davis County

## Dawson Hollow



*Salt Lake Valley in the mid-1850s.*

Elizabeth was eight months pregnant when she entered the valley, and the weather was turning cold. Alexander's first consideration was finding a suitable home in which to welcome their new baby. He arranged with Bishop Hunter to work for the rent of a one-room log house with a sod roof on Pioneer Square during their first winter in Salt Lake City.<sup>85</sup> Alexander also borrowed an ox from Bishop Hunter to team up with his cow, enabling him to haul wood down from the mountain for their winter fuel supply.

Not long after the Dawsons settled into their new home, Alexander "turned the cattle out to feed in the grass while he cut the wood, but when he when he went to hook them up to come home he couldn't find anything of the ox," said Emma. "He looked for it until dark, then went back the next day, but couldn't find it. That went on for a week. He got desperate. He didn't have any money to pay for the ox and he didn't know what to do. Some friends told him there was an old lady who had a peep stone and if he asked her she could tell him where the ox was, so he took his last dollar and went to her. She said it was out in Grantsville and if he went out there he would find it." It took Alexander a week to walk the one hundred mile round trip to

Grantsville, on the opposite side of the Ochre mountain range, looking for the ox along the way,<sup>86</sup> but he failed to find any trace of the stray animal.<sup>87</sup>

“By this time, Father didn’t know what in the world to do, so he said to Mother, ‘If I ever needed the help of the Lord it is now. Let’s kneel down and pray.’ They prayed and he went back up in the hills to look for the oxen again, but had no success. By this time it was getting toward night again and he had prayed and looked all day. Finally, he rolled his trousers up to his bare knees and kneeled down on the ground. He said, ‘If I ever offered a prayer it was then. I told the Lord I had come here for the gospel’s sake and I wanted to live it and wanted to serve him and if I ever needed any help it was now. When I got up from praying, there stood the ox, looking at me in the face.’ That was a living testimony to Father until the day he died. Father always said to never doubt. He was tested to the quick, he said for what reason he didn’t know, but it was all for a purpose. He said never in his life did he ever go to bed without saying his prayers and thanking the Lord, that no matter what hardship had come he knew it was all for his good.”<sup>88</sup>

A little more than a month after arriving in Salt Lake City, Elizabeth went into labor during a heavy snowstorm.<sup>89</sup> “Father had to walk two and a half miles from the old Pioneer Square up to the Eighteenth Ward Square, through the Eagle Gate, to get a midwife,” Emma said. “The snow was so deep it was up to his waist. He had to break the trail through the snow for the midwife and she followed him back to the house,” Emma said.<sup>90</sup> The midwife stayed at the Dawson cabin all night until William Alexander<sup>91</sup> was born the next day, 22 November, 1860.<sup>92</sup>

Conditions were difficult for the Dawson family that first winter. “Father gave up everything to come here and then had absolutely nothing,” related Emma, “On the Sabbath, Father would wear Mother’s shawl and go barefoot to church, as he didn’t own a coat and his shoes were so shabby.”<sup>93</sup> The first money Mother had was a five-dollar gold piece her little son Willie had picked up off the street in Salt Lake City. With two dollars of it she bought a coffee mill to grind wheat to make their bread.”<sup>94</sup>

Alexander found work at “the old lime kiln,” six miles from the center of Salt Lake City.<sup>95</sup> “He walked up there every day. They didn’t have any money and almost nothing to eat,” said Emma. “Things finally got so bad that he took a little baking powder can and went a neighbor’s house ready to beg for flour.”<sup>96</sup> When the neighbor opened the door, he couldn’t bring himself to beg, so “he asked for a loan of flour instead. ‘I came that near to being a beggar,’ Father told me.”<sup>97</sup>

Despite his destitute condition, Alexander was an ambitious young man and hard worker who recognized the opportunity to make a prosperous life for his family meant leaving Salt Lake City. “Father had made up his mind that when spring came he would join Kenny and Rich and go down to the southern part of the state, but fortune deemed it otherwise,” according to Emma.<sup>98</sup>

Alexander was to be paid for his work that first winter in part with a credit for an order of flour, not in Salt Lake City, but at a mill forty miles north in Ogden. “As quickly as the weather permitted, he started to Ogden for his sack of flour,” said Emma. He stopped to rest overnight at the Robert Bodily farm in Kaysville, then continued on to Ogden. On his way back to Salt Lake he again he stayed with the Bodily family, who spent the evening persuading him to abandon his plans of moving south and join them in settling the north end of Kaysville. The next morning, Alexander agreed to move north before shouldering the fifty pound bag of flour for the walk home. “When he opened the flour it was as black as your hat,” said Emma. “It had been made from smutty wheat, but it kept them alive.”<sup>99</sup>



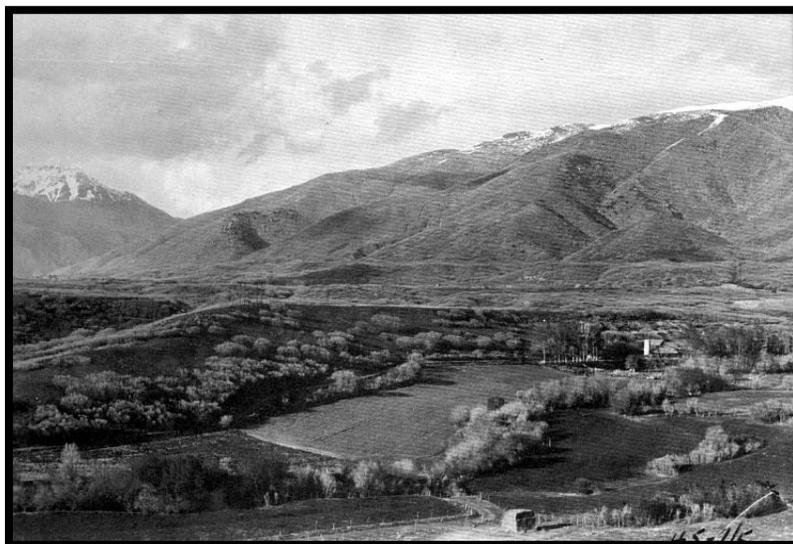
*Robert and Jane Bodily's Kaysville home.*

Kaysville had been home to a thin band of settlers for ten years before the Dawsons arrived, by which time the stage coach lines carrying mail and passengers along main road from Salt Lake City to Ogden ran through the middle of the small town.<sup>100</sup> Robert Bodily helped Alexander arrange to work that spring with Christopher Layton, who in addition to being bishop of the Kaysville Ward owned a hotel along the main road, as well as several large farms in the area.<sup>101</sup>

The Dawsons boarded at the Layton home where their second child, Lizzie,<sup>102</sup> was born on 24 March, 1863.<sup>103</sup> During the three years Alexander worked for Bishop Layton he learned the skills of farming and ranching necessary to run his own operation. He also managed to save \$350.00, enough to purchase one hundred and sixty acres and a one room log cabin from Mr. William Lindsey.<sup>104</sup> The cabin, built around 1858, was located on the middle fork of Kays Creek, in the area now known as Dawson Hollow. At the time, the hollow was called “Little Scotland,” as the Dawson, Forbes, O’Brian and Findlay families who lived there were among the few pioneers who were Scottish in a predominantly English settlement.<sup>105</sup>



*Elizabeth and her daughter Lizzie.*



*This view of Dawson Hollow shows only a small part of Alexander's land holdings.*

## Living in the Wilderness

The hollow was a true wilderness in the early days, close to the mountains and isolated from the cluster of rudimentary buildings along road downtown. Wild animals including wolves, coyotes and sometimes even bears and mountain lions came down from the nearby mountains in search of prey. "The hollow was called 'The Wilds' for some time because there were so many wild animals," remembered Emma. "You could stand outside at night and hear the wolves howling and howling. It was nothing to get up in the morning and see from seven to ten in a pack. Mother used to go with a dead chicken with strychnine and put it out in the brush to catch them. One night they came into the yard and killed sixteen of Father's lambs. The hawks would come right down in the door yard and pick up a chicken. There was weasels, there was skunks, there was everything. I was afraid to death of weasels. They would come out and chase you. We were never bitten with one, but I sure ran away from them."<sup>106</sup>

Long before the Mormon pioneers settled in the area, northern Utah Indian tribes migrated along the creeks and flat lands between the Great Salt Lake and the Wasatch mountains, leaving a scattering of stone implements easily discovered by the new farmers as they plowed their fields.<sup>107</sup> Hostilities sometimes flared as the pioneers fenced off land and built homes, hedging up the natural migration routes of the Indians. The Dawson's neighbor, John Forbes, the first

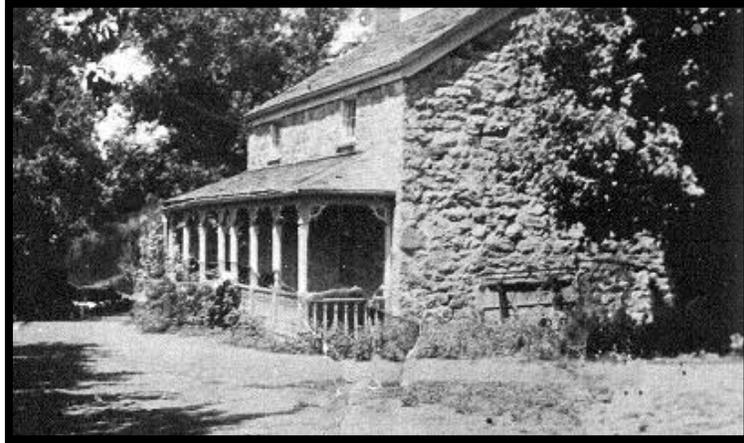
settler in Little Scotland, recalled how one evening the family heard yelling and saw “about a dozen menacing-looking Indians with painted faces” riding toward the house. John sent his wife and children into the loft before saying a brief prayer. The Indians rode around the house, stopping to set fire to the winter fire wood he had stacked around his house as a fence. Fortunately, no other damage was done, and “after some time, the Indians rode away.”<sup>108</sup>

Many of these Indians were so poor they often lacked guns and horses, surviving mainly by scavenging fish, roots and pine nuts. They saw the white settlers as a ready source of supplies for the taking, and they were especially interested in food.<sup>109</sup> Bands of Indians regularly camped close to Dawson Hollow as they passed through, increasing the settlers’ trials by begging and stealing the scattered families’ meager supplies.<sup>110</sup> Emma told of the situation being “so bad the Indians would watch from the top of the hill and if they saw Father leave for the fields, they would come down and walk in and lie on the bed, or take any food there might be in the cupboard. If Mother was baking bread, they would wait until she took it from the oven and they walked off with it. She was so frightened of them she didn’t dare say a word. About the time the men were coming home, the Indians would leave, only to return another day.

“One Indian hung around for three days. He was waiting for a tribe to come along the open highway. He claimed that one of their tribesmen had stolen his wife and he was going to kill him. All at once, he disappeared and Father went out to the barn and noticed that his lariat was gone. He started a search for the Indian and when he found him, he asked him what he had done with the lariat. The Indian claimed he had not seen it and father told him he knew he had. Father grabbed the Indian by the shirt and there it was wrapped around his waist. Father took hold of one end of the rope and spun the Indian around until the rope came off. Then he kicked his hind end and told him to git.”<sup>111</sup>

## Making a Home

Alexander and Elizabeth settled into the old Lindsey cabin with their two small children and a chicken, a housewarming gift from Christopher Layton.<sup>112</sup> The cabin was a typically rustic log construction, with a dirt floor and sod roof. Rough wooden slabs served as a door with a homemade latch and leather hinges. Living conditions were far from ideal. The cabin was so small Elizabeth was forced to make the children’s beds on the floor at night, picking them up in the next morning to make room for living and working. It was so roughly built that “when it rained the roof leaked and Mother would have to put tin tubs, dish pans and buckets on the bed and around the house to keep everything dry,” said Emma.<sup>113</sup>



*Alexander built this rock home on his Dawson Hollow farm.*

Alexander began work on a rock home to replace the uncomfortable cabin soon after moving into the hollow. There weren't many large trees growing in the area, but good-sized stones just right for building were easily picked up off the fields as Alexander cleared the land for farming and grazing. The new rock house, completed before 1865, expanded the Dawson's living area from one room to five, with a roomy kitchen, pantry and parlor on the main floor and two bedrooms upstairs. A verandah ran across the front of the house and frame building in back served as a summer kitchen.<sup>114</sup> There was room enough for the additional children born into the family over the next twenty years, adding both joy and sorrow to the household. Alexander Junior, called "Allie"<sup>115</sup> was born in the new rock house on 4 April, 1865, followed three years later by little Isabella,<sup>116</sup> who lived only fourteen days. Margaret<sup>117</sup> was born in January, 1869, followed by Annie<sup>118</sup> (1872), Effie<sup>119</sup> (1875), Eva<sup>120</sup> (1878), Mary<sup>121</sup> (1880) and Emma (1884).<sup>122</sup>

While Alexander went to work in the surrounding fields, Elizabeth literally kept the home fires burning. Fire was difficult to make, so Elizabeth made sure hers never went out by completely banking the embers at night. Every morning her first duty was to bring the fire back to life and begin the day-long food preparation. The hen laid a single egg every day, which Elizabeth boiled, then cut in half to divide between Willie and Lizzie. "Mother said the first winter they were up there they lived on just salt bacon and molasses with just the flour and that one egg," Emma recalled. "Those were the hardships of pioneer days, but they were blessed all the days of their lives. They felt like their blessings surmounted their hardships. After they had

cows and chickens and so on, Mother skimmed the cream off the milk and churned it. My sister Lizzie carried this butter over to Kaysville in a basket with a few dozen eggs to trade them for groceries, which she carried back again. She used to get ten cents a pound for her butter.”<sup>123</sup>

Oak brush covered the hillsides, providing plenty of easily gathered fuel. The ashes were collected regularly, emptied into a large keg or wooden barrel and left in standing water to begin the soap making process. After several days, Elizabeth drained the water and added grease or tallow before thickening the mixture over an open fire for several hours. The soap was cut into cakes after it had been poured out and cooled. Homemade soap was common for many years in the Dawson home. Emma said, “I well remember the first bar of soap that was ever bought in our home.”<sup>124</sup>

Resources were scarce and nothing went to waste on this edge of the wilderness. Even well after the Dawsons were established in the hollow, Elizabeth and her small daughters followed behind the thousands of sheep local ranchers drove from winter to summer ranges along the Mountain Road, “picking the wool off the oak brush which had been pulled from the sheep’s backs. This she washed and carded into bats to make quilts for the family and for each of her six daughters as they were married,” said Emma. “Many a day I followed behind my mother with a sack, picking wood off the oak brush. There were bands of Indians who came along that road, some of them with papooses on their backs. I was so afraid of them when I was a child. I would say, ‘Mama let’s go home,’ when I saw them. She would just said, ‘Oh, they won’t hurt you.’”<sup>125</sup>

Time was also a precious resource which was never wasted. Handwork was taken up when nightfall prevented outdoor labor. Elizabeth was adept at sewing, making all the clothing for her husband and eight children by hand for many years. “Mother never did have a sewing machine...she never had a spinning wheel,” Emma remembered. “I don’t know where she got the yarn, but she knit all the children’s stocking and mittens for years and years. She knit designs in our wool stockings. They were pretty, but I didn’t like them very well because they pricked my legs,”<sup>126</sup>



*Wagon ruts mark the road through Dawson Hollow.*

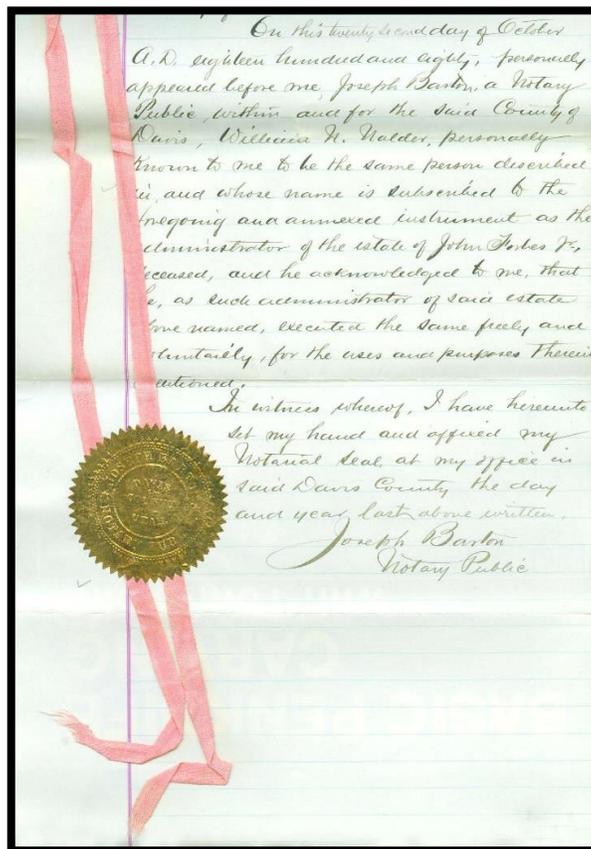
## Expanding the Farms

Alexander had already proved he could accomplish anything he set his mind to, a quality of character he continued to rely on in taming his new farm acreage. With no store of hay on hand, he nursed his oxen through the first winter “by cutting the tender little branches off the willows to feed them with,” said Emma.<sup>127</sup> By the spring of 1862, he was ready to make the most of the starter seed he had purchased, plowing and planting as long as daylight permitted. His first harvest was a good one, allowing him to acquire and sow larger fields the following year.

Land in northern Davis County was plentiful, but water was extremely scarce. Fortunately for Alexander, he was able to tap the creek running right through his property, providing reliable irrigation for his crops and water for his stock. He supplemented this natural flow by digging a well near his home, while Elizabeth collected rainwater runoff in barrels placed around the house. Not every farmer was as well-positioned as Alexander. Since Kays Creek was fed by snow melt which gradually dwindled over the summer, residents from lower Layton were forced to drive their livestock to Dawson Hollow for water, which was closer to the source. Dust plumbs could be seen from miles away as their ox-drawn wagons rolled along the dirt trails toward the creek, stacked high with water barrels.<sup>128</sup>

By 1864, Alexander had hundreds of acres<sup>129</sup> under cultivation with alfalfa hay and grain, two of the most widely grown crops in the area.<sup>130</sup> Relying on alfalfa as a cash crop was an especially profitable choice. With up to three mowings a season, it was not only easy to

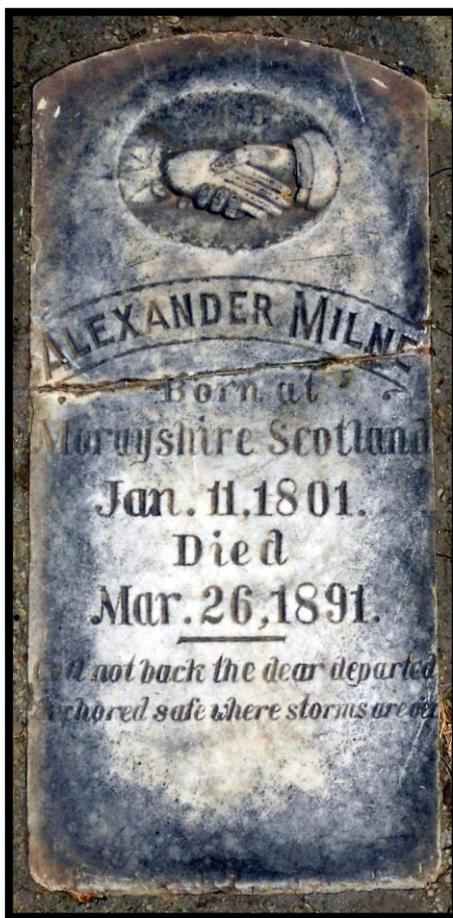
grow, but resulted in relatively weed-free fields that were easy to maintain.<sup>131</sup> Alexander overcame the typical farming challenges of insects, limited water supplies and occasional crop-destroying strong winds from the east, adding to his property “until he became one of the biggest land owners in Davis County,” said Emma.<sup>132</sup> Alexander purchased one hundred and sixty acres for \$450.00 from his uncle Alexander Milne in 1877.<sup>133</sup> “He owned two hundred and thirty acres [in Clearfield]; also four hundred and ninety acres where Hill Air Force Base is now. This tract of land was known at the time as the Morris Town Hill and was purchased from a Mr. Bowman for \$650.00. He traded four teams of horses in part payment for the land. I cried when I saw them taking those horses away,” remembered Emma.<sup>134</sup> Alexander also homesteaded three hundred acres in Syracuse,<sup>135</sup> building up his stock of sheep and cattle<sup>136</sup> at the same time he expanded his farms by partnering with George Webster in running a herd of one thousand sheep.<sup>137</sup>



**One of the original documents deeding land to Alexander Dawson.**

## What Became of Alexander Milne

*Alexander Milne, a childless widower, immigrated to Utah in 1868, where he purchased and worked 160 acres of land not far from the Dawson family. Milne became a member of the church in October, 1869, when he was baptized by Alexander. He retired from farming in 1877, selling his property to Alexander, and moved into the hollow homestead. He remained part of the Dawson household until his death at the age of ninety in 1891. He is buried in the Kaysville cemetery next to Alexander and Elizabeth Dawson (plot 14-1-A-10).*



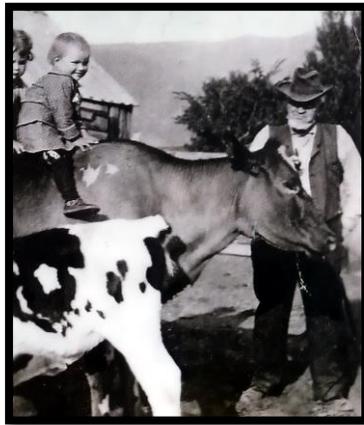
With so much land under the plow, it wasn't long before Alexander had to round up extra hands to help with the work. Emma remembered her father hiring harvest thrashers who camped out in the farthest fields "for three weeks at a time, thrashing grain with the horses, and no steam engines or anything. After the thrashing was done the Indians would come and glean around the stacks. Often times they would get four or five sacks of grain from gleaning around the stacks."<sup>138</sup>

In the early days, Alexander and his men harvested grain by hand with cradles and side rakes before loading it into a wagon box and "tramping it out," then used the winds to separate the wheat from the chaff.<sup>139</sup> One of the men Alexander hired was Hyrum Adams, who "by working early and late... could plow under two acres per day," with his team of horses. "For each acre plowed he was paid seventy five cents. Thus he earned \$1.50 per day for himself, horses and oxen, besides keeping the plow point sharp at his own expense," said Frank Adams.<sup>140</sup>

Hyrum modernized his methods in 1879 with grain shredders and horsepower threshing machines. "With a 'header' they could harvest twenty-five acres of dry farm wheat in a day, charging the owner a bushel and half per acre for the labor of six men, twelve horses, wagons and header. The work was hard and always dusty, feeding the grain into the noisy machine by hand, without the protection of gloves," according to Frank Adams.<sup>141</sup> "Each man fed sixty bushels at a shift before changing to oiling the measuring box, driving the twelve horses, then back to feeding again. That crew of hard-working men could change threshing floors, reset the machine, stake down the horsepower, replace the tumbling rods, hook up the horses and be ready for work in the short space of ten minutes. With dry grain and favorable threshing conditions they sometimes threshed fifteen hundred bushels in a day, but the average was much less. For the service of the six men, twelve horses and threshing machine they charged eight bushels toll for each one hundred bushels threshed. They worked from sun up to sun down for six days and rested on the Sabbath."<sup>142</sup>

The Dawson women worked as hard as their men, especially during harvest. "The boys helped their father with the farming and the girls were responsible for the chores at home. They took care of the livestock, fed the pigs and milked the cows," said Donna Patterson. "When the farming took the boys and men out on the range, the girls would also have to take turns going with them and cook for them."<sup>143</sup>

Cooking for the thrashers was like cooking for an army. “My sisters used to go out on the Morris Town Hill where Father owned eight hundred acres to cook for the thrashers,” said Emma. “They would be out there for three weeks at a time, working under a bowery built from sagebrush. They had to cook over an open fire with nothing but sagebrush as fuel, and the wind blowing to beat the band. Often times we would have the headers and the thrashers here at home and out there at the same time. I had to cook here for maybe twenty-five men, and at the same time bake pies and cakes to send out to Morris Town. My sisters could bake bread out there, but they couldn’t bake pie and cake.”<sup>144</sup>



## Up a Tree

*Like any landowner, Alexander often walked around his property to check on fences, crops and his stock, an activity which was not always without its dangers. Emma recalled one Sunday afternoon when her father and Francis Brown, a big-shouldered blacksmith from Layton, were “walking around the oak brush in the fields. We had cattle in the pasture and an old bull got after him and Father. They had to climb a tree, and that old bull stood there pawing for two or three hours before it went away and they could get down.”*

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>85</sup> Present day Pioneer Park, at 300 South and 300 West. Emma (Dawson) Simpson, “Historical Sketch of Alexander Dawson,” undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>86</sup> Interview with Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965. Transcript held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>89</sup> Emma (Dawson) Simpson, “Historical Sketch of Alexander Dawson,” undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>90</sup> Simpson, “Historical Sketch of Alexander Dawson,” undated typescript.
- <sup>91</sup> William “Will” Alexander Dawson (1860-1903), #K2MQ-BP3, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>92</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>94</sup> Emma (Dawson) Simpson, “Historical Sketch of Elizabeth Jane (Fowle) Dawson,” August, 1951, typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>95</sup> The lime kiln was located at approximately 863 North 300 West, near Warm Springs Park in North Salt Lake.
- <sup>96</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>100</sup> Annie Call Carr, *East of Antelope Island* (reprint, Salt Lake City, Utah; Publisher’s Press, 1969), page 121.
- <sup>101</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>102</sup> Elizabeth “Lizzie Jane (Dawson) Criddle (1863-1940), #KW CX-9WF, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>103</sup> Emma (Dawson) Simpson, “Historical Sketch of Alexander Dawson,” undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>104</sup> Simpson, “Historical Sketch of Alexander Dawson,” undated typescript.
- <sup>105</sup> Carr, *East of Antelope Island*, page 123.
- <sup>106</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>107</sup> Carr, *East of Antelope Island*, page 120. Native American hand-held grind stones were unearthed in East Layton by Ray Forbes and Richard Dawson, who in 1968 plowed up fourteen “manos” in a field just below Sunset Drive. See Carr, *East of Antelope Island*, page 29.
- <sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, page 36.
- <sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, page 35.
- <sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>111</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>113</sup> Carr, *East of Antelope Island*, page 133
- <sup>114</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965. This was one of the first rock homes built in Layton. The present address is 2391 Kayscreek Drive. See Carlsruh, *Layton, Utah: Historic Viewpoints*, page 89.
- <sup>115</sup> Alexander “Allie” Dawson (1865-1936), #KWCL-QGB, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>116</sup> Isabella Dawson (1868-1868), #KWVH-YZC, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>117</sup> Margaret Isabella (Dawson) Dodd (1869-1930), #KWVH-Y86, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>118</sup> Annie Priscilla (Dawson) Bennett (1872-1935), #KW CX-YZC, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>119</sup> Effie Louisa (Dawson) Denkers (1875-1943), #KW CX-NWM, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

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- <sup>120</sup> Eva Ellen (Dawson) Ray (1878-1957), #KWNR-4JR, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>121</sup> Mary Dawson (1881-1881), #KWCX-ZXQ, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>122</sup> “Alexander Dawson-Elizabeth Jane Fowle family group sheet,” supplied in 1979 by Richard R. Dawson. This sheet offers only a generic list of materials consulted.
- <sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>128</sup> Carr, *East of Antelope Island*, page 127.
- <sup>129</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>130</sup> Carr, *East of Antelope Island*, page 127.
- <sup>131</sup> Carlsruh, *Layton, Utah: Historic Viewpoints*, page 248.
- <sup>132</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>133</sup> Deed, Alexander Milne to Alexander Dawson, 22 January, 1877. Davis County Land Evidences, Book “O,” page 547, no. 7291.
- <sup>134</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>135</sup> Richard Rex Dawson, “Notes on the Land Holdings of Alexander Dawson,” undated typescript. Held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>136</sup> Interview with Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965. Transcript held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>137</sup> Carr, *East of Antelope Island*, page 128.
- <sup>138</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>139</sup> Simpson, “Historical Sketch of Alexander Dawson,” undated typescript.
- <sup>140</sup> Frank Adams and Bonnie Adams Kessler, compilers, *Cherished Memories: Biography of Hyrum Adams and Annie Laurie Penrod Adams, Layton, Utah*, (Salt Lake City: Paragon Printing, 1953) page 40-41.
- <sup>141</sup> Adams and Kessler, *Cherished Memories: Biography of Hyrum Adams and Annie Laurie Penrod Adams, Layton, Utah*, page 40-41.
- <sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>143</sup> Donna Thurgood Patterson, “History of Annie Priscilla Dawson Bennett,” undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>144</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.

## Chapter 5

# By Their Fruits

### Lives of Devotion



**T**he work required for survival filled every day from sunup to sundown, but that didn't mean there was never any fun to be had. Early Layton settlers combined their labors whenever possible, not only to lighten their workloads, but to create an opportunity to socialize at the same time. Pooling work was known as having a "bee," and almost any type of work qualified for such an event. There were wool picking, spinning, and rag sewing bees held by the women,<sup>145</sup> while men participated in barn raisings and "manure bees," according to Emma. "Everyone would come to a neighbor's and help haul manure on their ground, then they would have a big dinner. Then they would go to the next neighbor and haul all his out. Quilting bees for the women were held every week at someone's home, and how they did enjoy it."<sup>146</sup>

Friends and neighbors joined in as often as they could for home-made entertainments. Dancing was the most popular amusement of the day, and it was often at the Dawson home was where Layton residents gathered to the tune of a fiddle. "Father loved company and he loved music," recalled Emma. "He used to have Tom Ray and Joe Ray and Alex Bowman play the violin all night long and all the neighbors would come to the house. Up came the carpet and the straw came out and they danced until daylight in the morning and just had the best times. When I was just a little girl I loved to hear them play, and one night I said to Father, 'Why can't I play music? Why don't I know how to sing?' He said, 'Well, girl, you were born too near the woods, so you'll have to be satisfied to hear the birds sing.' So I went to bed and lay there until I was asleep and they played all night and dance and had the best time."<sup>147</sup>

Alexander was not content with music provided only by his neighbors. He eventually became one of the first settlers to buy an organ for his family. "There wasn't too many who had an organ or music," said Emma, who recalled that after the organ was purchased she finally had the opportunity to take music lessons as a girl.<sup>148</sup>

No one worked harder than Alexander and Elizabeth, and no one enjoyed themselves as much as the Dawsons did after their work was done. Alexander especially enjoyed company, and would go to almost any lengths to be sociable. Once, not long after the Dawsons had moved into the hollow, they were invited to share Christmas dinner with the James Forbes family, who lived a little over a mile away along the Mountain Road.<sup>149</sup> There was so much snow that "they had to take cattle to break a path," said Emma. "They worked all day fighting snow to get up to the upper highway. They had to turn back and proceed the next day."<sup>150</sup>

As much as Alexander and Elizabeth enjoyed their friends, no one was more important than their children. The Dawson siblings remained close after they matured and married, taking every opportunity to gather together for Sunday dinners and holidays. "I loved my family more than anything. When we were all young, every holiday they would all come home," said Emma.<sup>151</sup> One of the most looked forward to events was the annual Christmas celebration at the hollow homestead, hosted by Alexander and Elizabeth. There was a large, hand-cut Christmas tree in the living room lit with little candles and decorated with popcorn, cranberries and other homemade decorations. "They would light all the candles just for a few minutes, long enough to get the children's eyes wide open," according to Donna Patterson. "During the day, after the presents were opened, they spent the day sleigh riding down the hills. The older kids, as older kids will do, would sometimes play tricks on the younger ones. One thing Uncle Judd can remember them doing was getting the

younger ones to stick their tongues on the cold rim of the wagon wheels. He didn't know if he would ever get it off again. Of course, the adults found out what was going on and the older kids scattered."<sup>152</sup>

Part of any Christmas celebration in the Dawson family included sharing with others. "At Christmas time Father would say, 'Hook up the sleigh. I want you to take me somewhere,' said Emma. "He would visit all the widows around the neighborhood and say, 'Here is ten dollars,' or 'Here is fifty dollars. Don't let your children go without their Christmas.' Where both parents were alive, but very poor, he would give them money so their children would have Christmas presents."<sup>153</sup> Emma's husband Ted Simpson<sup>154</sup> recalled driving his father-in-law on his Christmas errands one year. "He told me to hook a team up on a sleigh. I was to go with him up see Mr. Bruce and three or four others," remembered Ted. "He gave them from twenty-five to fifty dollars apiece and said, 'Now I don't want your children to wake up on Christmas morning and find their stocking empty. I want them to have Santy Claus come.' He would always say, 'The Lord has blessed me with plenty and they haven't been blessed with the means of life like I have.'"<sup>155</sup>



*The Alexander Dawson family around 1894. Back row (left to right): Elizabeth, Annie, William, Margaret, Alexander Jr. Front row: Eva, Elizabeth, Emma, Alexander Sr., Effie.*

Alexander “was a big-hearted man” who took any opportunity to be of help to others, recalled Emma,<sup>156</sup> traits that Elizabeth shared with her husband. She was known as a devoted mother and kindly neighbor who took care of the sick whenever she was needed.<sup>157</sup> “Sister Dawson was always ready and willing to help the stranger or the one in need. She always had a desire to help the unfortunate, and to do it without being asked. The Dawsons were always ready and they would always volunteer,” said Ephraim Ellison.<sup>158</sup>

These charitable values were passed on to the Dawson children, who “had one thing in common: they were unselfish. They were very close to each other and helped each other where needed,” said Donna Paterson.<sup>159</sup> The entire Dawson family was known and admired throughout the county. “If Brother Dawson’s children had not been honest, industrious and neighborly, and true faithful citizens, we would all have been surprised at it, with the parents they had,” said Ephraim Ellison.<sup>160</sup> Neighbor Thomas J. Thurgood declared that “you could go anywhere throughout this entire state of ours and finer type of manhood and womanhood could not be found than that in those people by the name of Dawson.”<sup>161</sup>

## Charitable Works

The wider work accomplished by the Dawsons was brought about by “combining the temporal with the spiritual, molding the two together for a perfect life,” said John Thornley. “Brother Dawson has not only reared a large, loving and exemplary family, but he has been a factor in molding the lives of others in his community. He has helped through his intelligence, through his integrity and steadfastness, to build a community here than is invaluable.”<sup>162</sup>

Typical of the help spontaneously offered to friends and neighbors was Alexander’s offer to leave his own work for several days in order to accompany a Mr. Bruce to Salt Lake City for treatment of injuries Bruce suffered in a farm accident. Alexander remained with Mr. Bruce until he was well enough to return to Layton.<sup>163</sup> “He was always ready to do his part and more,” friend and business partner Ephraim Ellison recalled. “The bishop told me that it was many years since he had failed to receive from Brother Dawson his full amount to help take care of the poor, with the statement that if it was not enough, if they were short, to let him know and he would give more.”<sup>164</sup>

“He always paid his fast offerings and tithes, he was good unto those who need his mercy and blessing, he was always prepared to give unto others that were in need,” concurred James Ellison.<sup>165</sup> At least once Alexander helped church expansion by paying “one thousand dollars towards the expenses of a man to go to Arizona to help colonize it,” said Emma.<sup>166</sup>

## Admiration

*The Davis County Clipper, 9 June, 1905:*

*“One of our pupils taking the eighth grade examination, held recently, in answering the question in history, ‘Name your ideal American and give reasons,’ wrote the name of Alexander Dawson and gave as his reasons for so doing, that ‘Mr. Dawson was an honest man and, so far as he knew, had always been an American.’”*

## Sunday School

The same solid testimony of the gospel that brought Alexander and Elizabeth across the ocean to Utah kept them dedicated to living and teaching its principles for the rest of their lives. “I have often heard him talk of his faith and confidence in the revelation of the latter day prophets,” said John Thornley of his good friend. “When Brigham Young prophesied that the Lord would bless this land for our sake, Brother Dawson ...believed it with all his heart, and put his belief into practice, and helped to develop this large area of country, and make it blossom as the rose.”<sup>167</sup>

One of the first demonstrations of his faith and its contribution to the community was Alexander’s determination to provide church services in the northern part of town. During the early days, the nearest LDS meeting house was a modest adobe structure five miles away in downtown Kaysville, completed in 1863.<sup>168</sup> For some time after settling in Dawson Hollow, Alexander “left the oxen in the corral and walked to church in Kaysville on Sunday so the animals would be

ready for work on Monday.”<sup>169</sup> The trip on foot was often too much for Elizabeth and the small children, so with the petition of the Dawsons and other hollow families, the local church leadership finally agreed to hold official Sunday services at the Dawson Hollow School in 1877, setting apart Alexander as president of the Sunday school,<sup>170</sup> a position he held for twelve years.

“Father was the superintendent of the Sunday school, with William Nalder and George Adams as his counselors,” Emma recalled. “I remember it so plainly because when I was just a little girl, maybe six years old, they had a Sunday school program where someone would sing and someone else would give a reading. One Sunday they told me I must say a piece, so Mother taught me a lovely little piece. When I got there, someone lifted me up on this desk and instead of saying the piece she had taught me I said, ‘Doctor Foster went to Gloucester, in a shower of rain. He stepped in a puddle up to his middle and never went back again.’ Mother was embarrassed and when I got home Father said, ‘Well I don’t think we’ll ask you to be on the program anymore.’”<sup>171</sup>

Despite the occasional childish *faux pas* and other human frailties over the years, the Dawson Hollow Sunday school was generally considered a success. “I think with a great deal of pleasure of the time when I attended the Sabbath school,” said Frances Nalder. “I remember that in that place I learned as much of the gospel of Jesus Christ as I have learned in any period of my life. There are many others of my associates who probably can remember more of the teaching that they received at that time than what they can trace to any other source. It is probably for that reason that I represent the class on whom the influence of Brother Dawson has been more marked than on any of those that have preceded me. ... and that there was nothing quite so dear to him as the gospel of Jesus Christ.”<sup>172</sup>

Francis Nalder remembered “the spirit of meekness and humility with which he received me as a ward teacher, although I knew I was not able to teach him the gospel of Jesus Christ, that he knew it much better than I knew it, but he was always willing for the teachers to come to him and listen to anything they had to give, as he knew it was the duty of the people so to do. He would call the members of his family together, ask us to sit down and listen to what the ward teachers had to say. He did it because he knew it was the word of the Lord being given to them. Brother Dawson received the teachers always cheerfully, as he received the gospel, not because he felt that he was going to receive new counsel or that there was going to be given him anything that he did not already possess, but that it was the doctrines of the church to call the family together to listen to the instructions of the teachers and to the words which they had to impart.”<sup>173</sup>

Elizabeth initially joined her husband in church leadership as a Sunday school teacher, later becoming a counselor in the newly formed Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association and serving in both the children's Primary and women's Relief Society organizations.<sup>174</sup> As her family grew, Elizabeth made the Dawson home a welcoming Sunday afternoon gathering place for both family and friends. Emma recalled that "there was always a crowd at home in the hollow. So many young people used to come up and play croquet and tennis every Sunday. There used to be a gang of them and I wished I could hurry and grow up so I could play with them. They had many a good time. I can remember a big glass dish that Mother had. It was always filled with tapioca pudding and whipped cream, and the whole bunch would sit around the table and eat with us."<sup>175</sup>

## Frontier Learning

Alexander was as well-schooled in temporal matters as he was in spiritual subjects. He was a "great reader and had a remarkable memory," according to Emma,<sup>176</sup> and was noted around town for being "well posted," said Ephraim Ellison. "He took a great interest in the politics of his country and of foreign countries. He watched them with a great deal of anxiety and he was at home on any topic."<sup>177</sup>

Alexander that he made sure learning was easily available not only for his own children, but also to the surrounding community. Until he built and donated a one-room schoolhouse just west of the Dawson homestead,<sup>178</sup> the closest school was held in a primitive log cabin one mile south of the hollow.<sup>179</sup> With the opening of classes at the Dawson Hollow School in 1875, reading, writing and arithmetic were taught daily in a well-built brick building with proper desks in a room warmed by a wood stove.<sup>180</sup> "Children from a radius of ten miles attended it," according to Emma.<sup>181</sup>

Two sandy ruts cut through the stubby sage brush and high weeds where wagon and buggy wheels had worn a path down from the top of the hill toward the school, which stood out in the open fields against the backdrop of the Wasatch range to the east. Every spring the hills were covered in buttercups and wild violets for the students to pick. In winter, the squeals of children attending after-school sledding parties echoed across the hollow. Classes were held from nine a.m. until three p.m. during the week, allowing time for students to complete their chores at home before and after school. Attendance was irregular since children were often needed at home during

planting and harvesting season. Most of the children who attended school came in bare feet, weather allowing. “The boys wore jeans and the girls came in calico dresses. Shoes were still beyond the reach of the majority,” said teacher Sara Jane Adams.”<sup>182</sup>

Many evenings the Dawson Hollow School also served as a social center for the area. Desks were stacked against the wall as the early settlers, accompanied by a violin and portable organ, enjoyed an evening of dancing in the light of coil oil lamps and candles. The Dawson family was usually on hand at these events, since they were “a fun loving family. They had the best times you’ve ever seen. They were just full of fun, always bubbling.”<sup>183</sup>



*The Dawson Hollow School as seen by former teacher Sarah Jane Adams.*

## The Fate of the Dawson Hollow School

*The school, damaged by an east wind a few years after it was built, required support and stabilization by 1899. An article in The Davis County Clipper for 3 November, 1899, reported that “the school house had to be repaired...The walls of the building consist of brick and adobe. These began to separate, so buttresses had to be built to hold the wall to its place. An entry is being built to keep the front wall in its position.” The buttresses were made of the plentiful fieldstone found across the area.*

*The school was closed from time to time under quarantine orders as needed (a scarlet fever scare halted classes in February, 1911), but the doors were shut forever in 1916, when a modern brick school building was opened in downtown Layton. The little pioneer school stood vacant for many years, the victim of extensive vandalism. The standing walls of both the school and outhouse were torn down during the 1940s and the bricks sold. The cement foundation, steps and stone abutments remained in the open fields until they were eventually removed altogether with the expansion of the Country Oaks subdivision in the 1980s. In 1985, the Kaysville-Layton Historical Society conducted an archeological dig on the old school site. Pieces of school desks and slates were discovered along with pink plaster from the walls and odds and ends such as bottles and buttons (below).*





*The Farmer's Union building on the corner of Main and Gentile Streets in downtown Layton.*

## Community Leader

With his cheerful disposition and love for his fellowman, Alexander made friends with almost everyone he met over the years, “and it did not make any difference to him whether a man was Scotch, English or anything else. ‘A man’s a man, for all that,’ was his motto,” said John Thornley.<sup>184</sup> He was widely known and highly respected in the community, and became a popular speaker at many public functions, including the first annual Christopher Layton Reunion in 1889 at the Kaysville Music Hall.<sup>185</sup> He was often called upon to present eulogies at funerals in the Layton area. “There was scarcely a funeral held in the north end of Davis County but what Brother Dawson would be present, and the occasions when he was not asked to speak to the mourners, and those gathered together, were very rare indeed,” remembered Ephraim Ellison.<sup>186</sup> He presented an especially moving tribute in his Scottish burr at the funeral service for long-time friend Thomas Sandall, a night watchman who was shot and killed during a robbery at the Farmer’s Union store in 1899.<sup>187</sup>

Always concerned with community affairs, Alexander remained active in various political pursuits. He was elected to the Kaysville City Council in 1872, with two hundred and twenty votes, and took the oath of office at a meeting on 13 February, 1872, along with Mayor Rosel Hyde, T. F. Roueche, J. R. Barnes and Justice of the Peace John Ellison. Some of the tasks accomplished by the council during the next year included the levying of a road tax to perform necessary work and making an appropriation to control mill waters. Fencing local gardens and stockyards was also discussed. Alexander

was elected to the council again in 1860 and later in 1880,<sup>188</sup> the same year he was one of several appointed election judges. He also served as one of two Democratic delegates from Davis County to the state convention in 1900.<sup>189</sup>

Alexander was in the forefront of supporting commerce in the Layton area. In the early days, much of the trade was carried on by barter and exchange of goods, as what little cash was available was hoarded, hidden and sometimes even buried.<sup>190</sup> By 1882, the town was ready for a better system. Christopher Layton spearheaded the founding of the Kaysville Farmer's Union, a cooperative commercial organization headquartered in a single-story frame building at what is now 9 South Main Street in Layton. Alexander was among the eleven founding board members who directed the operation.<sup>191</sup>

The Farmer's Union served as a convenient alternative to the general stores several miles farther away in Kaysville, offering a good selection of basic items such as clothing, dry goods, groceries, grain and produce. The Union also acted as a local bank for over twenty years, providing a place where local growers and cattlemen could change money, deposit funds and cash checks received in payment.

Business was good, allowing the Union to expand in 1892, with the construction of a two-story brick building just north of the original frame structure on Main Street. The entire second floor was used as a meeting hall for social and political gatherings, theatrical events, dances and parties. The local basketball team also played games there.<sup>192</sup>

After serving on the board for seventeen years, Alexander was elected the director of the Farmer's Union in 1897, and as one of seven directors in 1909 when the organization was reincorporated as Farmer's Union of Layton, a position he held until his death ten years later.<sup>193</sup>

The Union continued offering local banking services until The First National Bank of Layton was founded in 1905, by Ephraim P. Ellison.<sup>194</sup> Alexander was one of the original thirty-nine stockholders in the bank, holding five shares at one hundred dollars each. Ironically, eighteen months after the bank opened its doors, a devastating east wind collapsed part of the building and banking operations were moved across the street to the Farmer's Union until the bank could be rebuilt.<sup>195</sup>

## Alexander and the Morrisite Rebellion

*Alexander joined the Utah Territorial Militia in Davis County soon after he settled there. Officers from Salt Lake City traveled to Fort Lane, in what is now downtown Layton, once a month to train the militia with drills “in case of an Indian outbreak,” according to Ted Simpson. “They were always prepared for them.” A training camp was later organized farther north near Church Street and Antelope Drive 1865, where Captain Robert Burton from Salt Lake worked with the men, many of whom rode in the Calvary wearing Nauvoo Legion uniforms. Alexander may have been among those who wore one of the handsome uniforms, as he owned a striking sword which he used as a member of the Militia in the Morrisite Rebellion of 1862.*

*The Morrisites were a group of apostates led by Joseph Morris, an English immigrant who claimed to have received his own revelations in 1857. Among other things, Morris preached reincarnation, proclaimed the “immediate” second coming of Christ, and taught that Brigham Young was a fallen prophet.*

*Morris moved to South Weber with his followers where he converted a local bishop and almost two hundred other LDS church members before being excommunicated and starting his own church. He proclaimed all of his followers should gather at Kingston Fort in South Weaver to wait for the Second Coming.*

*Eventually, several of Morris’s converts became dissatisfied and attempted to leave the fort, taking with them what was left of their consecrated property. They were pursued and captured after the escape attempt and placed under guard in a small log cabin. When word reached Chief Justice of the Third District Court John F. Kenney that Joseph Morris was holding prisoners in violation of the law, he demanded the prisoners be set free. The Morrisites held themselves above the law, forcing the deputy marshal to round up five hundred men in neighboring counties to form a posse with the purpose of capturing Joseph Morris and other leaders and bringing them to trial.*

*Marshal Burton and his men arrived in South Weber on 13 June, 1862, where he ordered two cannon shots to be fired at the fort to speed up Morris’ surrender. The second ball ricocheted into the fort, killing and maiming as it went. The fire was returned, killing a member of the posse. In hostilities lasting three days, Joseph Morris, his counselor John Banks, and a few other men were killed. With their leaders dead, the remaining Morrisites surrendered.*

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>145</sup> Annie Call Carr, *East of Antelope Island* (reprint, Salt Lake City, Utah; Publisher's Press, 1969), page 452.
- <sup>146</sup> Interview with Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965. Transcript held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>149</sup> As of June, 2013, the Forbes' original rock house still stands at the intersection of Valley View Drive and Hobbs Creek Drive.
- <sup>150</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>152</sup> Donna Thurgood Patterson, "History of Annie Priscilla Dawson Bennett," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>153</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>154</sup> Edward Simpson (1883-1971), #KWC5-715, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>155</sup> Interview with Edward Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965. Transcript held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>156</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>157</sup> Emma (Dawson) Simpson, "Historical Sketch of Elizabeth Jane (Fowle) Dawson," August, 1951, typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>158</sup> Ephraim P. Ellison, "Alexander Dawson Funeral Address," 15 October, 1918, Layton Utah. Transcript held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>159</sup> Patterson, "History of Annie Priscilla Dawson Bennett," undated typescript.
- <sup>160</sup> Ellison, "Alexander Dawson Funeral Address," 15 October, 1918, Layton Utah.
- <sup>161</sup> Patterson, "History of Annie Priscilla Dawson Bennett," undated typescript.
- <sup>162</sup> John Thornley "Alexander Dawson Funeral Address," 15 October, 1918, Layton, Utah. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>163</sup> Notes taken by Janice (Page) Dawson from the funeral of Isabel Bruce, 6 March, 1962. Original notes held by Janice (Page) Dawson.
- <sup>164</sup> Ellison, "Alexander Dawson Funeral Address," 15 October, 1918, Layton Utah
- <sup>165</sup> James Ellison, "Alexander Dawson Funeral Address," 15 October, 1918, Layton Utah. Transcript held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>166</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>167</sup> Thornley "Alexander Dawson Funeral Address," 15 October, 1918, Layton, Utah.
- <sup>168</sup> Annie Call Carr, *East of Antelope Island* (reprint, Salt Lake City, Utah; Publisher's Press, 1969), page 328
- <sup>169</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>170</sup> Carr, *East of Antelope Island*, page 126.
- <sup>171</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>172</sup> Francis H. Nalder, "Alexander Dawson Funeral Address," 15 October, 1918, Layton Utah. Transcript held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>174</sup> Carr, *East of Antelope Island*, page 131.
- <sup>175</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>177</sup> Ellison, "Alexander Dawson Funeral Address," 15 October, 1918, Layton Utah.
- <sup>178</sup> The site of the Dawson Hollow school is now located in the backyard of the home at 1650 East Kayscreek Drive.
- <sup>179</sup> The school was set atop a knoll located at 2213 Oakridge Drive.

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- <sup>180</sup> Dan and Eva Carlsruh, editors, *Layton, Utah: Historic Viewpoints* (Salt Lake City: Moench Printing, 1985), page 123.
- <sup>181</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>182</sup> Carr, *East of Antelope Island*, page 126.
- <sup>183</sup> Patterson, "History of Annie Priscilla Dawson Bennett," undated typescript.
- <sup>184</sup> Thornley "Alexander Dawson Funeral Address," 15 October, 1918, Layton, Utah.
- <sup>185</sup> *The Deseret News*, 9 March, 1889.
- <sup>186</sup> Ellison, "Alexander Dawson Funeral Address," 15 October, 1918, Layton Utah
- <sup>187</sup> Thomas Sandall and his family had emigrated with the Dawsons from South Africa in 1860.
- <sup>188</sup> Janice Page Dawson, "Complied Notes from *The Davis County Clipper* Concerning Alexander Dawson," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>189</sup> *The Davis County Clipper*, 7 September, 1900.
- <sup>190</sup> Carr, *East of Antelope Island*, page 130.
- <sup>191</sup> Oma (Ellison) Wilcox, "Kaysville/Layton Farmer's Union: 1882-1957," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>194</sup> Carlsruh, *Layton, Utah: Historic Viewpoints* page 296.
- <sup>195</sup> *Ibid*, page 297.

## Chapter 6

# Steadfast

## House on the Hill

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*Alexander and Elizabeth moved into this small house when running the farm became too difficult.*

Alexander and Elizabeth presided over their large and loving family as it increased with marriages and grandchildren. Lizzie was the first child to leave home when she married James Criddle<sup>196</sup> in the early spring of 1887. Allie married Cass Green<sup>197</sup> two years later in January, 1889. Allie and Cass made their home with the rest of the Dawson family while they built their own home on the hill overlooking the hollow. Quarters were tight with Will, Margaret, Annie, Effie, Eva and Emma still at home, but the Dawsons always got along and made the best of things until the two-room adobe home on Cherry Lane was ready, sometime in the late 1890s.

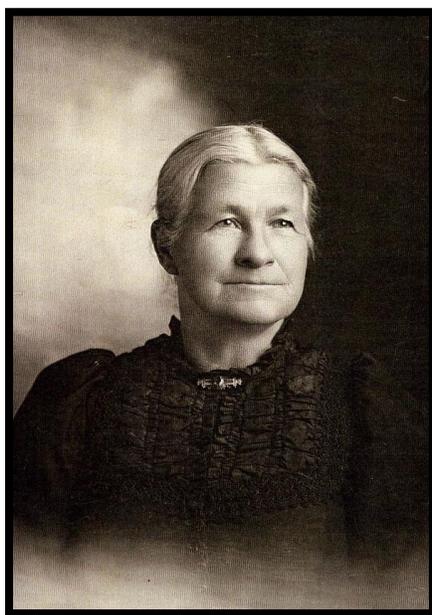
Meanwhile, the three oldest children fell in love: Margaret married Lew Dodd<sup>198</sup> in November, 1893, followed two months later by Annie's wedding to George Bennett<sup>199</sup> in January, 1894. A year later, Will married Ella Adams<sup>200</sup> and moved to downtown Layton in 1895. Effie and Emma continued to live with and care for their aging parents, who were content to stay in the home they had built thirty years earlier.

Gradually, Alexander found even routine work around the homestead too taxing, and when he was no longer able to feed his stock, he and Elizabeth agreed it was time to give up the farm. Will tried to talk his parents into buying property and building a home near him in downtown Layton, “but Father said nothing doing,” according to Emma.<sup>201</sup> Since Alexander wanted to be as close to his old homestead as possible, Allie added a room onto his house to accommodate his parents and Effie and Emma, who moved into the Cherry Lane home in 1900. Allie and Cass moved back down to the farm to supervise operations there.<sup>202</sup> Effie left home when she married Henry Denkers<sup>203</sup> in September, 1905, but Emma’s husband Ted Simpson agreed to move in with his new in-laws after their wedding in 1912. Emma and Ted oversaw the household and care of the Dawson for the next six years.<sup>204</sup>

## Horses vs. Horsepower

By the time Alexander and Elizabeth left their pioneer home, technology was rapidly changing all across the Wasatch front. Because Allie’s snug adobe house was within reach of the town’s expanding electrical services, the Dawsons could switch on the light anytime of the day or night. Then there was another modern marvel added to the home. “We had the first telephone and my, how tickled was I to think that we could talk from here down to Will’s,” said Emma.<sup>205</sup>

One thing Alexander wasn’t happy about, however, was modern transportation. “Father was real provoked by automobiles. He never did get one and never had any desire,” said Emma. “Allie had bought an automobile, a Buick. One day, while Father was director at the bank, they called a meeting. Allie said, ‘Let me come and take him in the automobile.’ Father wasn’t very thrilled, but Allie drove up to the house and Father got into the automobile to go, but Allie didn’t know how to get the car started again. They fiddled around until Father was late for the meeting. After all of that, Father had to drive downtown in the horse and buggy. As time went on, Ted bought a Ford. From then on Father quite enjoyed riding out, but until then, he didn’t have any use for automobiles. He would rather go with a horse and buggy. Father used to go to Layton every day of the world with a horse and pick up the mail, since there was no mail route at the time.”<sup>206</sup>



*Elizabeth Dawson*

## Life and Death

Elizabeth often joined her husband on his trips downtown, stopping by the home of Will and Ella, or driving over to Kaysville to call on the Criddle or Dodd families. The Bennetts, Denkers and Rays had left the area, so as often as they could, these families brought the grandchildren around for visits, especially on Sundays when everyone could picnic out on the lawn overlooking Dawson Hollow.

By 1900, there were seventeen grandchildren to fuss over, and Elizabeth had attended each birth as the midwife. “Every time a baby was born in the family she went to their homes and stayed a week at a time. She was quite a midwife,” said Emma.<sup>207</sup>

At first, 1901 was expected to be a bumper year for new grandchildren, with Ella, Margaret, Annie and Eva all looking forward to having babies, but in the end, only little Margaret Dodd,<sup>208</sup> born in December of that year, survived. Elizabeth was kept busy with births, funerals and comforting her daughters as two month old Harold Dawson<sup>209</sup> died in May, Wilford Ray<sup>210</sup> died the same day he was born in November, and four month old William Bennett<sup>211</sup> died in December.

Even more devastating than the death of so many babies was the unexpected loss of Will, who was one of several Layton residents stricken with typhoid fever during the summer of 1903. He battled the disease for over a month, with the family, especially Elizabeth, spending as much time as possible nursing him at his home in Layton.<sup>212</sup> “I’ll never forget Tuesday night before he passed away,” recalled Emma. “He called Mother and she walked into the bedroom. He said, ‘Mother, don’t pray for me anymore because it won’t do any good. A couple of men came last night and sat on the bed and said, we need you on the other side.’ Oh, I’ll never forget how Mother sobbed and she cried. In a couple of nights, he passed on.”<sup>213</sup> William died at the age of forty-three on 22 August, leaving behind his pregnant wife and two small children.

Will’s death hit Elizabeth hard. “How Mother and Father felt when he passed on,” said Emma. “Many a time I went into the bedroom and Mother would be standing, looking out the window, just sobbing, and she would say, ‘Oh dear, we’ve lost the head.’ He took such a responsibility, and was just so good to them. She really never got over it.”<sup>214</sup>

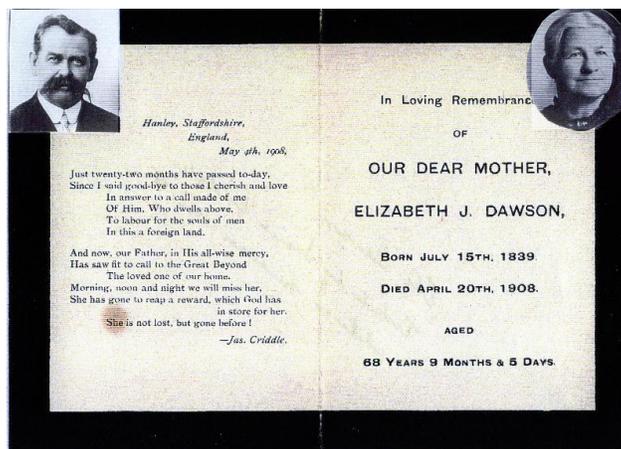


*Alexander surrounded by some of his children and grandchildren.*

## Fading Health

Both Alexander and Elizabeth had enjoyed remarkably good health during their lives, but by turn of the twentieth century, the *Clipper* was reporting “The Alexander Dawson family seems to be having more than its share of sickness lately. Three of the daughters, Mrs. Joseph Ray [Eva] of South Weber, Mrs. James Criddle [Lizzie] and Miss Effie Dawson were all very sick. Three different doctors were waiting on the patients at the same time. Miss Effie was the last one out of the three to take down and just before she took sick her father was hardly expected to live. He has since improved considerable.”<sup>215</sup>

Other maladies and complaints began to attend the aging couple, but until Elizabeth came down with a bad case of pneumonia in April, 1908, none of the illnesses were serious. Even this illness, which began as a simple cold Elizabeth picked up while visiting Effie and her children in Ogden, seemed routine until it progressed into what the family took to be “la grippe, but afterwards proved to be pneumonia,” according to the *Clipper*.<sup>216</sup> Family friend and physician Dr. Gleason was called in to do what he could over the next few weeks, attending to what he told Emma was “congestion of the lungs. Dr. Gleason came up and stayed all night the night before she died,” but sixty-nine year old Elizabeth was too weak to fight the illness and finally faded away on the morning of 20 April, in the home on the hill.<sup>217</sup> “Mother never appeared to be very sick. She went real sudden,” said Emma. “That was a sad day. Her death almost did Father in.”<sup>218</sup>



*Elizabeth's death announcement.*

Elizabeth's body was handled in the traditional manner by family and friends, who with the aid of the Relief Society sisters, dressed the body for burial and surrounded it by ice packs. Family members took turns sitting with the body, changing the ice packs until it was time for the funeral.<sup>219</sup>

Funeral services were conducted in the newly constructed Layton chapel two days after Elizabeth's death. Among the speakers who "offered consoling remarks and paid tender tributes" were friends Elizabeth had made over the years.<sup>220</sup> So many people attended the services with floral arrangements in hand that the chapel was filled, "a stronger testimony than words could give of the esteem in which this good lady was held."<sup>221</sup> Elizabeth was buried next to the children she lost as infants in the Kaysville cemetery.



*Alexander around 1912.*

## Life without Elizabeth

Elizabeth died just two years short of her fiftieth wedding anniversary, but the Dawson children did not want to miss the opportunity to celebrate their parent's union. They planned a surprise party for their father on Washington's Birthday, the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February, 1911. The event, reported the *Clipper*, "was a complete success. They presented him with a leather chair."<sup>222</sup>

Alexander enjoyed relatively good health until he suffered a "slight stroke" sometime in 1913, according to Emma. "He was aided in getting around by his cane and a wheelchair,"<sup>223</sup> but his physical health didn't seem to hinder his participation in church work, as he was ordained a high priest in the Melchizedek Priesthood at the age of seventy-eight in 1915.<sup>224</sup> True to his character, Alexander continued to take part in educational pursuits, thoroughly enjoying Layton's Chautauqua lectures.<sup>225</sup> Once the United States entered World War I, he made it a point to become "a profound student of European politics and kept in daily touch with the war news. He was intensely patriotic and at all times had an abiding faith in the final success of the Allies."<sup>226</sup>



*Alexander shortly before his death.*

Emma and Ted continued to care for him in the Cherry Lane home. “He loved to have his family come and visit him there,” said his grandson Harold,<sup>227</sup> who lived in the hollow home.<sup>228</sup> Alexander also welcomed visits from his numerous friends who dropped by from time to time to see how he was doing. His energies had begun to slowly fade several years before, and by the autumn of 1918, Alexander was ready to face the end. “I had the pleasure of visiting him about three weeks before his death, and he expressed himself at that time as being ready and willing whenever the time came and he had full confidence that he was going to meet a merciful Father,” said Ephraim Ellison.<sup>229</sup>

“Of course I want to live so long as the Good Lord permits, but I am ready to go when He calls, and it makes no difference how soon that may be,” Alexander told a reporter for *The Weekly Reflex*. “I have more friends over there than I have here. My good wife is waiting for me and I want to see her very much.”<sup>230</sup>

On the clear, crisp afternoon of 9 October, 1918, Alexander took a walk through the yard with Harold, who stopped by for a chat with his grandfather. Harold hadn’t made it more than half way home when he saw his mother coming to meet him along the road from the hollow. “She said I had to go back up to Aunt Emma’s because Grandpa was dead,” said Harold.<sup>231</sup> Alexander had collapsed from a massive stroke. “He died as he had wished, ‘that the Lord take him like a snuff of a candle,’” said Emma.<sup>232</sup> He was eighty-one years old.

## Funeral Under the Wasatch

The infamous influenza epidemic was spreading through the countryside in 1918, and health regulations forced the family to hold Alexander’s funeral services on the lawn of his hilltop home. The Sunday afternoon weather was “perfect and the surroundings ideal,” according to his obituary. The speakers stood on the front porch of the house to address the crowd, described as “a great multitude of neighbors and friends.”<sup>233</sup> Bishop James P. Ellison conducted the service, which included among the speakers long-time friends Ephraim Ellison, Samuel Slaughter, old neighbors David E. Layton and Senator John W. Thornley, “who was reared on the adjoining farm and was a great favorite with the deceased.”<sup>234</sup>

A small choir sang a few selections “blessed with spirit of God,”<sup>235</sup> before the family journeyed to the Kaysville cemetery, where Alexander was buried beside his beloved wife.<sup>236</sup>



*The Dawson plot in the Kaysville City Cemetery.*

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>196</sup> James Criddle (1865-1941), #KWCX-9WJ, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

<sup>197</sup> Mary Catherine "Cass" (Green) Dawson (1869-1941), #KWCL-QGT, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

<sup>198</sup> Lewis Abel Dodd (1868-1960), #KWJX-M5G, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

<sup>199</sup> George Henry Bennett (1870-1947), #KWCX-N71, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

<sup>200</sup> Ella Rose (Adams) Dawson (1871-1953), #KWC6-KQ7, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

<sup>201</sup> Interview with Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965. Transcript held by Shelley Dawson Davies.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> Henry Denkers (1898-1948), #K2W3-DHG, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

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- <sup>204</sup> All marriage dates from “Alexander Dawson-Elizabeth Jane Fowle family group sheet,” supplied in 1979 by Richard R. Dawson. This sheet offers only a generic list of materials consulted.
- <sup>205</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>208</sup> Margaret Dodd (1901-1906), #K2WD-FP1, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>209</sup> Harold Earl Dawson (1901-1901), #KZ1P-6H7, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>210</sup> Wilford Alexander Ray (1901-1901), #MWJ1-LBN, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>211</sup> William Alexander Bennett (1901-1901), #KWV3-N4J, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>212</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>215</sup> *The Davis County Clipper*, 12 October, 1900.
- <sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, 24 April, 1908.
- <sup>217</sup> Elizabeth Jane (Fowle) Dawson, death certificate, number 250 (1908), Utah Department of Public Health, Salt Lake City.
- <sup>218</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>219</sup> Donna Thurgood Patterson, “History of Annie Priscilla Dawson Bennett,” undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>220</sup> *The Davis County Clipper*, 24 April, 1908.
- <sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 24 February, 1911.
- <sup>223</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>224</sup> Davis Stake Priesthood Minutes: CR 2160 #2 11,13 : High priest 1915
- <sup>225</sup> “The Chautauqua” was an adult education movement highly popular across the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Named after Chautauqua Lake where the first lectures were held, Chautauqua assemblies brought entertainment and culture to rural communities with speakers, teachers, musicians, entertainers and specialists of the day.
- <sup>226</sup> *The Weekly Reflex*, 10 October, 1918.
- <sup>227</sup> Harold John Dawson (1911-1986), #KWCL-QGG, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>228</sup> Interview with Harold John Dawson, by Janice (Page) Dawson, 1 August, 1980. Transcript held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>229</sup> Ephraim P. Ellison, “Alexander Dawson Funeral Address,” 15 October, 1918, Layton Utah. Transcript held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>230</sup> *The Weekly Reflex*, 10 October, 1918.
- <sup>231</sup> Interview, Harold John Dawson, by Janice (Page) Dawson, 1 August, 1980.
- <sup>232</sup> Interview, Emma Victoria (Dawson) Simpson by Alice Rampton, 1965.
- <sup>233</sup> *The Davis County Clipper*, 11 October, 1918.
- <sup>234</sup> *The Weekly Reflex*, 3 September, 1918.
- <sup>235</sup> John Thornley “Alexander Dawson Funeral Address,” 15 October, 1918, Layton, Utah. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>236</sup> Grave 14-1-a. Utah Cemetery Inventory, Utah State Historical Society. *Utah Cemetery Inventory*. Salt Lake City, UT, USA: 2000.

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