

# Warren Percival Mecham and Lula Maud (Phillips) Mecham



## A Family History

by Shelley Dawson Davies

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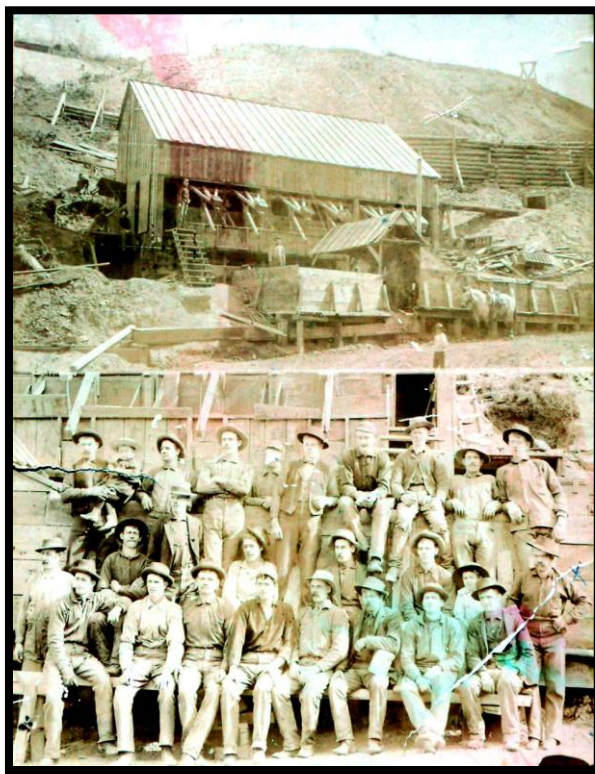
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## Chapter 1

# Warren and Lula

## Growing Up in Summit County

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*Nineteen-year old Warren (marked with an "X")  
and his mining crew in Park City, Utah.*

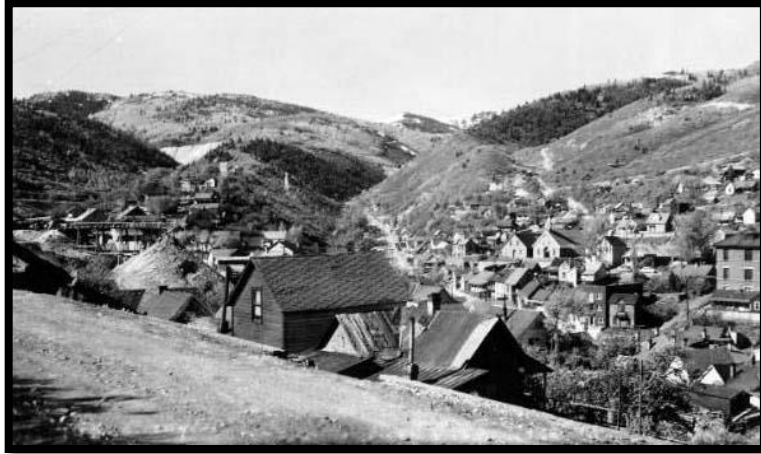
Park City, Utah, was a bustling town in the early 1890s, one of the west's largest mining towns where the boom in gold, silver, gold, lead, copper and zinc had been running for almost twenty years by the time Warren<sup>1</sup> arrived to seek his own fortune. Surrounded by high mountains on three sides, Park City was only thirty miles south east of Salt Lake City, but it was in a different world altogether. At its peak population of almost 10,000 miners, saloon owners and prostitutes, Park City had become a very un-Mormon town in the heart of Mormon country. The mine workers were a rough combination of Catholic immigrants and wandering

itinerants who drank and boarded together in the hastily built false-front buildings lining streets that were stripped of trees and littered with machinery and mining debris. Saloons and whorehouses were the most numerous businesses in town.<sup>2</sup>

This was a man's city, full of sweat and dust and the hope of striking it rich, and Warren was attracted to its sense of adventure and wealth. His first paying job was working at what was called the "jigs" at one of the gold mines, a job he held for several years during his late teens.<sup>3</sup> However hard the work was, it promised him more excitement than the drudgery he had left on the family farm in Oakley, a sleepy agricultural community tucked in a mountain valley just twenty miles away.

Mining lured many a young man with the hopes of striking it rich, but the work itself was more arduous than anything most newcomers had ever experienced. Warren was one of the lucky men who worked on the sluices instead of in the pitch-dark of the mine itself. Rock dug from the earth below was hauled up to the surface, then run down a series of sluices to a small, shabbily constructed building made of rough boards with cracks as wide as a man's hand between them. "When they worked there they stripped to the waist, even in the cold of those Park City winters, and they never quit working once they started," said Warren's son Marlow Meham.<sup>4</sup> "They worked ten hours a day and they got thirty minutes off for noon. It was all arm and shoulder work. Dad had huge muscles on him from working there. He was a powerful man."<sup>5</sup>

After a few years of working at the mine, Warren tried his hand at tending bar in one of Park City's many liquor establishments, despite the fact that "he never drank and he never smoked," thanks to a promise he had made to his mother<sup>6</sup> on her deathbed several years before.<sup>7</sup> At twenty years old Warren was young enough to be dubbed "The Kid" by his customers, who were a rough and ready crowd.<sup>8</sup> "Men used to fight a lot in those days," said Marlow. "Dad was easy to get along with, just don't push him too far. Well, there was this guy who was a bully. He was a pretty good size, bigger than Dad. They got into an argument one night and Dad stepped out from behind the bar to work on him and the guy hit Dad right in the center of the forehead. He said it knocked him backwards and the guy run him further back as he went. When Dad hit the wall he was in a sitting position and he was able to hit the guy with an upper cut. From then on he was in control. Dad had a hit like a mule a-kicking. He used to tell us boys about those things, I think to let us know what it was like to be around such folks as that."<sup>9</sup>



*Homes and businesses crowded along Park City's slopes at the turn of the nineteenth century.*

Tough men were not the only danger in a mining town like Park City during the 1890's, especially for an attractive young man like Warren. "Daddy used to tell us about two sisters from Pocatello, Idaho, that was prostitutes there in Park City," recalled Toni Davies,<sup>10</sup> Warren's youngest daughter. "They were the most beautiful girls he ever saw in his whole life. This one was just nuts about Daddy, but he always said he wouldn't have touched her with a ten-foot pole. She came into the bar one night and said to Daddy, 'If you are not over to my place by eight o'clock tonight, I'm going to take poison.' Daddy said, 'Do whatever you want,' and never thought any more about it. He went right on working that night. A man later came into the bar who was crazy about this woman and he glanced up at the clock and realized it was about the time this girl had told him she was going to take the poison if Dad wasn't there. He said to this man, 'If you want to see this girl alive, you had better get over there.' They went over there, but she had already taken the poison. He said her sister came into the bar a few days later and told Daddy, 'I want to tell you that I really admire you for your standards.' She lifted her blouse and said, 'I want to show you something.' She had these big, black sores all over her. She had syphilis and said, 'My sister was a lot worse than I am.' He told me that story many times."<sup>11</sup>

Warren was able to stand up to the corruption of the town despite his young age, and when the day arrived that temptation became too great, he received extra help to remain strong. "They was raffling off this bridle and saddle," remembered Toni. "It was a big celebration and they was passing out cigars. They would say, 'Oh, Kid, have a cigar.' Daddy would take it and put it in his pocket. When somebody would come in he knew that smoked, he would give them the cigar from his pocket. He said the boys hounded him all day about smoking

a cigar. He finally thought, ‘Oh, I guess one cigar is not going to hurt me,’ so he bit the end off the cigar and reached down to light the wooden match under the counter. He got the match up to light the cigar and suddenly he saw the spirit of his mother standing right beside him. He said, ‘I took that cigar out of my mouth and I never put another one in there.’”<sup>12</sup>

It wasn’t the first time Sarah Ann Mecham had appeared to Warren after her premature death from cancer in 1887. Not long after his mother died, twelve-year old Warren was feeding the oxen one night when he saw his mother standing at the barn door. “She was all dressed in white, but she wasn’t touching the ground, and she was watching him,” said Toni. “She walked, but she walked slowly and went the whole length of the barn. When she got to the one corner of the barn she stood there and looked at him for a few seconds and then she just disappeared. Daddy said he went into the house and he must have been as white as a ghost. His father<sup>13</sup> said to him, ‘Warren, what’s the matter?’ He just said, ‘Nothing.’ He said all his life he was sorry about not telling his father about seeing his mother because his father had lots of spiritual experiences. If Daddy had told him, his father would have been able to tell him why his mother had come back, but he never knew why she had come back to him.”<sup>14</sup>

Several years later, a young girl thought she might have seen Sarah Ann’s spirit wandering nearby her own house. Lula Maude Phillips<sup>15</sup> (who later became Warren’s wife) often gazed from her bedroom to the rolling hills in the distance. “Many, many times she would look out the window at the little hill out by their place and see this woman all dressed in white. She often told of seeing this woman in white walking along that hillside. She always wondered if it was Daddy’s mother,” Toni recounted.<sup>16</sup>





*Wanship's main road across from the old stage stop.*

## Warren's Early Life

Hyrum and Sarah Ann Mecham were both from pioneering families who settled in the high alpine valley between the Uinta and Wasatch mountains in the early 1860s. Hyrum built a modest log home in the town of Wanship where Sarah Ann eventually gave birth to nine of their ten children, including Warren, who arrived on 3 September, 1875.<sup>17</sup> Warren was greeted by three older brothers, Hyrum S., nine,<sup>18</sup> Ephraim, eight,<sup>19</sup> Charles, six,<sup>20</sup> and sister Eliza one year old.<sup>21</sup> Four more brothers were later added to the family: Franklin (1876),<sup>22</sup> Lewis (1878),<sup>23</sup> Thomas (1882)<sup>24</sup> and Marion (1884).<sup>25</sup> Another sister, Polly,<sup>26</sup> had died three years before Warren's birth, in 1878.

Warren's father supported the family by a variety of means. Hyrum farmed a few acres of land in Wanship and also had a claim on a ranch in nearby Boulderville, farther down the Weber River, where the land "as the name implies, is very rocky."<sup>27</sup> Most of Wanship's men were ranchers and farmers, spending the spring and summer tending to their crops before the fall harvest, but the railroad pushing up through the canyons toward Park City in the 1870s, created a pressing need for wooden ties and other supplies for its construction. The mines in Park City and Coalville also needed timbers for tunnel construction and charcoal used in forges.

All winter long, Hyrum joined the other Wanship men in felling large trees on the mountain slopes and preparing them to float down the river when it was swollen high with spring snow melt. The huge logs were pulled from the river at Wanship where they were cut into railroad ties, lumber for construction and cord wood for fuel. As many as twenty-five sawmills sprang up along the river near Wanship to accommodate the demand for logs.<sup>28</sup>

Business was booming by 1870s when two railroad lines were built through Wanship, making it not only an important hub for shipping logs, but also coal from Coalville and silver from Park City. The growing mining towns created an expanding market for local farm produce, which was also shipped by rail, making rapid delivery possible for dairy products, wheat, fruits and vegetables to neighboring communities.<sup>29</sup> Between logging and railroads construction, there was enough business to support four general stores, two blacksmith shops, two sawmills, several saloons and a small hotel in Wanship. The town was prosperous enough to have “commodious frame buildings...and good substantial barns” instead of the “mud or log hovels” more typical of early communities.<sup>30</sup> The fortunes of the Mecham family were riding high with the flourishing local economy and the combined income from logging and the farm, where Hyrum raised barley, rye, wheat and alfalfa, all crops suited to the high altitudes of Summit County.<sup>31</sup>



*Devil's Gate in Weber Canyon.*



*Oakley as it appeared in the late 1800s.*

## The Mechams Move to Oakley

Wanship's economy eventually took a downturn when two railway spur lines were constructed between Echo and Park City, bypassing Wanship altogether in favor of a more direct route.<sup>32</sup> By the early 1890s, a number of families began to abandon Wanship for greener pastures. In 1884, the Mecham family moved ten miles south to Oakley,<sup>33</sup> a settlement established twenty years earlier by Sara Ann's parents, William<sup>34</sup> and Emma Stevens.<sup>35</sup> There was good pasture and farmland in Oakley, and even with the challenges of high altitudes and a short growing season, the Mecham farm proved successful.

Hyrum and Sarah purchased the Steven's old home, the first cabin built in the settlement.<sup>36</sup> It was perfect for their growing family, which by then numbered eight children ranging in age from sixteen years to one year old.<sup>37</sup> The old cabin was considered a large one for the time, with two bedrooms upstairs and a kitchen and main room downstairs. One of the best features of the house was its rock basement and floor.<sup>38</sup>

Even though Oakley was growing fast, the town was on the edge of untamed, unsettled territory where wild animals roamed freely. The mountains teemed with black bears, elk and deer, while smaller animals such as rabbits, porcupines and skunks were constantly spotted around the barnyard. The boys always kept a wary eye out for

the wolves, coyotes and foxes that were known to sneak into the pens at night for an easy meal of chicken or lamb. On occasion, a fearless predator ventured right up to the house itself. Warren was no more than twelve years old when he was alone in the house one evening, lying on his bed. He heard the unmistakable growl of a cougar through the ceiling vent of the cabin and knew the animal was walking around on the roof. He quickly loaded his rifle and looked out a window in time to see the cougar “climb up the corner of the house. The cougar stuck his head down in the vent to look in,” said Marlow. “I guess the only reason the animal didn’t come in was that the hole didn’t seem quite big enough for him. Dad said the animal looked around a little and then backed off.”<sup>39</sup>

## By the Book

Warren began his education in Oakley’s log school house, which had “one window, one door and only a dirt floor.”<sup>40</sup> Rough split logs served as seats and a small stove heated the room, stoked by wood contributed by the students themselves. Textbooks were simple and limited: a first reader, a spelling book and the Bible, all of which were provided by parents. Students read aloud from the books as a class and individually, as well as performing recitation exercises in front of the class to demonstrate their learning. Memorization of spelling words, poems, state capitals, multiplication tables and much more was the way students learned most of the information required.<sup>41</sup>

Warren was in the third grade when the school burned to the ground and classes were moved to the town’s recreation hall. The building was divided into two rooms with the aid of a large curtain, which hung between a stage on the east end and the central hall. Funds were raised by the town for school improvements, one of the most anticipated of which was the new oak desks, purchased at \$3.90 each in Park City.<sup>42</sup> Ornamented with metal scrollwork on the sides, each desk had a folding seat and an inkwell hole in the top. Warren was probably among the boys who carved their initials into the desk with their penknives when they became bored during class.

Overcast days meant minimal lighting from the small windows, and when winter winds whipped hard against the building students were forced pull their desks up around the potbellied stove to stay warm. The stove was a temperamental piece of equipment. “On an average of twice a week, it would puff and blow the pipe off,”<sup>43</sup> giving students a brief vacation while one of the trustees fixed up the long stove pipe, no small job, as the pipe ran half way across the room.

Unfortunately, even though Warren “was a really smart man, very intelligent,” according to Toni, his formal education was limited. “Daddy always made his letters so perfect. He wrote slowly and deliberately, his letters were very precise, but he learned to write later in life.”<sup>44</sup> Basic proficiency in reading, writing and arithmetic were felt by many people of the day to be all that was necessary in an education; the farming and ranching skills required to make a living were best learned from parents and from experience. Like most students, Warren attended class whenever he wasn’t needed at home, mostly after harvest season and before spring planting began. After his mother’s death in 1887, he was unable to attend school at all. “When his mother died, the family was in a bad way and Dad had to fend for himself,” said Marlow.<sup>45</sup>

## Growing Up Too Soon

Sarah Ann had suffered for months before she finally died from breast cancer on 3 January, 1887.<sup>46</sup> Sarah Ann was sorely missed in the family. “She was a beautiful woman,” said Toni. “Daddy said she was a very kind, sweet person. His father could get riled, but his mother was a sweet person.”<sup>47</sup>

With their mother gone, everyone in family had to contribute where and when they could. Eliza, at fifteen, took over household and mothering duties for Warren, twelve; Franklin, eleven; Lewis, nine; Thomas, five; and Marion, three years. While the older boys shouldered the brunt of the farming, Hyrum found it difficult to manage his extended properties and sold his land in Boulderville later that year.<sup>48</sup>

Warren was doing adult labor on the farm by the time he was enlisted to work in one of the nearby logging camp to help support the family. “Dad’s oldest brother, Hyrum, who was in logging, he come and took Dad into the mountains, barefooted, without any shoes,” explained Marlow. “They took burlap sacks and wrapped them around their feet. That’s how they would get by. The boss came along and said, ‘Get that kid into town and get him a pair of shoes,’”<sup>49</sup> but it was some time before enough cash was found to purchase footwear. In the meantime, Warren made do trudging through the woods in burlap wrappings. His hardships served to toughen both his feet and his temperament. After a particularly difficult day of working and waling a great distance through the forest, Warren stumbled into a scout camp where he was mocked by the young men as he wolfed down a plate of beans and bacon. By coincidence, the scout master happened to be none other than his uncle, W.H. Stevens. “Are you going to let

these boys bully you like that?" his uncle chided him. With that, Warren beat up "almost every kid in camp. He found a can of molasses and poured it down one kid's pants," said Toni. "After he was finished, his uncle asked why he had put up with that for so long. Daddy said he hadn't had anything to eat for three days and didn't know if he had the strength to defend himself."<sup>50</sup>

Even though his was a rough and ready life, Warren was content to work in the mountains and was happy enough to decline a unique opportunity that came his way a few years later. Warren had a "wonderful voice," according to Toni, who said that as a young man, her father attracted attention across the county with his singing. "There was this man who offered to pay all of Daddy's expenses and send him to the best voice teacher in Paris, but he wouldn't go."<sup>51</sup> Warren was accustomed to the masculine world of the frontier and couldn't imagine trading it for the big city. "He just didn't want to live that kind of life," said Marlow. As he matured into his late teens, Warren had other plans. Instead of Paris, he set his sights on the raucous mining town of Park City, where fortune beacons just sixteen miles to the south east. Park City's boom eventually slowed to a trickle after a financial depression in 1893 and a devastating fire in June, 1898, which burned over two hundred business and homes, leaving Main Street in smoldering ruins.<sup>52</sup>

It was probably after the fire when Warren left Park City to join a survey crew headed north to the Canadian border in the area that is now Glacier National Park, where he worked for several years. "When the crew got through at Glacier they got on the train to come back to Salt Lake," Toni related. "He met two beautiful girls on the train who was real friendly. They said they was going down to Salt Lake and they didn't know if they dared go there with those Mormons. They thought Mormons had horns and were scared to death of them. Dad lifted his hat and said, 'Well, I'm a Mormon. Feel my head. Do you feel any horns?' Dad said he was always sorry they didn't treat those girls a little different when they got to Salt Lake. They just got off the train and went their own way."<sup>53</sup> Warren's thoughts were firmly centered on returning home to Oakley.





*Warren posed for this formal portrait around the time he worked in Park City.*

## Lula's World

The Mechams hadn't been the only family to leave the fading economy of Wanship. Joseph<sup>54</sup> and Sarah Lovisa Phillips<sup>55</sup> moved with their four children<sup>56</sup> to Oakley the same year as the Mecham family, choosing a log home right across the rutted dirt road from Hyrum and Sarah Ann.<sup>57</sup>

The Mecham and Phillips were well acquainted with each other, having been friends and neighbors for seven years in Wanship. The two families most likely made the move together, as "they always lived right there close together and were real friendly," said Marlow.<sup>58</sup> Sarah and Sarah Lovisa often shared childcare duties, among other things, so when little Lula Maud was born to Sarah Lovisa in Oakley on a crisp March morning in 1886,<sup>59</sup> there were plenty of babysitters ready to lend a hand. Even eleven-year old Warren was recruited for diaper duty from time to time, according to Marlow. "My dad used to babysit my mother, rock her to sleep and change her diapers. He told us about that when I was a kid."<sup>60</sup>

The Phillips home was a large one for the time and place, perfect for their expanding family which eventually totaled ten children.<sup>61</sup> The family's living quarters were located in back of the general merchandise store they ran in Oakley. Lula shared the upstairs bedroom with her sisters, where the window not only looked out upon the nearby hills, but gave a good view of the large mill pond at the edge of the property.

The pond was part of one of the most important businesses in town, the Rocky Mountain Grist Mill, run by Warren's uncle W. H. Stevens.<sup>62</sup> Thanks to the mill, long wagon trips to Wanship to obtain flour were made obsolete when the mill opened in 1882. The shop became a center of activity as families from surrounding farms brought their grain in to be ground at Oakley. Power for the mill was supplied by a race channeling water from the nearby Weber River. The resulting pond "was a beautiful sight when full of clear water," recalled resident May Sorenson.<sup>63</sup> It was also a source of ice, which was harvested by the townsfolk against the summer heat. The mill pond "would sometimes freeze until the ice was twenty to thirty inches thick," Lula noted. "The men would saw large pieces of ice, take it home and pack it in sawdust to keep it during the summer for ice cream and other things as there was no refrigeration in those days."<sup>64</sup>





*Lula, seated, and her sister Edna and brother Lyle in 1896.*

The pond's location next to the school house meant it was "covered with rollicking, happy children" at recess, when students joined in games such as "shinney," a homemade sport played with a "shinney stick to knock a round rock around over the ice, something like a golf ball," said Mae. "It was a fine sport until you happened to get hit on the shin. Then tears seemed to be your only friend."<sup>65</sup> Ice skating was also popular among the children, and Lula often strapped on her own pair of skates to glide across the ice during lunch time. She didn't think about the dangers of play on the frozen pond until one afternoon when she skated across a weakened area where ice had been harvested not long before. "The ice hadn't had a chance to freeze back thick enough to hold my weight. I broke right through the ice," she recounted. "I threw my hands up under my armpits to keep myself from going under the ice until the big boys came and pulled me out. My clothes were frozen stiff on me by the time I got home, and it was just a little way from the school."<sup>66</sup>

A dip in the frozen pond failed to keep Lula from joining her friends in other cold weather activities, however. One of her favorite past times came when winter snows packed the hillsides and dirt roads, forcing residents to hitch their horses to sleighs and cutters for transportation. Few team drivers passed up the opportunity for a thrill as they trotted down an icy Main Street. “Whirling in sleighs was a thrill for all,” according to local resident Marie Nelson. Phillips Hill was kept slick for sledding for many years.<sup>67</sup>



*Oakley's pond and mill wheel.*

## School Work

By the time Lula was old enough to attend school in the recently converted Steven's Hall, the beginning class was announced with "a beautiful toned bell and could be heard for miles."<sup>68</sup> Students made their way across town and fields by foot on sunny days; the lucky children were transported by horse and buggy in inclement weather. Enrollment had grown to ninety-four students and two new teachers had been hired, one for the older children and another for the primary group, who were partitioned off at the end of the hall by a curtain.<sup>69</sup> A black slate chalkboard was installed at each end of the room where students were required to demonstrate their spelling and writing skills with chalk and a sheepskin-covered block of wood that served as an eraser.<sup>70</sup>

Class work depended heavily on memorization, no matter what the subject. Poems, state capitals, multiplication tables, and much more was drilled into the students by rote, who were obliged to stand in front of the class to recite their various lessons. Primers were designed to teach children the rudiments of reading, but because there were few books and no standardized tests for reading comprehension, teachers judged students on their performance in reading aloud.

School programs throughout the year were entertainment for the entire community. Seasonal events and programs for holidays were occasions for family get-togethers featuring singing, reading, and musical solos. The only event that generated as much excitement as the Christmas program was the end of school picnic in early June with sack races, baseball games and horseshoe contests that were followed by a picnic under a shady grove near the school. Lula was twelve years old when she moved from the primary grades to the upper class with a celebration of recitations, songs, a children's dance and "candy and nuts for all. Hen Walker played his fiddle, sang and danced, and he was a character. We all had fun," said former student May Snapp.<sup>71</sup>

## Keeping Time

*Lula was allowed to keep the sixty-cents a week allotted by the school district for janitorial work and with careful saving she was able to purchase a gold watch for nine dollars. In a time when very few people were able to own something as expensive and personal as a watch, being able to buy her own pretty gold timepiece was something that meant a great deal to Lula, who prized it for the rest of her life. She mentioned the watch in her will as one of the few items she wanted to leave to her children.*

## Home Work

The real toil in Lula's life was not school work, but the duties she was obliged to perform at home. Every member of the family was put to work as soon as they were able to complete simple tasks. Their survival depended on it. Family members took turns behind the counter at the family store while Joseph tilled his fields and cared for a number of stock kept on the large town lot. "I used to have to herd the cows when I was quite young," said Lula,<sup>72</sup> who joined other children in watering the cattle at the mill pond.<sup>73</sup> "When I was twelve years old I had to go to the field and tromp the hay, then go in at noon and cook dinner as Mother was in the store. I did most of the cooking and house work from the time I was twelve years old until I was married."<sup>74</sup>

As a trustee for the school, Lula's father was ultimately in charge of the building's maintenance, but because of serious health problems he was unable to fulfill his duties. Lula took over those duties at the age of fourteen, which included the responsibility of readying the school for class each morning. "My three elder sisters had moved to Salt Lake City to work on account of my father's poor health," said Lula. "My eldest brother was home most of the time in the summer to work on the farm, so I started to do janitor work at the two-roomed schoolhouse, which was also used for the church. I did that until I was married, four years later. I had to scrub the floors once a month on Saturday, then go home and do all work at my home.

“I was the eldest girl at home, and oh, how I did have to work! I would get up, cook breakfast, put it in the warming oven, go to the school house, do all the dusting as I had swept the night before, put the teacher’s desk in order, build two fires, get a scuttle of coal for each stove and start ringing the bell at 8:30 a.m. I had my clock in my hand so I could ring the bell for five minutes, as some of the kids lived three miles from school. Then I ran home, combed my three younger sisters’ hair and got them off to school. Then I did the dishes, swept the floor and mopped it, then got myself ready and ran back to school. I was late every morning, but I never did get a tardy mark. I used to have to go home at morning recess and get the vegetables ready for dinner and I didn’t dare ask if I could go to a dance or any place at night until supper was over and I had the house cleaned, dishes washed and the bread mixed.”<sup>75</sup>

“Mother always told us how mean her mother was to her,” declared Toni. “She said she had to go over to the school to sweep the wood floors and sometimes get these great big splinters up, and all this dirt, and she had to bring in all the coal and wood and start the fires. She said as soon as she let loose of ringing that bell, she would be running to get home because she had to get her sister ready for school. If she didn’t get everything done, her mother would take a strap to her. The teacher said one time in front of the other kids that anyone who was late to school would be marked tardy except for Lula Phillips. Mother said it embarrassed her in front of the other kids, but everyone knew about the situation.”<sup>76</sup>

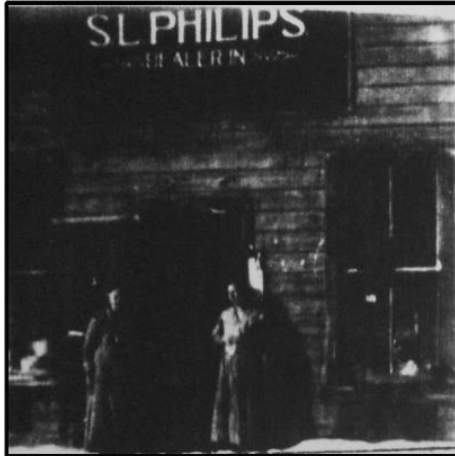


*Lula's parents Joseph and Sarah Lovisa Phillips.*



## Centennial Celebration

*The entire state of Utah celebrated in January, 1896, when it was announced that the territory was finally accepted as a state. School and businesses were suspended to celebrate inauguration day. Ceremonies were held in every town in the new state, but the biggest celebration was in Salt Lake City. "Mother went and brought me along to take care of the baby [one year old Florence]," said Lula. "There was a big parade before the Brigham Young monument was unveiled. I stood so close to it the veiling touched my body. I was thrilled."<sup>1</sup> Among other thrilling moments was seeing the famous tabernacle on Temple Square, which was decorated for the occasion with patriotic red, white and blue bunting and a huge forty-five star flag. Celebrations were held all over the state with speeches and songs, featuring the new state anthem 'Utah We Love Thee.' The statehood celebrations were an exciting event for ten-year old young girl from an isolated farming community, and Lula remembered them for the rest of her life. Above: A building in Salt Lake City decorated for the event.*



*Left: The Phillips Oakley store. Right: An unidentified photo of a typical county store interior.*

## Clerking at the Store

In addition to her duties at school and at home, Lula often helped out when her parents travelled to Salt Lake City to stock up on goods for the store along Main Street.<sup>77</sup> Among the items that could be purchased were a range of basic supplies such as flour, sugar, coffee, salt, canned goods, medicine, spices and a variety of farming tools.<sup>78</sup>

“When I was about fifteen years old, Mother and Father and I had gone to Salt Lake City to order goods for the store,” said Lula. “It was Sunday and they left the store locked. Some kid in town had stolen the key to the store just a few days before this, so before my parents left, my Father put a hole through the door and through the wall and put a heavy chain and heavy padlock on the door.

“Some of the town boys were sitting on the store porch. I was in cleaning the house when here came two tramps. One of them came to the house to ask me if I would let them in the store. I said, yes, if the boys would go with us, so I let the tramps in. They looked all around like they wanted to know just where everything was. When they left I went back to the house. In about an hour there came three more tramps. That was something we had hardly ever seen at Oakley. They wanted to get in the store, too, so I asked a lady who was there visiting to go in with me. These tramps looked all around like the other two had done. Then they seemed to get out of town until dark, until they came back again.

“I had my younger brothers and three younger sisters to take care of that night.<sup>79</sup> One of the boys from town came and sat with me awhile that evening. We had two little pups and they kept barking. Every once in a while I would hear someone come up on the porch of the room where were sitting. I said to my friend, ‘There is someone on the porch.’ He said, ‘It’s just some of the kids around,’ but when I would go look, they would run.

“When my friend left our place about 11 p.m. there was all five of those tramps in front of the store, three sitting on the porch and two on the steps. They ran up over the hill. My friend left me there alone, but my eldest brother [Joseph, twenty-one] had been to see his girlfriend and he came home in a while on a horse. There all five of those tramps were sitting on the steps, but when he came in on his horse, they left. I must have been protected that night.”<sup>80</sup>

## Shop Talk

*The Phillips’ store was known for a pet parrot the family kept there, according to Toni.*

*“People would knock on the door and the parrot would say, ‘Come in,’ and they would come in and it would say, ‘Sit down’ and they would sit down and looking all over for somebody. Then they would realize it was the parrot. Mother always laughed and used to tell us about this parrot and how it fooled so many people.”* Interview with Afton “Toni” “D”

(Mecham) Davies, 17 August, 1997. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.



## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Warren Percival Mecham, #KWC7-9K9, [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> Frederick E. Allen, "From Boom to Boom," *American Heritage Magazine* (February/March 2002), page 33-35.
- <sup>3</sup> Interview with Marlow Glen Mecham, 4 July, 2000. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>4</sup> Marlow Glen Mecham (1912-2003), #KWZH-NZ4, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>5</sup> Interview, Marlow Glen Mecham, 4 July, 2000.
- <sup>6</sup> Sarah Ann (Stevens) Mecham (1847-1887), #K2HN-Q17, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>7</sup> "The night Daddy's mother died she sat up in bed. Some of the older boys had already started to smoke, and the one thing she made Daddy promise was that he would never smoke. He promised her he never would and he never did. He never smoked and he never drank, either." Interview with Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 17 August, 1997. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>8</sup> Interview, Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 17 August, 1997.
- <sup>9</sup> Interview, Marlow Glen Mecham, 4 July, 2000.
- <sup>10</sup> Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies (1925-present), LNDN-5FS, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>11</sup> Interview with Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 4 July, 2000. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>12</sup> Interview, Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 17 August, 1997.
- <sup>13</sup> Hyrum Moroni Mecham (1842-1917), #KW6D-C37, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>14</sup> Interview, Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 17 August, 1997.
- <sup>15</sup> Lula Maude (Phillips) Mecham, #KWCL-PMH, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>16</sup> Interview, Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 17 August, 1997.
- <sup>17</sup> "Hyrum Moroni Mecham and Sarah Ann Stevens family group sheet," supplied 1997, by Afton "D" (Mecham) Davies. This sheet offers only a generic list of materials consulted.
- <sup>18</sup> Hyrum Smith Mecham (1866-1940), #KWCX-347, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>19</sup> Ephraim William Mecham (1867-1954), #KWCC-XYB, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>20</sup> Charles Henry Mecham (1869-1950), #KFX4-CTK, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>21</sup> Eliza Isabella (Mecham) Jensen (1874-1951), #KWCG-C6H, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>22</sup> Franklin Moroni Mecham (1876-1958), #KWCI-11N, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>23</sup> Lewis Albert Mecham (1878-1951), #KWJ8-FJB, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>24</sup> Thomas Leroy Mecham (1882-1949), #KWZ8-NX6, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>25</sup> Marion Nathaniel Mecham (1884-1963), #KWJ4-GKB, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>26</sup> Polly Emma Mecham (1872-1878), #KFX4-CTT, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>27</sup> May Sorenson, *The Falling Leaves: A History of Oakley, Utah* (privately printed, 1964), page 13.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, page 23.
- <sup>29</sup> Raye Carlson Price, *Doings and Diggings in Park City*, (Bonneville Books, University of Utah Press), page 946.
- <sup>30</sup> David Hampshire, Martha Sonntage Bradley and Allen Roberts, *A History of Summit County* (Utah Historical Society, 1998), page 69.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>32</sup> Marie Ross Peterson, "Echoes of Yesterday: Summit County Centennial History," (Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, Summit County Chapter, 1947), page 190.
- <sup>33</sup> Sorenson, *The Falling Leaves: A History of Oakley, Utah*, page 3.
- <sup>34</sup> William Stevens (1819-1902), #KWJV-58L, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>35</sup> Emma (Crowden) Stevens (1823-1900), #KWJV-58G, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

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- <sup>36</sup> The cabin stood at approximately 4666 North State Route 32 in Oakley. Peterson, "*Echoes of Yesterday: Summit County Centennial History*," page 225.
- <sup>37</sup> Hyrum S., sixteen; Ephraim, fifteen; Charles, thirteen; Eliza, eight; Warren, seven; Franklin, six; Lewis, four; and Thomas, one.
- <sup>38</sup> Peterson, "*Echoes of Yesterday: Summit County Centennial History*," page 224.
- <sup>39</sup> Interview with Marlow Glen Mecham, 4 July, 2000.
- <sup>40</sup> Sorenson, *The Falling Leaves: A History of Oakley, Utah*, page 14.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, page 15.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>44</sup> Interview with Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 8 July, 2001. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>45</sup> Interview, Marlow Glen Mecham, 4 July, 2000.
- <sup>46</sup> "Hyrum Moroni Mecham and Sarah Ann Stevens family group sheet," supplied 1997, by Afton "D" (Mecham) Davies.
- <sup>47</sup> Interview with Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 4 July, 2000.
- <sup>48</sup> Sorenson, *The Falling Leaves: A History of Oakley, Utah*, page 13.
- <sup>49</sup> Interview with Marlow Glen Mecham, 4 July, 2000.
- <sup>50</sup> Interview, Afton "D" (Mecham) Davies, 23 July, 2013. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>51</sup> Interview with Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 8 July, 2001.
- <sup>52</sup> Price, *Doings and Diggings in Park City*, page 946.
- <sup>53</sup> Interview, Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 8 July, 2001.
- <sup>54</sup> Joseph Phillips (1853-1907), #KWCX-MVQ, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>55</sup> Sarah Lovisa (Roundy) Phillips (1858-1941), #KWCX-MV7, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>56</sup> Josephine (Phillips) Clark (1876-1933), Lovisa Jenne (Phillips) Chamberlin (1879-1938), Joseph Curtis Phillips (1880-1955) and Edna May (Phillips) Newberry (1883-1979). "Warren Percival Mecham and Lula Maude Phillips family group sheet," supplied 1997, by Afton "D" (Mecham) Davies. This sheet offers only a generic list of materials consulted.
- <sup>57</sup> Sorenson, *The Falling Leaves: A History of Oakley, Utah*, page 8.
- <sup>58</sup> Interview, Marlow Glen Mecham, 4 July, 2000.
- <sup>59</sup> "Warren Percival Mecham and Lula Maude Phillips family group sheet," supplied 1997, by Afton "D" (Mecham) Davies.
- <sup>60</sup> Interview, Marlow Glen Mecham, 4 July, 2000.
- <sup>61</sup> Children born after Lula: Lyle Edwin Phillips (1888-1945); Earnest Wayne Phillips (1891-1891); Blanche (Phillips) Brown (1893-1971); Florence (Phillips) Siddoway (1895-1975); Evalyn Irene "Eva" (Phillips) Hallstrom (1898-1977). "Warren Percival Mecham and Lula Maude Phillips family group sheet," supplied 1997, by Afton "D" (Mecham) Davies. "Joseph Phillips and Sarah Lovisa Roundy family group sheet," supplied 1997, by Afton "D" (Mecham) Davies. This sheet offers only a generic list of materials consulted.
- <sup>62</sup> William Henry Stevens (1849-1913), #L4TW-Q1X, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>63</sup> Sorenson, *The Falling Leaves: A History of Oakley, Utah*, page 21.
- <sup>64</sup> Lula Maud (Phillips) Mecham, "Life History of Lula Maud Phillips," 26 January, 1968, manuscript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>65</sup> Sorenson, *The Falling Leaves: A History of Oakley, Utah*, page 22.
- <sup>66</sup> Mecham, "Life History of Lula Maud Phillips," 26 January, 1968, manuscript.
- <sup>67</sup> Marie H. Nelson, editor, *Mountain Memories: 1848-1986* (Kamas Utah: Enviro Graphics, 1986), page 97.
- <sup>68</sup> Sorenson, *The Falling Leaves: A History of Oakley, Utah*, page 18.
- <sup>69</sup> Peterson, "*Echoes of Yesterday: Summit County Centennial History*," page 234.
- <sup>70</sup> Sorenson, *The Falling Leaves: A History of Oakley, Utah*, page 16.
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>72</sup> Mecham, "Life History of Lula Maud Phillips," 26 January, 1968, manuscript.
- <sup>73</sup> Sorenson, *The Falling Leaves: A History of Oakley, Utah*, page 22.
- <sup>74</sup> Mecham, "Life History of Lula Maud Phillips," 26 January, 1968, manuscript.

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Interview with Afton “Toni” “D” (Mecham) Davies, 4 July, 2000.

<sup>77</sup> The store was located in the cabin that had been their original home when they first moved to Oakley. Sorenson, *The Falling Leaves: A History of Oakley, Utah*, page 19.

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

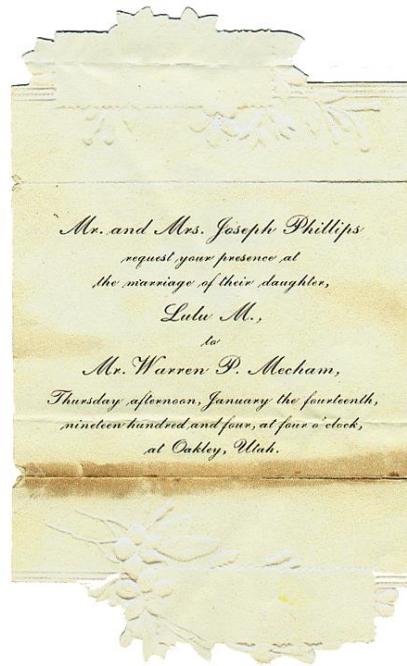
<sup>79</sup> Lyle, thirteen; Ernest, ten; Blanche, eight; Florence, six; and Eva, three years old.

<sup>80</sup> Mecham, “Life History of Lula Maud Phillips,” 26 January, 1968, manuscript.

## Chapter 2

# Marriage and Children

### Mountain Home



Warren had been living on his own and working in the rugged man's world of the west for fifteen years, but he was always anxious to return to the familiarity of Oakley. When he arrived back in town after his stint on the Canadian survey crew, he couldn't help noticing how much little Lula Phillips had grown while he had been away. She was now a lovely young woman who was an accomplished homemaker, in charge of her family's household while clerking at the store and maintaining the school at the same time.

Even though Warren had grown up next door to the Phillips family, he was eleven years older than Lula and barely knew the seventeen-year old woman she had become. He began "calling" on Lula from time to time, first stopping by the store when he knew she would be behind the store counter, walking her home from Sunday meetings, and dropping by for a chat on the front porch of the Meham home. Warren and Lula's romance blossomed over the summer and autumn of 1903, and by winter the couple was engaged. "They were engaged

none too soon,” said Toni. “Somebody told Daddy that if he wanted to marry her, he had better do it quick, because if he didn’t, she was going to be dead from all the hard work she was doing.”<sup>81</sup>

A special wedding dress was made<sup>82</sup> and beautiful embossed invitations printed on creamy paper were sent out to family and friends, inviting them to the marriage ceremony at the new Oakley chapel on 14 January, 1904.<sup>83</sup> Warren and Lula were “married by Elder P.J. Sanders, who was teaching school at Oakley at that time,” according to Lula.<sup>84</sup> Members of both families attended the simple ceremony and the dinner dance held afterwards in the ward building that had been decorated with swags of bunting and boughs of evergreens.

## Oakley’s Church

*The first Sunday school in Oakley was organized in 1885, with Joseph Phillips as assistant superintendent. Meetings were held in the old schoolhouse. The growing population quickly increased the small Sunday school, which at one point increased the membership to forty-three within a month. The town had outgrown the original log structure by 1901, when a new building was planned. Seventeen-year old Lula attended the ceremony with the rest of the town in the summer of that year when church president John Taylor placed a two dollar silver piece on the first cornerstone of the new chapel. Everyone contributed to the church by either working on the building itself or raising funds with community dinners, plays and quilt auctions. "There was a good feeling among the people, we were building our meeting house and it seemed we were all working towards the same end, it was the happiest time of my life," wrote church counselor John H. Seymour. The old school bell was installed in the church tower, where it can still be seen today. Boyd and Helen Lake, "The History of the Oakley Ward," 5 August, 1994, typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.*

## First Home in Oakley

Warren and Lula moved into the old Mecham home across the street from the Phillips' general store.<sup>85</sup> The cabin and its six acres of land<sup>86</sup> had been left vacant by Warren's father, Hyrum, who had remarried after his wife's death and left Oakley to homestead one hundred miles away in the Uinta Mountains.<sup>87</sup>

Living so close to extended family members has always been challenging, as the newlyweds soon discovered. Not only was Lula still expected by her parents to work in the Phillips' general store,<sup>88</sup> but Lula's mother continued to exercise an unhealthy control over her daughter. Fortunately, Warren was not intimidated by anyone, least of all his domineering mother-in-law, and he quickly established his authority as the man of his own house. "I can remember Daddy telling us about Mother bawling every night after they were first married," said Toni. "Grandma Phillips would come over to their house every day and change Mother's furniture around because she didn't like it. This upset Mother so much that she would be bawling when Daddy came home at night. He tired of it, so one day he walked across the street and said to Grandma, 'If I come home one more time and catch Lula bawling, I'm going to kick your butt clear across this street!' It just tickled Grandpa Phillips to death. He told Daddy, 'I've never had anything do me so much good in all my life as to have someone put her in her place.'"<sup>89</sup> Lula was finally released from her clerking duties soon afterward this incident when her brother Joseph took over running the store.<sup>90</sup>

Lula spent much of her work day as a young wife at home in the kitchen, preparing three meals a day from "scratch." Preparing food took a long time. All the wood for the cook stove came from the farm and had to be split as it was used. If she wanted to cook chicken for dinner, Lula had to catch and kill the bird, pluck the feathers and prepare it for roasting. Baking bread and pies required hours of hand work, as did preparing the fruits and vegetable that came out of the kitchen garden out back. Not only did Lula plant and tend the garden, but she preserved the excess produce by pickling, canning and drying what the family couldn't consume right away. She sold any eggs, butter and baked goods at the store. "My mother also took in boarders when they were first married to get extra cash," said her daughter Gladys (Mecham) Clayton.<sup>91</sup>

When Warren donated the lot next to his house to the LDS church,<sup>92</sup> the ward soon recruited Lula to provide bread for the weekly sacrament service. "We had a well as everyone else had at Oakley," said Lula. "Our well was the only one that didn't go dry in the winter

from the time we were married until we moved from there. The water for the church services came from our well, and they came to me to get bread for the sacrament. I always baked bread on Wednesdays and Saturdays and made enough for the sacrament. The only time I didn't was when I was in bed with my babies. I always loved to mix and bake bread.”<sup>93</sup>

## Little Ones

It was a little over a year after their marriage when the Mecham's first child, Lila Bell,<sup>94</sup> was born at home on 10 March, 1905.<sup>95</sup> The couple's first son, Theodore Roosevelt Mecham,<sup>96</sup> was born fourteen months later on Independence Day, 1906.<sup>97</sup> Warren and Lula determined that the best way to celebrate the birth of both their son and their country was to name the child after their favorite president. President Theodore Roosevelt was well liked across the nation in the early years of the twentieth century, and was especially popular with the residents of Summit County, where the neighboring towns of Theodore and Roosevelt were named after him.

Sadly, little Theodore came down with a case of erysipelas, a serious skin infection caused by bacteria the child may have been exposed to in the family's barnyard manure. His face erupted with patches of red, painful sores and he shook with fever and chills while Lula stood by, helpless to do anything but bath her crying baby in cool water. Without a doctor or antibiotics available, there was no hope of recovery and little Teddy succumbed to the disease in his mother's arms<sup>98</sup> on 14 September, 1907.<sup>99</sup> “He was a beautiful child. One day a lady said to me, ‘Lula, you will never raise that baby. He is too good to be on this earth.’ We were able to keep him fourteen months and ten days,” Lula recalled.<sup>100</sup>



*Little Theodore's grave.*

Warren and Lula found comfort after Theodore's death in both their strong faith and the birth of two more sons, Ellis<sup>101</sup> in February, 1908,<sup>102</sup> and Wilmer<sup>103</sup> in December, 1910.<sup>104</sup> It was in the same year Wilmer was born that W.H Stevens, added a water-powered electric generator to his milling operation, providing electricity for residents in the main part of town. The generator ran from dusk to 11 p.m., with a blink of the lights at 10:30 p.m. "to let people know it was time to retire for the night or be left in the dark."<sup>105</sup> The potential of the new Edison light bulb was exciting, and the Mechams soon wired their home for light with a single fixture in the middle of the kitchen ceiling. The first electric lights were turned on with a pull chain, which meant feeling in the dark with out-stretched arms to find the hanging cord.

The Mechams quickly became accustomed to the convenience of electric lights, but it wouldn't be until many years later that Lula would have the luxury of an electric refrigerator or washing machine. Lula continued to run her household by hand, as she always had, cooking, cleaning and doing the laundry the hard way. She was often found seated at her treadle sewing machine, stitching up shirts, pants, dresses and nightwear for the family. Lula was also skilled at knitting and crocheting little sweaters, hats, mittens and socks for her growing family.

## Homesteading in Mountain Home

By the turn of the twentieth century, the grueling life of the pioneer had been tamed by time and budding technologies that softened the rigors of survival in the Great Basin. Warren and Lula, like most other families around them, had settled into a comfortable, familiar routine that blended farm chores with small town life and its growing amenities.

Warren, however, still had a streak of adventure running through him, and when The Federal Homestead Act opened up the former Indian reservation lands of Duchesne County for settlement in 1905, his interest in homesteading was strong. After his brother Ephraim was called by the church to help settle the Lake Fork area in 1908,<sup>106</sup> Warren saw a way to fulfill his desire to acquire virgin land in the high country of Utah's last frontier with little cash expense. Ephraim had not only been joined in this venture by his brother Charlie, but their father Hyrum as well, who spent the first year making the area livable for the next wave of settlers. The men toiled on "the ditch," an



irrigation scheme to move water from the Lake Fork River to land the settlers hoped to cultivate. With the support of his family already homesteading in the area, Warren felt he could count on success.

Somehow Warren convinced Lula to try their hand at high-altitude farming in the spring of 1909. “The governor had thrown the Indian reservation open, so we filed on sixteen acres of land there,” said Lula. The family packed up their belongings and left for the Uintas, where they homesteaded their land allotment near the Lake Fork River.<sup>107</sup> The road between Oakley and Mountain Home was a little over one hundred miles of dusty, rocky trail worn deep with ruts from overloaded wagons. “What a trail we traveled over to get there! It was just a cow trail,” said Lula. “It took us about five days to make the trip. We went by covered wagon, always very heavily loaded.”<sup>108</sup>



*A view of the Duchesne County countryside.*



*Mining for coal in one of Utah's early shafts.*

## Accident at the Mine

Homesteading in the Uinta Basin was not for the faint of heart. There was only “a plain of sagebrush, rock and a few scattered dear trees”<sup>109</sup> to greet the newcomers that summer, who had no time to build homes, as the men continued work on the vital irrigation canal. Lula set up housekeeping by converting the wagon into make-do living quarters supplemented by a sheet of canvas stretched out as a tent.<sup>110</sup>

The first winter on Lake Fork had been a brutal “forty degrees below and snow up to their hips,” wrote Leona (Mecham) Spencer, Ephraim’s third child. “All the livestock died, starved and froze to death, but one cow and two horses. They melted snow for water.”<sup>111</sup> Warren and Lula decided against returning to the shelter and comfort of Oakley for the upcoming winter, and made preparations to camp by the river in Ioka, thirty-eight miles west of Vernal. “Warren fixed our covered wagon into a camp house, quite snug and comfortable,” said Lula, who somehow managed to care for toddlers Lila and Ellis in the confines of the wagon.<sup>112</sup>

Like farmers everywhere, the Mechams depended on off-season work to survive. Warren joined his brothers and hired on at a coal mine near Deer Creek above Vernal, where Lula also found work as camp cook.<sup>113</sup> Hard-rock miners generally rotated working one of three shifts, beginning at 7 a.m., 3 p.m. and 11 p.m., six to seven days a week. It was a physically demanding and dangerous job. Explosions and cave-ins took lives every year. Less common, but no less

dangerous accidents also took a toll, such as an unattended hoist cage suddenly crashing hundreds of feet to the bottom of the mine entrance.<sup>114</sup> It was just such an accident that almost claimed Warren's life that winter.

"One day, an hour after Warren had gone into the mine to work his first shift, the boss came running to the cabin to ask for a match," said Lula. "'I have let the loaded car down and I don't know if I have hurt anyone or not,' he told me. I said to myself, 'Oh, it is Warren!' When I got to the mine they had just brought him to the top, a man on each side supporting him and the blood streaming down his face. He had been knocked forty-five feet down the shaft and pinned against a pole. He was very badly hurt and there was no doctor closer than Fort Duchesne [twenty miles away]. The men put him in bed in our camp wagon and we started for the hospital. The snow was hub deep and the horses strained and floundered. We didn't get to the hospital until eight thirty that evening," said Lula.<sup>115</sup>

Riding in a wagon over rough roads was difficult in the best of conditions, but it was an excruciating trip for the gravely injured Warren, who "held himself up away from the wagon bed by holding onto the slats of the wagon cover because he couldn't lay down, it hurt him so bad," said Toni. "Bumping over those rough rutted roads with no shocks on the wagon would be like being hit in the head with a board, but Daddy told me he never lost consciousness.

"He was partially scalped and was covered with coal dust. The doctors took his eye out and laid it on his cheek and cleaned out most of the dust, but for many years afterwards you could see little flakes of black under his eye where some of his wounds were. They didn't have any anesthesia, so Daddy could feel everything they were doing to him. He told the doctors, 'I've got a splinter back there in my eye. I can feel it when you're probing around in there,' but the doctor couldn't see it. Finally, after a while they found a great big splinter of wood that had run right straight back into his eye."<sup>116</sup>

Warren was so badly injured he almost died right then and there. In fact, he claimed he actually had died while he was on the operating table, according to Toni, who recalled hearing the story many times as she was growing up. "He told me he died and found himself standing in a beautiful, green place. He wished he could see his mother and a sister [Polly] who had died when she was a baby. His cousin William Ward Stevens,<sup>117</sup> who had died when his arm was cut off in lumber mill accident, came to him out of this place that was hell. Daddy said to him, 'William, what are you doing in a place like this?' He told Daddy, 'This is where I have to stay until my temple work has been done.' Then Daddy said that all of a sudden he felt his spirit come

back into his body. If you wanted to get him angry, you would just tell him you didn't believe that story. He would always say, 'I know what I saw and I know what happened.'"<sup>118</sup>

Warren spent two weeks recovering in the hospital. In the meantime, Lula and the children were camped in their wagon by the river in Fort Duchesne, hoping and praying that Warren would pull through. Lula managed to keep herself and the children warm, even though "it was thirty six degrees below zero that winter," said Lula. "The coal haulers had heard that Warren was hurt, so most of them would leave coal for us and we kept quite warm. When Warren was able to travel we went back up to Ioka and stayed there until spring."<sup>119</sup>

## Coming and Going

It was a long and difficult winter with Warren injured and the family living in a wagon, but spring eventually thawed the ground enough for work on the canal in Mountain Home to recommence. "There was quite a group of us that summer," Lula recounted. "We used to get together in the evenings and have programs. Then we cleared off some ground and we danced by the light of a big bonfire."<sup>120</sup>

With the canal well under way, more time and effort was directed to building the town from the ground up. Ephraim "moved an old building to a spot about a mile away [from his home] and fixed it up for a schoolhouse, which was the only public building in the settlement for many years," said Leona. "Dad's older brother Hyrum helped them all he could. He lived just below them on the sand wash. He often told Dad to trade him a load of the soil from his place for a load of sand from his, then maybe they would both have some good soil. Dad worked all year and finally got enough logs to build a two room log house with an outside stairway up where the boys slept."<sup>121</sup>

At the end of the season, even with the construction of their own cabin well under way, Warren and Lula packed up to return to Oakley until spring, a routine they followed for several years. They were settled back in their home in time to prepare for the birth of Wilmer, who was born 10 December, 1910.<sup>122</sup> The return trip to Mountain Home in the spring of 1911 meant travelling with three small children: Lila, five, Ellis, two, and Wilmer, six months old, but this time Warren and Lula were joined by Warren's cousin, Les Stevens, his wife Ella and their two children. "It was a "tedious and sometimes dangerous trip," said Lula.<sup>123</sup>

Warren hitched up a team of four horses to the covered wagon, which was heavily loaded with the supplies the family would need during the next five or six months. The trip was going well until they came to a very steep part of the trail. "Warren said to Les, 'We will never make it down that sidling mountain unless we get a long pole and put in between the spokes on the hind wheel and you and Lula ride on the end of the pole,'" remembered Lula. "While the men were finding a pole, I put my babies out of the wagon in a place where they would be safe. There was a lovely smooth straight pole about six feet long nearby. The pole was put through and Les and I got onto it, balancing our stomachs with our feet and hands dangling and bumping all the way to the bottom. Then I ran up the mountain where I had left my babies and got them.

"Our next trip to Mountain Home we had an even more frightening experience," recalled Lula.<sup>124</sup> "We were still traveling in our covered wagon, of course. We were always heavily loaded. Warren didn't want to take chances on a chain to hitch the lead horses to, so he went to Park City and bought a thick lead bar such as they used on the heavy ore wagons. We came to a real steep pitch on the side of the mountain and *pop* went the lead bar and away the wagon ran! A team of two horses broke loose and ran down the mountain.

"Warren pulled the brake on as he jumped out of the wagon. I don't know who was there to help me get our three babies out of the wagon, but someone was, as I did have help. When I got all of my babies safe up on the side hill, I put rocks under the hind wheel, as I knew the two remaining horses couldn't hold the heavy load. The run-a-way team didn't go very far until the line got wrapped around the trees and stopped them. Oh, how blessed we felt, as we thought about what could have happened! I was surely glad when we were through making those trips."<sup>125</sup>

Toni recalled her mother telling of another experience when the family was protected from danger on the primitive roads. Warren, Lula and the children were on their way to cut firewood in the mountains during the spring when the streams were raging and swollen with snow melt. "The wagon had a big break they had to pull back by hand, something Mother had been doing for hours by the time they stopped for a rest," said Toni. "Mother and the babies stayed behind while Daddy went ahead to cut some wood. Mother was so tired from working the wagon that she laid down under this big tree by that roaring stream and fell asleep. She told me, 'I woke up and my guardian angel was standing over the children with his arms out, protecting them so they couldn't get near the water.'"<sup>126</sup>



*A view of Fort Duchesne in the early twentieth century.*

## Settled In

The pioneering era was over in the lower valleys, but for those who settled in Mountain Home, life was much as it had been for the early pioneers, when cooperation and grueling work was the key to success. During the summer of 1911, Warren and Lula traded homes with Les and Ella Stevens, who had a cabin in Mountain Home. “We lived in the Stevens house under the hill while they lived in our house at Oakley,” Lula said. “Bob and Nettle Workman, whose land joined ours, stayed with us there while Rob and Warren built our houses.”<sup>127</sup>

The homes were simple log cabins “unadorned by paint, shade trees, flower gardens or curtained windows,”<sup>128</sup> but Warren made the most of the scenic location by building a large front porch that faced south across the foothills.<sup>129</sup> The cabin started out with a hard-packed dirt floor, but Warren was able to install wood planks from one of the nearby sawmills after the first season. Glass window panes, which had been hard to come in the early years, could be purchased locally in Myton by the time the Mechams moved in.<sup>130</sup>

Household water was relatively easy to haul from the nearby canal during the summer, but when freezing weather arrived, the canal water was cut off. “We had to melt snow or ice for our household water,” said Lula. “When there was no snow we had to haul water in big barrels about six miles or get ice from the lakefront or river. That was a big job for a big family, using water for Monday laundry and Saturday night baths for ten people.”<sup>131</sup>



*Roosevelt's Main Street in 1917.*

## Provisions

Making a living from the Uinta soil required the same effort as farming always had, and even more ingenuity due to the severe conditions encountered at such high altitudes. “We were the last farm at the foothills of the mountains, about 7,500 feet above sea level,” Marlow remembered. “The first thing I remember about Mountain Home was the deep snow in the winter and hauling rocks on a rock boat. It had poles for the runners and heavy planks for the bottom, with a little pole flattened on each side and nailed to the edge all the way around. At first it was there for fun, then in a year or two it was a must. We had one big pile of rocks in the field and the rest went around the fence line,”<sup>132</sup> a testament to the rocky ground the Mechams tried to tame. It wasn’t unusual to spend more than a year to clearing a virgin tract of sagebrush and cedar trees, remove the rocks and level the ground for planting.

By the spring of 1913, Warren’s ranch operations had assumed a smooth routine. “We raised hay, grain, horses, cows, pigs, chickens and sheep,” said Marlow. “I was pretty young and I started riding horses and herding cows when I was about five years old. When I was six I was the official cow herder. I would take them out in the foothills in the morning, then bring them in at night.”<sup>133</sup>

Although most farmers were accustomed to living off a dogged self-sufficiency, the high-valley residents of Mountain Home depended on the nearby towns for many of their basic supplies. The closest store was next the post office in Bonita, six miles away, where items such as soap, sugar, salt, and baking powder could be purchased. Major

shopping was reserved for a trip to Roosevelt. “We went to town to do our shopping,” said Marlow. “We couldn’t grow a kitchen garden in Mountain Home. It was too cold. The only thing we grew out on the ranch was gooseberries. We always had a nice patch of gooseberries. There was a valley about two and half miles down from Mountain Home where they did grow some apples. The folks went to town in a wagon once a week, maybe once every two weeks.”<sup>134</sup>

There were times when basic supplies were hard to come by, even in town. At one point there was very little sugar to be had and “a scarcity of salt. It seems strange to have no salt in Utah, but in the Uinta Basin there was in 1909, not even in the stores, not in Vernal, Myton or Roosevelt,” said Leona.<sup>135</sup> Marlow even remembered a time when white flour was impossible to find. “We were in Mountain Home during World War I and I remember during the war you couldn’t even buy flour. It was sent to the soldiers. Dad always raised enough wheat to take to the mill to get flour in hundred pound white seamless sacks. They were hung on a wire in the granary so the flour wouldn’t get musty. But during the war they wouldn’t let them have the flour back, so Mother used the bran to make bread. It was good bread. We loved it.”<sup>136</sup>

Cash may have been king, but bartering was more common in the Uintas with money as scarce as it was. “A dollar looked as large as a wagon wheel,” said Lula. “The men would go to the mountain, chop poles, then take the poles to Roosevelt or Myton, which were both quite well settled then, and trade them for hay, grain and groceries.”<sup>137</sup>



*One of Roosevelt’s businesses in 1915.*



## Indians

Despite the difficulty of putting food on the table during these years, Warren and Lula were always willing to share what they had. "My husband would always ask anyone who was there around mealtime to come and eat. I have cooked for a lot of people, and could not count the people I have cooked for in my life," said Lula, and that included the local tribesmen.<sup>138</sup>

Many Native Americans still lived in the area, travelling across the roads which connected the white settlements out of a mixture of curiosity and hunger. The Mechams became accustomed to visits by the local Utes, who especially liked to drop by the cabin on baking day. "I remember the Indians coming to the house time after time in Mountain Home," said Marlow. "We lived at a high altitude where you could hear and smell a long ways. If the Indians smelled bread cooking they would come to the house. They didn't come on the road, they would cut through the brush and across the field. Prit near every time they would ride up right to the door on their horses. Dad told Mother, 'If the Indians come, I want you to give them bread and food.' Mother would get them a loaf of bread, wrap it up and give it to them. It seems to me that about half the time they wanted two. Mother would argue with them because flour wasn't plentiful, but if they asked for two, they got it."<sup>139</sup>

Native men wore cowboy blue jeans with a knotted silk kerchief around their necks. Their wide faces were framed by braids and a broad-brimmed hat, ornamented with a brightly beaded hat band. The women, who always walked behind the men, wore long full skirts with a large plaid blanket wrapped around their shoulders, often smelling "of wood smoke and campfires."<sup>140</sup>

Warren was comfortable making friends with the natives, and he often invited them to dinner with the family. "As a rule there was just one, and sometimes there would be two," according to Marlow. "They never had a squaw with them. They would come and set up at the table and they would not touch one thing until Dad did. He would pass them some food and they would take it, but they wouldn't touch a mouthful until Dad started eating. They just didn't trust the white man, I guess, even though they knew Dad well."<sup>141</sup>

Lula, on the other hand, was uneasy with these visits, especially if the Indians arrived when Warren was not at home. "One day while Rob and Warren were away at the saw mill getting lumber for the home, two Indian braves came to the house," she said. "I had fresh baked

bread out and they wanted a loaf. After getting their bread, they stayed half an hour, then left, for which I was glad. I was terribly frightened of the Indians. They came back again about sundown and wanted another loaf of bread. I told them they just couldn't have one, as there were many mouths for us to feed and it took us three days to get to a store where we could get flour. They put money on the table and said, 'Now give us a loaf of bread.' We didn't dare refuse for fear they would be mean. The nearest neighbor was a mile away and our men were gone. They asked me, 'Where her man?' I said, 'He is up on the hill.' 'Where your man?' 'He's up there, too,' I lied. 'They will be here in a few minutes.' Then they left. After we had lived at Mountain Home for a while, I lost my fear and cooked many meals for the Indians."<sup>142</sup>

Occasionally some of the Indian men joined the white settlers in rounding up a few of the wild horses running loose in the mountains. "Dad had an awful nice corral at Mountain Home," said Marlow. "There was a bunch of wild horses and five or six white men used to go out there and round up those wild horses. They would get those horses running down a lane and once the horses started down that lane and they couldn't get out. They had to go where the men wanted them to go. When they got down to our place, which was only about a half a mile from the head of the lane, there were some guys who got out in front of the horses and ran them into the corral.

"We was out to the corral when I was really little and there was an Indian there with Dad. We used to have this baling wire to bale hay with and it had a little loop in the end and when you baled the hay up, a man had to sit there and thread that. The Indian had a piece of that baling wire and he made it like a lariat. All at once, that Indian reached over with that wire and put it over my head. I throwed it off real quick and that Indian just laughed. That tickled that old duffer to death. He said, 'Well, they're not going to get that guy, are they!'"<sup>143</sup>

## Gold Digging

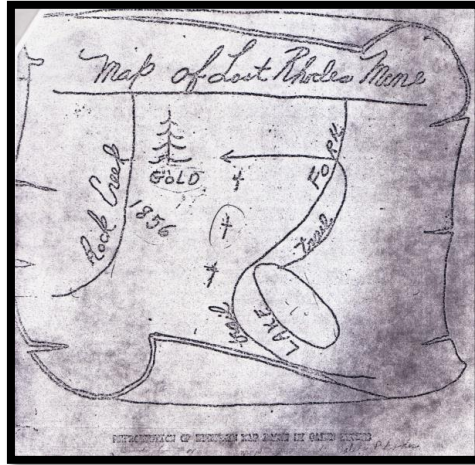
One reason Warren was friendly with the locals, according to Marlow, was to pick up some inside information on locating the infamous Rhodes gold mine, which he believed was located somewhere on the former reservation. "Dad asked the Indians, 'Why don't you tell me where the Rhodes mine is?' 'Me show um,' one of them said, and stepped out into the barnyard where he pointed toward the mountain and made a circle. 'See?' he said. It covered miles. That's where it was, somewhere out there," chuckled Marlow at the memory.<sup>144</sup>

Warren was convinced that if he worked hard enough, and looked long enough, he would eventually pull raw wealth straight out of the earth. He spent hours scouring the backcountry in search of elusive mineral veins, occasionally brining home sparkling chunks of mountain he hoped would amount to something. “He was usually looking for gold,” said Toni. “Dad always liked to prospect and had mines all his life. He took us up in the mountains one time, way, way back about a mile. He and a couple of other miners had the mine all fixed up so it wouldn’t cave in on them. It was really something.”<sup>145</sup>

The local newspaper often reported him “at outside points prospecting,”<sup>146</sup> sometimes with unhappy results. In September of 1931, Warren, his brother Charlie and three friends were reported to be prospecting for gold at camp near the head of the Yellowstone River in Duchesne County. One of the friends, Warren Sulzer, remained in camp that Saturday as he was not feeling well. “When they returned to camp their companion was dead,” according The Roosevelt Standard. “Warren Mecham left at daylight Sunday morning and riding horseback to the closest ranger’s station, telephoned to Sheriff Arzy Mitchell. The sheriff immediately got in touch with the Justice of Peace at Midway, Wasatch County, who with one or two other men went to the prospector’s camp. Sulzer had been ailing with heart trouble for some time and it is believed that that caused his death. Early Monday morning the party left camp. The body was carried by pack mule to the ranger’s station.”<sup>147</sup>



*The countryside near Mountain Home.*



## The Rhodes Mine

*One of the many legendary mining stories of Utah concerns Thomas Rhodes and his lost gold mine. Rhodes, an expert in native ways and languages, was supposedly asked by Brigham Young to locate a secret Indian gold deposit he had been told existed somewhere in the hills of the Uinta Basin. Rhodes eventually earned the Indian's trust and was not only led to the mine, but was allowed to work it as well, eventually moving a small fortune of gold to the coffers of the Mormon church. Rhodes honored his promise to the Indians and refused to divulge the mine's location until, upon his deathbed, he drew a map for his wife to follow. Many treasure hunters since then have hunted in vain for the lost mine.*

## Old Man Rowley

Death by natural means was always a cause for concern, but it paled in comparison to the threat of frontier violence. While every man not only owned his own firearm and was skilled in using it to help feed his family, it was only on the rare occasion that a dispute elevated to the level of intimidation with a weapon, especially in the mostly Mormon communities of the Uinta Basin.

“Watch what you say because once those words are out of your mouth you can never take them back,” Warren often said, and he meant it.<sup>148</sup> He was the kind of man who commanded a firm respect, both from his family and the community. “Dad wasn’t a troublemaker. He got along with people, but you didn’t want to push him around too much. I know some people were scared of him, but if they knew him, they respected him,” Marlow affirmed. “When we were in Mountain Home, Dad was on the board of directors with the [irrigation] ditch with a man named Rowley. Old man Rowley was a character. He told Dad that he sat up in the mountains and waited for this guy who was mad at him and he was going to kill him. He was supposed to be an awful good shot. We was kind of scared of Rowley.

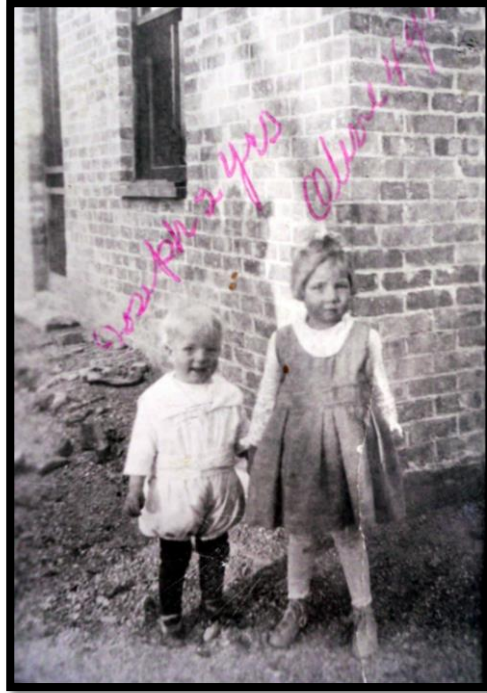
“One day when I was pretty small, Wilmer and I were out at the woodpile getting wood. Rowley come up the road on his horse and Dad walked out to the gate of the picket fence. They got into an argument. We couldn’t hear a word Dad said, but we could hear Rowley. By the time we got our wood gathered up, Dad put his hand on that fence and jumped over it. Rowley tried to take off on his horse, but Dad grabbed the reins. They continued to argue there a bit, and finally Dad let go of the reins. Rowley said, ‘I’ll kill you before the sun goes down tonight!’

“Dad took us in the house and wouldn’t let us go outside. He made us stay away from the doors and windows. He got his ought-six and stood it there by the door and put a big blanket over the window in the living room so we couldn’t be seen. Dad said Rowley could shoot from his place through that window with his rifle if he wanted to. Dad sat right there where he could see down the road. I remember him saying that ‘If Rowley had passed that corner, I would have stepped out on the porch and let him have it,’ but Rowley never showed up.

“Dad was a good shot, too. I was with him and a few other men on the mountain one day when we were just coming out of the timber. Dad saw a little pin hen. He had his ought-six in his hand and he just shot that bird right out of the tree. He shot the head right off that bird. Another time there were five birds in a tree and he shot the head off every one of them. So if he had ever shot Rowley he would have killed him, but Rowley never showed up. We used to be afraid that he would ambush Dad sometime, but they got along pretty good after that.”<sup>149</sup>

## Court Case

*A few years after his run-in with Old Man Rowley, Warren had a disagreement with a man by the name of George McMillan of nearby Fruitland. This time, the dispute was settled in court. “Mecham had done some work for McMillan and was to get hay for it,” reported The Roosevelt Standard. “McMillan had let Mecham have all the hay that he thought he was entitled to, but Mecham thought he had some more coming, and in the absence of McMillan, proceeded to go down into the field in broad daylight and get another load.” Warren refused to back down when confronted by McMillan, who took Warren to court in Duchesne. “After a lengthy argument from attorneys on both sides the judge took the view that Mecham didn’t steal the hay, therefore declaring him not guilty.” The Roosevelt Standard, 20 February, 1925, “McMillan vs. Mecham.”*



*Joseph and Olive outside their home in 1919.*

## Far Away to Ferron

In the mountainous isolation of the Uinta frontier friendships were dear. "Our neighbors came to mean a great deal to us, and we welcomed each new family to arrive," said Lula. "John and Susan Shirts lived just a little way from us, and Susan and I became lifelong friends. In 1918, although we had been at Mountain Home for nine years, we still did not have any fruit trees that had started to bear and we became very hungry for fruit. One day, Mrs. Shirts received a letter from a sister living at Ferron who said we could come to her place and get fruit, if we would bring her some wheat and our own bottles to pack the fruit in. Three of us women decided to go: Mrs. Shirts and her daughter Sarah, Frank Mecham's wife and their three small children and myself with my two smallest children, Olive [three]<sup>150</sup> and Joseph [one year].<sup>151</sup> I was the teamster of the group. I had to drive, feed, water, hitch and unhitch the horses, unharness them at night and harness them the next morning. We had quite a load. We all slept in the wagon every night going.

“Our first night's stop was at Duchesne [twenty miles away]. There had been a terrible rainstorm up Indian Canyon the day before and the people in Duchesne tried to warn us not to go on, but we were determined to get our fruit, so we started out early the next morning. It wasn't long until we got into trouble. Heavy freight wagons had made such deep ruts in the dirt road that some of them couldn't make it and had pulled out on the outside of the road. One wagon was so close to the road that the hub of our wagon caught on the hub of the other wagon. There we were, couldn't move an inch.

“We sat there helpless for about an hour until two men with the mail wagon came. In order to go on through they had to get us out of their way. They took our team off our wagon, tied it behind our wagon and put their lead team on our wagon and drove us down to where we were on good dry roads. We camped by the side of the road that night and left early the next morning. The next night we camped at Price, where Mrs. Shirts' two sons were living in a tent. From there Mrs. Shirt's youngest son Dave, who was about seventeen years old, went with us and he drove the team the rest of the way to Ferron. That was such a relief to me.

“Mrs. Shirt's other son, George, told us there was a terrible lot of influenza around and it was very contagious, so we stayed right at the campground to avoid catching it. The flu was also raging at Ferron. We stayed at the fruit farm and canned and dried fruit as fast as we could work. Every letter we got from home told us that three or four people had died with the flu there. The schools were closed. Every day I would wonder if Warren and our four oldest were still all right. We did a lot of worrying and a lot of praying. When we were ready to come home in November, Frank and Mrs. Shirts came with two extra wagons to haul our fruit with. We were able to take back bushels of fresh apples as well as our canned and dried supply. Oh, how we did enjoy that fruit!

“It was really cold when we got started for home. Dave drove my team home, for which I was grateful. We found ourselves in the midst of a celebration when we came through Helper. It was on November 11th and the Armistice had been signed. World War I was over. It took two more days to get home. We had been gone six weeks and were thankful to be home. We heard that after leaving us in Mountain Home, Dave Shirts went up to Draper's saw mill to work where he got the flu and died a few days later. We were much saddened by this news, but thankful the rest of our party escaped it.”<sup>152</sup>



## Homemade Healthcare

The flu pandemic of 1918-1919 was an unusually severe and lethal outbreak that spread over most of the world. The deadly natural disaster was terrible enough that no one could be sure they wouldn't come down with it, even in the remoteness of the upper Uintas. Medical expertise against the flu was inadequate. Without inoculations against the disease, only a combination of hearty health, limited exposure and outright luck determined survival. Marlow attributed the Mecham family's escape from the disease to a daily ritual his parents performed. "Our family didn't get the flu during the epidemic and do you know why they didn't?" he asked. "Every morning after Mother got the food off the table Dad would take some sulfur and sprinkle it on the stove and that would kill all the germs. It was beautiful. It would flame right up."<sup>153</sup>

The Mechams may not have been victims of the flu, but they did contract several cases of scarlet fever not long afterwards, in 1920. "It was in the spring when my dad was working on the big canal with all the rest of the farmers before the water was turned on," said Marlow. "Wilmer was worse than the others. He about died, and they never had no doctor that I know of come to the house. All of the kids were in bed except me. I was eight years old and helped take care of them all the time. At noon each day Mother fixed a hot lunch for Dad and put it in a pan. I would get my horse and Mother handed up the lunch so I could put it over my shoulder. Then I rode to the canal, which was two miles away, with the lunch and a note from Mother. The first thing Dad said to me when I got there every day was, 'How's the family?' I will never forget the sad look on Dad's face when he would read that one of the children was not doing well."<sup>154</sup> Fortunately, the disease ran its course without any serious consequences and the children gradually regained their health.

Every family in the isolated regions of Utah was required to doctor themselves. The nearest physician was in Roosevelt or Fort Duchesne. There was little a doctor could do for most illnesses in any case, as there were no antibiotics and few other drugs at his disposal. When any of her children were sick or injured, Lula pulled down the large medical book she kept in the living room bookcase. "Dad and Mother had one of the best doctor books I ever seen in my life," said Marlow. "It had everything in it and was illustrated with a lot of pictures. If anybody got sick, they would have that doctor book out there to figure out what to do."<sup>155</sup>

Mothers relied on tried-and-true home remedies handed down to them from pioneering parents, such as peppermint and yarrow tea remedy for fever, or an infusion of sagebrush and aspen bark to reduce boils. Popular poultices included bread and milk for infections, lard and pepper to soothe sore throats, and onion or mustard for coughs and pneumonia. A concoction of kerosene and sugar was guaranteed to dislodge mucus from the throat and turpentine was known to reduce inflammation of the bowels. Burnt flour and baking soda were good relief for minor burns and diaper rash. “Mother saved the life of one of my nephews who had pneumonia when he was really little,” Toni remarked. “In those days a lot of them died with pneumonia, but Mother made a mustard plaster and put it on his chest and it turned him and he was just fine. You just took care of yourself.”<sup>156</sup>

Fortunately, there were other women in the mountains who could lend a hand during the most dangerous and difficult time a mother faced, that of childbirth. The next Mecham child, Marlow, arrived soon after the family was settled at Mountain Home on 21 September, 1912.<sup>157</sup> “We had no doctor closer than Duchesne, no telephones. There were complications and I came almost to dying when he was born,” said Lula. “I thank the dear Lord that the midwife had had the same experience herself and knew what to do to help us.”<sup>158</sup> Lula continued to rely on local midwives for the next ten years as she gave birth to Olive (1915), Joseph (1917), Wanda (1920)<sup>159</sup> and Gladys (1922),<sup>160</sup> all in the isolation of her Mountain Home cabin.<sup>161</sup>

## High Spirits

*Lula was called to serve as Primary president of the local ward, a position she enjoyed for several years. “Primary was a big occasion in the summer,” said Marlow. “My mother would pick up all the ladies and children and take them to Primary. At this time we were going to church in a dead-ax wagon, traveling about three miles. In the winter we traveled in a bob sleigh. Sometimes the snow was so deep we drove over the tops of the fences. Dad would say, ‘Watch for any high posts above the snow.’” Marlow Glen Mecham, “History of Marlow Glen Mecham,” March, 1977, typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.*

If medical care was limited, dental care was almost non-existent. “We didn’t go to the doctor very often and never went to the dentist,” said Olive.<sup>162</sup> Like doctors, dentists could do very little in the way of treatment. The primary duties of most dentists were pulling severely decayed teeth and making dentures to replace them. Because there was no such thing as preventative care, most people had full sets of false teeth by the time they were in their fifties. Gladys remembered her mother having quite a few teeth pulled and dentures made while they lived in Mountain Home, an event that was notable enough to be reported in *The Duchesne County News*.<sup>163</sup>

Eventually the rigors of homesteading took their toll on not only the Mechams, but many other families as well. Warren decided to seek greener pastures elsewhere in 1923. Lula left the Uintas with a jumble of emotions. “We surely did a lot of pioneering for the first eight years,” said Lula. “Our years at Mountain Home demanded a lot of us and gave a lot back to us. We had sorrows and hard times there, and a lot of love and good times within our family and with our good friends and neighbors.”<sup>164</sup>

## Taking a Licking

*“Spare the rod and spoil the child” was a maxim believed by most parents at the time and Warren and Lula were no exception to this rule. “When Dad told you something, you paid attention,” said Marlow. “He was never abusive, but you knew what he meant. He only told you once. I remember one licking I got. Dad had told Wilmer and I to go out and do something with the pigs. We were playing in the camp wagon out there and we hadn’t done what we were supposed to. Dad came in and he had his buggy whip in his hand and he tingled our legs with that whip, but he didn’t hurt us.” Lula was apparently fond of stripping the leaves from small tree branches for use as a disciplinary tool. “Mother used to use switches on us. She also had a little paddle she wasn’t afraid to use. One time I ran from her and I was going to get over the fence, but I didn’t make it,” said Marlow, who was happier to endure a switch wielded by his mother than face his father. “I was afraid she would tell Dad what I had done and then he would be mad at me.” Interview with Marlow Glen Mecham, 4 July, 2000; Interview with Afton D. (Mecham) Davies, 4 July, 2000. Transcripts held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.*

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>81</sup> Interview with Afton D. (Mecham) Davies, 17 August, 1997. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>82</sup> Interview with Afton D. (Mecham) Davies, 4 July, 2000. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>83</sup> Mecham-Phillips marriage, 14 January, 1904, Summit County, Utah, Volume 1, page 438; Western States Marriage Record Index: details for marriage ID #197338:
- <sup>84</sup> Lula Maud (Phillips) Mecham, "Life History of Lula Maud Phillips," 26 January, 1968, manuscript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>85</sup> Interview with Afton D. (Mecham) Davies, 4 July, 2000.
- <sup>86</sup> Mecham, "Life History of Lula Maud Phillips," 26 January, 1968, manuscript.
- <sup>87</sup> Daphne Draper, "Life Sketch of Wilmer Phillips Mecham," 4 December, 1995, typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>88</sup> "I did a lot of clerking in the store after I was married when Mother had to go to Salt Lake City to buy for the store," said Lula. Mecham, "Life History of Lula Maud Phillips," 26 January, 1968, manuscript.
- <sup>89</sup> Interview with Afton D. (Mecham) Davies, 4 July, 2000.
- <sup>90</sup> Interview with Lula Olive (Mecham) Woodard, 2 February, 2010, by Sean Seth Davies. Transcript held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>91</sup> Gladys (Mecham) Clayton (1922-2011), #KWZ4-82T, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) Interview with Gladys (Mecham) Clayton, June, 2010. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>92</sup> Mecham, "Life History of Lula Maud Phillips," 26 January, 1968, manuscript.
- <sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>94</sup> Lila Belle (Mecham) Farnsworth (1905-1981), #KWC7-9VD, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>95</sup> "Warren Percival Mecham and Lula Maude Phillips family group sheet," supplied 1997, by Afton D. (Mecham) Davies. This sheet offers only a generic list of materials consulted.
- <sup>96</sup> Theodore Roosevelt Mecham (1906-1907), #KWVH-2BX, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>97</sup> "Warren Percival Mecham and Lula Maude Phillips family group sheet," supplied 1997, by Afton D. (Mecham) Davies.
- <sup>98</sup> Interview, Lula Olive (Mecham) Woodard, 2 February, 2010, by Sean Seth Davies.
- <sup>99</sup> Theodore Roosevelt Mecham, death certificate no. 250 (1907), Utah Department of Health, Salt Lake City. He was buried in the Oakley cemetery.
- <sup>100</sup> Mecham, "Life History of Lula Maud Phillips," 26 January, 1968, manuscript. Years later, Marlow came down with the same disease, but never told his mother, according to Toni. Interview with Afton D. (Mecham) Davies, 4 July, 2000.
- <sup>101</sup> Warren Ellis Mecham (1908-1996), #KW86-CXL, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>102</sup> "Warren Percival Mecham and Lula Maude Phillips family group sheet," supplied 1997, by Afton D. (Mecham) Davies.
- <sup>103</sup> Wilmer Philips Mecham (1910-1995), #KWC3-M3D, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>104</sup> "Warren Percival Mecham and Lula Maude Phillips family group sheet," supplied 1997, by Afton D. (Mecham) Davies.
- <sup>105</sup> Boyd Lake and Helen Lake, *The History of the Oakley Ward*, (Centennial Commemoration, 5 August, 1994), page 12.
- <sup>106</sup> Ephraim W. Mecham, "Experiences of Ephraim W. Mecham," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>107</sup> Draper, "Life Sketch of Wilmer Phillips Mecham," 4 December, 1995, typescript.
- <sup>108</sup> Lula Maud (Phillips) Mecham, "The History of the Mecham Family at Mountain Home, Duchesne County, Utah" 1953, typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.

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- <sup>109</sup> “History of Early Mountain Home and Farnsworth Canal and Reservoir Company,” undated typescript, copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>110</sup> Mecham, “The History of the Mecham Family at Mountain Home, Duchesne County, Utah” 1953, typescript.
- <sup>111</sup> Leona Mecham Spencer, “Biographical Sketch of Ephraim William Mecham,” undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>112</sup> Mecham, “The History of the Mecham Family at Mountain Home, Duchesne County, Utah” 1953, typescript.
- <sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>114</sup> Daniel L. Sutherland, *The Expansion of Everyday Life* (University of Arkansas Press, 2000).
- <sup>115</sup> Mecham, “The History of the Mecham Family at Mountain Home, Duchesne County, Utah” 1953, typescript.
- <sup>116</sup> Interview with Afton D. (Mecham) Davies, 4 July, 2000.
- <sup>117</sup> William Ward Stevens died 13 January, 1906.
- <sup>118</sup> Interview with Afton D. (Mecham) Davies, 4 July, 2000.
- <sup>119</sup> Mecham, “The History of the Mecham Family at Mountain Home, Duchesne County, Utah” 1953, typescript.
- <sup>120</sup> 1910. *Ibid.*
- <sup>121</sup> Spencer, “Biographical Sketch of Ephraim William Mecham,” undated typescript.
- <sup>122</sup> “Warren Percival Mecham and Lula Maude Phillips family group sheet,” supplied 1997, by Afton D. (Mecham) Davies.
- <sup>123</sup> Mecham, “The History of the Mecham Family at Mountain Home, Duchesne County, Utah” 1953, typescript.
- <sup>124</sup> The Mechams returned to Mountain Home in 1912.
- <sup>125</sup> Mecham, “The History of the Mecham Family at Mountain Home, Duchesne County, Utah” 1953, typescript.
- <sup>126</sup> Interview with Afton D. (Mecham) Davies, 17 August, 1997.
- <sup>127</sup> Mecham, “The History of the Mecham Family at Mountain Home, Duchesne County, Utah” 1953, typescript.
- <sup>128</sup> Virginia Parker, *A Memoir of Fort Duchesne 1925-1935* (Agreka Books, 1998).
- <sup>129</sup> Marlow Glen Mecham, “History of Marlow Glen Mecham,” March, 1977, typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>130</sup> John D. Baron, *A History of Duchesne County* (Salt Lake City, Utah State Historical Society, 1998), page 119.
- <sup>131</sup> Mecham, “The History of the Mecham Family at Mountain Home, Duchesne County, Utah” 1953, typescript.
- <sup>132</sup> Mecham, “History of Marlow Glen Mecham,” March, 1977, typescript.
- <sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>134</sup> Interview with Marlow Glen Mecham, 4 July, 2000. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>135</sup> Meda Leona (Mecham) Spencer, “History of Ephraim William Mecham,” undated typescript, Daughters of the Utah Pioneers. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>136</sup> Interview, Marlow Glen Mecham, 4 July, 2000. Also, Mecham, “History of Marlow Glen Mecham,” March, 1977, typescript.
- <sup>137</sup> Mecham, “The History of the Mecham Family at Mountain Home, Duchesne County, Utah” 1953, typescript.
- <sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>139</sup> Interview, Marlow Glen Mecham, 4 July, 2000.
- <sup>140</sup> Virginia Parker, *A Memoir of Fort Duchesne 1925-1935* (Agreka Books, 1998).
- <sup>141</sup> Interview, Marlow Glen Mecham, 4 July, 2000
- <sup>142</sup> Mecham, “The History of the Mecham Family at Mountain Home, Duchesne County, Utah” 1953, typescript.
- <sup>143</sup> Interview, Marlow Glen Mecham, 4 July, 2000
- <sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

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- <sup>145</sup> Interview with Afton D. (Mecham) Davies, 4 July, 2000.
- <sup>146</sup> *The Roosevelt Standard*, 11 June, 1926.
- <sup>147</sup> *Ibid*, 11 September, 1931, "Prospector Found Dead."
- <sup>148</sup> Interview with Afton D. (Mecham) Davies, 9 June, 2002. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>149</sup> Interview, Marlow Glen Mecham, 4 July, 2000
- <sup>150</sup> Lula Olive (Mecham) Woodard (1915-2011), #KWCL-PM4, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>151</sup> Joseph Hyrum Mecham (1917-1968), #KWCY-XLX, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>152</sup> Mecham, "The History of the Mecham Family at Mountain Home, Duchesne County, Utah" 1953, typescript.
- <sup>153</sup> Interview, Marlow Glen Mecham, 4 July, 2000
- <sup>154</sup> Mecham, "History of Marlow Glen Mecham," March, 1977, typescript.
- <sup>155</sup> Interview, Marlow Glen Mecham, 4 July, 2000
- <sup>156</sup> Interview with Afton D. (Mecham) Davies, 30 May, 2005. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>157</sup> "Warren Percival Mecham and Lula Maude Phillips family group sheet," supplied 1997, by Afton D. (Mecham) Davies.
- <sup>158</sup> Mecham, "The History of the Mecham Family at Mountain Home, Duchesne County, Utah" 1953, typescript.
- <sup>159</sup> Wanda Eva (Mecham) Loveland (1920-2002), #KWCZ-GTJ, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>160</sup> Gladys (Mecham) Williams Clayton (1921-2011), #KWZ4-82T, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>161</sup> "Warren Percival Mecham and Lula Maude Phillips family group sheet," supplied 1997, by Afton D. (Mecham) Davies.
- <sup>162</sup> Interview, Lula Olive (Mecham) Woodard, 2 February, 2010, by Sean Seth Davies.
- <sup>163</sup> *The Duchesne County News*, 30 December, 1916.
- <sup>164</sup> Mecham, "The History of the Mecham Family at Mountain Home, Duchesne County, Utah" 1953, typescript.

## Chapter 3

# Move to Upalco

## High Altitude Ranching

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*Autumn in rural Duchesne County.*

**M**eager crop yields from Mountain Home's short growing season, poor soil and periodic droughts forced a number of once-hopeful homesteaders of the Upper Country to abandon their dream of land ownership. After nine years of struggling with the rigors along the Lake Fork River, the Mechams moved twenty-five miles south east to a rented ranch with a large orchard outside the small town of Upalco.<sup>165</sup>

Ellis and Wilmer<sup>166</sup> remained in Mountain Home to manage the stock while Warren set up operations at the new ranch. Several weeks later, Wilmer and his uncle Charlie "drove a bunch of cows from Mountain Home to the Upalco area. It took about all day," said Wilmer. "When we came out of the cedars on the west bench and looked down in the valley, I saw one special house that looked better than any of the others. I thought to myself, 'I hope that is where we are going. Sure enough, that was the house where we lived for a year or so.'<sup>167</sup>

The ranch house was a warm and welcoming two-story frame home with a wrap-around front porch where Warren and Lula could sit and relax on warm summer evenings.<sup>168</sup> “It was a really lovely place, with three bedrooms upstairs, two bedrooms downstairs and a great big kitchen,” said Gladys, who also recalled the convenience of a wringer washing machine on the screened-in back porch.<sup>169</sup>

The living room was large enough for the entire family to draw together after dinner when Lula would read a few chapters of a favorite book, ending the evening by kneeling around the table in family prayer. “There was never a time when my dad and mother didn’t have family prayer when I was growing up,” said Gladys.<sup>170</sup> Marlow also had fond memories of “winter evenings when my father was at home. We would gather around the fire and sing songs, and Mother would read us stories from *The Children's Friend* magazine. I can remember sometimes my mother would cry when reading certain stories. At bed time we were taught to have our private prayers, as well as the family prayer. My folks lived close to the Lord. Their prayers were constant and often.”<sup>171</sup>

## The Ranch

Warren expanded his operations at the new ranch to include pigs, turkeys, a herd of cattle and three hundred sheep.<sup>172</sup> Ellis and Wilmer took responsibility for the running the sheep through the mountains every summer,<sup>173</sup> while Marlow was in charge of the cattle. “I hated to herd sheep, but I loved to work with the cattle, and I was lucky that I got that job,” said Marlow. “We used to trail the cattle about sixty miles down on the Green River in the spring, then bring them home in the fall. We would have to make a trip or two in the summer to see how they were.”<sup>174</sup>

The summer after moving to Upalco, Warren rented a second farm in nearby Sours Canyon, where he sent Ellis and Marlow “to put in the crops. We took our cattle along. The two farms were four miles apart, being the last two farms up the canyon,” Marlow recollected. “My job was to keep the cattle between these two farms and keep them in the canyon so they would not get out on the reserve, as there was a certain time of the year for them to go on the reserve.



“The lower ranch is where we the boys lived in a big one room cabin. This cabin was also where the cowboys would stay. Sometimes there would be six or eight of us. As there was only one bed, there would be beds all over the floor. It took us about two weeks to get the grain in on the lower ranch. We traveled each morning to the other ranch as there was no house up there fit to live in.”<sup>175</sup>

The boys were working and travelling in untamed country that was still full of wild animals. Marlow told of one encounter with a mountain lion while he and his brother Ellis were plowing the upper ranch. “I staked my horse by the front foot in the grass along the creek, walked up the creek a few rods to a nice little grassy spot and laid down on my stomach with my chin in my hands. I dozed off to sleep, as we had gotten up early that morning. In a few minutes I heard something sniff and I opened my eyes. There was a cougar sniffing and following my trail. He was about twenty-five feet from me. I moved a little and he saw me and stopped. I laid there looking at him and he looking at me. Then I got up on my feet and he just stood there, wagging his tail. After watching him for two or three minutes, I started to yell at Ellis, who was on the far side of the field. He was driving four head of horses on the plow and packed a whip that he could reach the leaders with.

“When Ellis saw the cougar, he said to me, ‘Get on your horse,’ but the cougar was between me and my horse. Ellis came running down through the field hollering and cracking his whip, but Mr. Cougar stayed right where he was. He would look at me, then at Ellis. When Ellis got about a hundred feet from me, the cougar turned and slowly walked away. Ellis got a club and we got on the horse and chased the cougar about a hundred yards where he went in the bush. Ellis said, ‘Keep an eye open for him.’ I thought I was watching for him, but about three o’clock in the afternoon, Mr. Cougar raised up out in the grass about twenty five yards from me. He stretched like a cat does after a nap, looked all around, slowly walked over to the foot of the mountain and disappeared. My father said if I would have gotten scared and run, it would probably have been my last run.”<sup>176</sup>

The high Uintas was also rattlesnake country, a fact underscored by an impressive collection of rattles Joseph acquired during the years he tended sheep. “Joseph had a bottle that was crammed full of rattles to show all the rattlesnakes he had killed. He said every one of those rattles was from one of the snakes that slept with him,” said Gladys. “Joseph came in early one morning and said, ‘Daddy, I want a decent bed roll. I’ve been sleeping on blankets on the ground and when I rolled up my blankets one morning there were six rattlesnakes under my bed. I want a bed that I can get up off of the ground. I’m not sleeping with rattlesnakes anymore.’ So my dad gave him a little cot and he slept on that.”<sup>177</sup>

Rattlesnakes were also common around the barnyard. Marlow remembered Joseph chopping wood one day when “a big rattlesnake crawled out from under the log, right by his feet. He came jumping around the granary about four feet in the air with every jump, yelling, ‘A rattler! A rattler!’ I thought sure it had bitten him, as he had killed a good many of them before. I told him to get a willow and throw the snake over the fence. When he went to throw it over the fence it somehow caught on the stick and came right at me. He hollered and I saw it just in time to duck, or it would have wrapped right around my neck. We then made short work of Mr. Rattler.”<sup>178</sup>



*One of Lula's tables set for Upalco's Independence Day celebration in 1928.*

## Fun and Games

The extensive property around the Mecham's house extended from the barnyard to include “a “huge yard surrounded by a white picket fence,” said Toni. “We had a hop scotch outline in the yard and Daddy made us a swing in one of the trees. We used to swing a lot in that swing.”<sup>179</sup>

Every July the grassy expanse became the center of Upalco's Independence Day celebrations. Sponsored by the local ward, the festivities attracted people from surrounding communities, as it was the biggest event of the summer. Lula set up tables under the trees with glass pictures of lemonade for the pot luck picnic. Many families brought their hand-cranked freezers and fruit preserves to top the ice cream; others baked cookies or cakes to eat with the frozen treat.

Sports and competitions of all kinds were popular, especially foot races which were run according age and sex. At the age of thirty-nine, Lula saw no reason to miss the 1925 competition, even though she was expecting to deliver her eleventh baby any day. She lined up with the other “older ladies” at the starting line and not only ran the race, but came in first, none the worse for it. Lula gave birth to a daughter early the next morning. They named the baby Afton.<sup>180</sup>

“The next day Dad went in the store and told the clerk that Lula had her baby that morning and no one believe it. They all said, ‘You’ve got to be out of your mind. She couldn’t have had a baby, she won the race just yesterday.’”<sup>181</sup> If the townspeople were shocked at little Afton’s birth, so were the children at home. “All of us kids was surprised,” said Marlow. “None of us kids knew Mother was pregnant. I certainly didn’t know she was pregnant. She was built so you couldn’t tell and she always dressed in loose clothes. I come out of the bedroom that morning and Dad set there in front of the stove with the oven down, holding the baby. He uncovered her face and said, ‘See your new sister?’ We was all surprised.”<sup>182</sup>

## House Afire

“Trouble comes in threes,” the old saying goes, and that was certainly true for the Mecham family in the spring of 1929. “Both Mother and Daddy were in the hospital in Roosevelt when I was three years old,” said Toni. “Daddy had had some kind of surgery. Three weeks after that Mother went into the hospital and had her gall bladder removed. Three weeks after that the house burned down.”<sup>183</sup>

Lula was standing at the old black stove fixing breakfast one morning in May when Warren came into the kitchen with a large can of sheep dip. “As my father ran sheep, every spring there would be lambing, shearing and then branding and docking. My father always made his own paint, using lamp black and raw linseed oil. He mixed it in a five-gallon honey can on the back of the kitchen stove.” said Marlow. Lula, who was still cooking bacon and eggs, chided him as he set the can on the hot stove. “Warren, don’t put that in here,” she said, but Warren dismissed his wife’s concern. “Oh, it’s not going to hurt,” he replied as he hefted the can onto the burner and took a seat at the large table next to the stove. “Father then went out to the corral to help get the sheep ready. Mother had an extra hot fire that day, and the paint boiled over just as Father came in door. The whole house was on fire in just seconds,” recalled Marlow.<sup>184</sup>

“The house just exploded,” said Gladys, who was only six years old at the time. “Mother had oil cloth tacked up around the stove and it caught on fire right away.”<sup>185</sup> Olive, Wanda and Joseph had already left for school, but little Afton was sitting at the table by the stove in an open high chair when the paint exploded. She immediately slid out of her chair and under the table to hide from the flames. “Mother looked for me and started screaming, ‘Where’s my baby! Where’s my baby!’” said Toni. “She said the wind parted those flames and they saw me sitting under the table and Marlow ran in there and got me. I had nothing wrong with my lungs, nothing from inhaling smoke, nothing.”<sup>186</sup>

“Dad grabbed the can and ran outside with it. He really burned his hands,” Marlow said. “When I got up from the table I took my chair with me and that was the only thing we saved in that kitchen.”<sup>187</sup> Everyone else ran. The other boys grabbed the milk and cream as they went out. “It was so dark you could hardly see, really black,” said Marlow. “The smoke was as black as the paint. It done a good job on the sheep and it done a good job burning the house, too. That house was on fire so quick. The windows were open upstairs, too. It was just absolutely perfect. It didn’t take long for it to go.”<sup>188</sup>

As the stunned family members gathered in front of the burning house, they realized everything they owned was still inside, including new suits that had just been purchased for the boys in Roosevelt a few days before. Gladys remembered that “all of a sudden, Daddy looked up at the kids and said, ‘Where’s Ellis?’ and one of the other boys said, ‘He went up to get our suits.’ Daddy raced up those stairs and Ellis was coming back down and they collided. Well, it was a good thing they did, because the stairs was wide enough that one of them could have gone up and the other passed each other. Then they both went down and got out, but the suits got burned up.”<sup>189</sup>

Almost everything else was burned as well, except for Lula’s sewing machine, which stood against the wall next to the living room window. “We tried to get into the front room, but there was so much pressure in the house that it slammed the door shut,” said Marlow.<sup>190</sup> Lula was determined to rescue the machine and broke the window with her hands, cutting herself badly. She called for the boys to help. “We took the sewing machine right through the window, that and the trunk that had all of her pictures in it,” said Marlow. “We lost everything else.”<sup>191</sup>

What the raging fire didn’t turn to ash, it completely melted. Toni remembered that Marlow, who “was the secretary for the Sunday school, had this great big box of silver dollars that melted. He picked the melted pieces up and sent them back to the treasury and got

reimbursed. Mother had just got this great big set of aluminum ware and that melted down into little chunks. For years and years we used to go out to the site of the old house and pick up these pieces of aluminum to play with,” said Toni.<sup>192</sup>

“We lost everything, but the people in the ward and our neighbors were very good to us,” Olive remarked. “Someone even gave Daddy a hundred dollars. We built a log cabin and lived there after that. The house was never rebuilt.”<sup>193</sup> Marlow remembered moving “a little log building [15x 20] that was used for a workshop into the yard, close to where the house had been. We weren’t able to build a new house right away because we were too busy with farm work during the summer, so Dad built a small room onto this building and put a stove and a bed in there. The girls slept in the sheep wagon and the boys slept out in the wooden granary until it was time to put the grain in, then we had to move out with the sheep. We fenced off an area large enough for two beds in the covered part of the corral. The folks had purchased lots of blankets when they sold the wool that spring, and we slept under those with a heavy tarp over us to keep the moisture off. The temperature got as low as twenty below zero, but we slept pretty warm after we got the bed warmed up. Our shoes were always frozen so hard that we would grab them and run to the house in our stocking feet. Dad always had a fire going in the cabin by the time we got there, so we put our shoes by the stove to thaw out.”<sup>194</sup> These arrangements made a deep impression on Glady, who remembered seeing her brothers “sleeping in the granary, tucked down in the wheat with a blanket. As little as I was, it hurt my soul to think my brothers had to sleep in the granary.”<sup>195</sup> Warren and the older boys began work on a new house the next spring.<sup>196</sup>

At fifty-five years old, Warren still had the frontier toughness he developed as a young man working in a Park City bar, and it came in handy from time to time on the ranch. “My father would never pick a fight, but you had better not tangle with him,” said Toni. “Daddy had huge shoulders and he was as solid as a rock. He was a powerhouse and he wasn’t afraid of anybody,”<sup>197</sup> least of all Mr. Morris, the local banker, who drove to Upalco to discuss business with Warren soon after the house was completed.

Warren was already renting the property from the bank,<sup>198</sup> and probably took out a loan in order to build the new house. Taking out a loan was considered “signing your life away” and until the loan was paid off, the banker had control of the family’s destiny. Although bankers were among the more respected citizens, they were also were eyed with suspicion by most farmers and ranchers.

“Mr. Morris and Daddy got into a big argument over money,” said Glady. “Mr. Morris, who was 6’2”, towered over Daddy, who was about 5’9”. Daddy was walking Mr. Morris out to his car, arguing the whole way, when he said to Daddy, ‘You just come off your property!’ As soon as they walked through that gate Daddy hit him, just like that. Mr. Morris flew right up over the hood of his car and landed on the other side. He jumped up and threw his hands up and said, ‘Don’t hit me again, Warren, don’t hit me again!’ They talked for a minute, then shook hands and went back in the house the best of friends again.”<sup>199</sup>



*Lula Maud (Phillips) Mecham*

## Lula’s Kitchen

Mr. Morris returned to often to the Mecham home over the next few years, carefully timing his visits to arrive for one of Lula’s famous meals. “Mr. Morris always managed to get there in time for dinner because Mother was the best cook around,” said Glady. “She would cook roasts so big you would think it was half a cow. I loved her boiled raisin cake and her pies were out of this world. She was always baking cakes and pies. I remember one morning when I was about seven years old, Mother had made eleven lemon meringue pies and put them in our great big window to cool. There was a man who came over just looking at them; he wanted a piece of one of those pies so bad. Mother cut him a big piece of pie and gave it to him. My mother and dad fed more people than you can imagine.”<sup>200</sup>

Warren made it a habit to share his prosperity with family, friends and anyone who happened to be passing by at mealtime. “In Upalco there was always company at our table and it wasn’t just a person or two. It was families, and in those days families meant six or eight kids,” said Toni. “Daddy would even invite salesmen to stay for dinner because his patriarchal blessing said no one would ever be turned away from his house hungry. He would say, ‘Lula, put on a plate.’ In Upalco we had an electric meter and the man who read that would make sure he got there right around noon time because Mother would always give him a piece of cake or pie.”<sup>201</sup>

Even with plenty of dessert at the table, Warren “always finished off every meal with a teaspoon full of sugar, always—morning, noon or night, even on top of his dessert,” said Toni. “He always used cream and sugar in his coffee, too. He loved anything sweet. I remember my oldest sister getting so mad at Father because he would stick her babies’ thumbs in the sugar bowl and then put them in their mouths. Lila said he was teaching them to suck their thumbs.”<sup>202</sup>

## Eating Right

*“Everyone was welcomed in our house, but there was a right way of doing things in Daddy’s mind,” said Toni. “We always had deserts and lots of ice cream because we had so much milk and cream and we made our own. We were having dessert one day with Mr. Morris and he was eating his cake and ice cream with a fork. Daddy passed him a spoon and says, ‘Would you like a spoon?’ Mr. Morris said, ‘No, thank you.’ Daddy sat there and a few minutes later passed the spoon over and said, ‘We eat our ice cream around here with a spoon!’ There was a right way of doing things.”* Interview with Afton “Toni” “D” (Mecham) Davies, 17 August, 1997. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.

## Spiritual Blessings

More than anything Warren loved to spend time with his children and grandchildren. “Daddy was great one to hold the grandkids and bounce them on his knee,” said Toni, who remembered sitting on her father’s lap even as “a big kid. I went to sleep on his lap every night. I can never remember him saying, ‘That’s enough.’ I would get tired and just lay there on his shoulder and go to sleep. I was probably about eleven years old when I stopped doing that, he felt really bad about it. He would say, ‘You never come and sit on my lap anymore.’”<sup>203</sup> Olive also remembered the comfort of her father’s arms. “Oh, my dad was such a wonderful daddy!” said Olive. “I used to sit on his lap and love him. I don’t think Daddy was ever mad at me in his life.”<sup>204</sup>

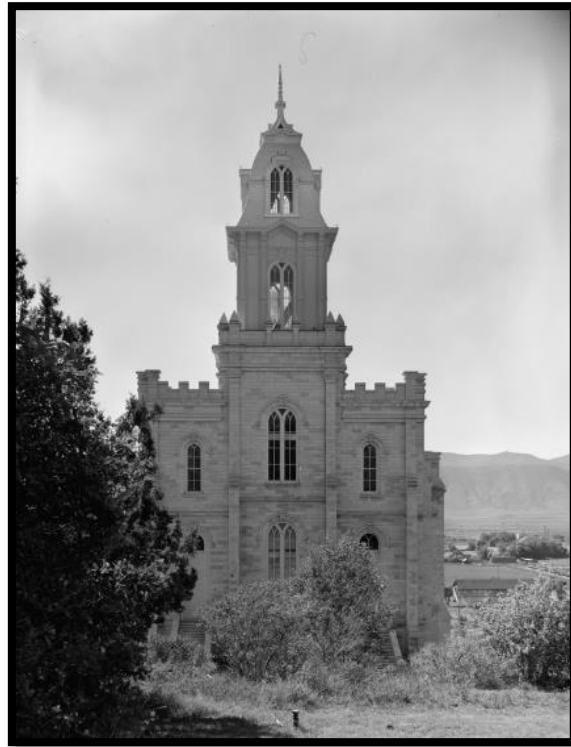
The end of every day brought family members home again for dinner and evening prayer, and the beginning of every week found the family in church. Meetings were held at the ward chapel, where Warren was often asked to sing in one of the meetings and the boys took turns blessing and passing the sacrament. “Wilmer and I administered the sacrament together a great deal,” said Marlow. “We used to pass the water with a glass, and one deacon would have a pitcher of water and when the glass was empty, you would go to the other deacon and he would fill your glass. Sometimes if someone was thirsty, they would drink most of the water, or all of it. This did not happen very often. I can remember how happy we were when we got our first trays for water.”<sup>205</sup>

In June, 1932, Warren, Lula and all ten of their children joined other ward members on a trip to the Manti Temple. “I remember there was a whole bunch of us that went there from different families,” said Olive. “The truck had a tarp over the top and Dad was the driver and Mom and all of us kids was in the back. We pitched tents and camped out in a grove of trees along the way, then camped at the temple grounds when we got there. We children waited outside until it was time for them to seal us. It felt so good to be in the temple. It was the most beautiful place I had ever seen in my life. I admired the plush carpets, the paintings on the wall and everything.”<sup>206</sup>

Marlow recalled “being all dressed in white and them bringing us in and sitting us all down around this big altar. Mother and Dad said there wasn’t a dry eye in the place when we were all gathered there. They had someone stand in for Theodore. It didn’t happen very often when that big of a family was sealed,” said Marlow.<sup>207</sup>



Not all of the ward members took the day's proceedings as seriously, however. Marlow reported one of the young men "got about half way up the stairs inside the temple and remembered he still had his cigarettes in his pocket. He said, 'Wait while I hide these,' and he ran down the stairs and out to the shrubbery where he hid them. I don't know if he ever got them back."<sup>208</sup>



*"We had all ten of our children sealed to us, what a happy day for me," wrote Lula of the family's trip to the Manti Temple.*

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>165</sup> The family moved to Upalco in 1923. Lula Maud (Phillips) Mecham, "The History of the Mecham Family at Mountain Home, Duchesne County, Utah" 1953, typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.

<sup>166</sup> Ellis was nineteen and Wilmer was fifteen years old at the time.

<sup>167</sup> Daphne Draper, "Life Sketch of Wilmer Phillips Mecham," 4 December, 1995, typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.

<sup>168</sup> Interview with Gladys (Mecham) Clayton, June, 2010. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>171</sup> Marlow Glen Mecham, "History of Marlow Glen Mecham," March, 1977, typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.

<sup>172</sup> "In Upalco we had animals, hay, grain, cows, pigs, chickens and sheep. We had lots of turkeys," according to Marlow. Interview with Marlow Glen Mecham, 4 July, 2000. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.

<sup>173</sup> Draper, "Life Sketch of Wilmer Phillips Mecham," 4 December, 1995, typescript.

<sup>174</sup> Mecham, "History of Marlow Glen Mecham," March, 1977, typescript.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> Interview, Gladys (Mecham) Clayton, June, 2010.

<sup>178</sup> Mecham, "History of Marlow Glen Mecham," March, 1977, typescript.

<sup>179</sup> Interview with Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, June, 2010. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.

<sup>180</sup> "Warren Percival Mecham and Lula Maude Phillips family group sheet," supplied 1997, by Afton "D" (Mecham) Davies. This sheet offers only a generic list of materials consulted.

<sup>181</sup> Interview with Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 8 July, 2001. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.

<sup>182</sup> Interview, Marlow Glen Mecham, 4 July, 2000.

<sup>183</sup> Interview with Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 17 August, 1997. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.

<sup>184</sup> Mecham, "History of Marlow Glen Mecham," March, 1977, typescript.

<sup>185</sup> Interview, Gladys (Mecham) Clayton, June, 2010.

<sup>186</sup> Interview, Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 17 August, 1997.

<sup>187</sup> Interview, Marlow Glen Mecham, 4 July, 2000.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> Interview, Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 17 August, 1997.

<sup>190</sup> Interview, Marlow Glen Mecham, 4 July, 2000.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> Interview, Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 17 August, 1997.

<sup>193</sup> Interview with Lula Olive (Mecham) Woodard, 2 February, 2010, by Sean Seth Davies. Transcript held by Shelley Dawson Davies.

<sup>194</sup> Mecham, "History of Marlow Glen Mecham," March, 1977, typescript; Interview, Marlow Glen Mecham, 4 July, 2000.

<sup>195</sup> Interview, Gladys (Mecham) Clayton, June, 2010.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> Interview with Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 4 July, 2000. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.

<sup>198</sup> Interview, Gladys (Mecham) Clayton, June, 2010.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>201</sup> Interview, Afton “Toni” “D” (Mecham) Davies, June, 2010.

<sup>202</sup> Interview with Afton “Toni” “D” (Mecham) Davies, 30 May, 2005. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> Interview, Lula Olive (Mecham) Woodard, 2 February, 2010, by Sean Seth Davies.

<sup>205</sup> Mecham, “History of Marlow Glen Mecham,” March, 1977, typescript.

<sup>206</sup> Interview, Lula Olive (Mecham) Woodard, 2 February, 2010, by Sean Seth Davies.

<sup>207</sup> Interview, Marlow Glen Mecham, 4 July, 2000.

<sup>208</sup> Mecham, “History of Marlow Glen Mecham,” March, 1977, typescript.

## Chapter 4

# The Great Depression

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### Refuge in Yost



*The Raft River Mountains near Yost.*

The ten years following the infamous stock market crash of 1929 brought poverty, high unemployment and plunging farm incomes across the nation, but due to Warren's work ethic and careful management, the Mecham family maintained their prosperity during the 1930s. "We were never without anything during the Great Depression," said Toni. "I remember Mother telling me she didn't even know there was a depression at the time. It didn't affect us. Daddy always paid cash for everything. He would bring something home and Mother would say, 'How much did that cost?' and he would say, 'Hell, I don't know. I saw it and I liked it, so I bought it.' He managed his money well. My father always had a new car, even during the depression."<sup>209</sup>



*Glady, Lula, Warren and Toni pose in  
Front of their car around 1939.*

## Car Trouble

*“Mother was a good bookkeeper and Dad was a good manager,” said Toni, who remembered her father having enough cash to purchase a “big, black shiny car from a man he knew named Parker. Daddy hadn’t had the car for long when one day here came the sheriff. Mr. Parker had stolen the car in Salt Lake and sold it to Daddy and the sheriff had come to take him away. He lost his money on it, I guess.” Even though Warren liked fine cars, he never drove them, depending on Ellis and Marlow to drive him wherever he needed to go. “He learned to dive a little bit, but shifting was hard work for him,” said Toni. “He used to say, ‘One day all you are going to have to do is put the car in gear and drive and you won’t have to shift. Then I’m going to start driving.’” Interview with Afton “Toni” “D” (Mecham) Davies, 4 July, 2000. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.*

In the middle of the financial downturn, Warren decided to move his ranching operations from the Uinta Mountains to the high desert ranges of northwestern Utah. He purchased twelve hundred acres of range land just outside of Yost, an isolated community of ranchers located on the slopes of the Raft River Mountains, a few miles south of the Idaho border. The only access to Yost even today is by a twenty-two mile stretch of dirt and gravel road across the desert, segments of which were once part of the 1848 Great Salt Lake Cutoff to California.<sup>210</sup> It is a dry and unforgiving country, dotted with an occasional abandoned house and rimmed with the towering crags of City of the Rocks to the north.

Yost had changed very little since its initial settlement in the 1880's. Although the physical boundaries of the town were the largest in the state, the population was only several hundred. The center of town was nothing more than a gas station, an LDS chapel and a small store that carried necessities such as milk, cheese, flour, sugar, eggs, candy, soap and cleaning products. "That was the whole town, those three buildings," said Toni.<sup>211</sup>

The town may have been small, but the surrounding ranches encompassed acres of wide open spaces. Toni recalled the Meham ranch "was such a huge place that Daddy had to have help running it. He always had four or five men from town working for us."<sup>212</sup> In addition to hired hands, Warren continued to rely on his sons to run the stock. Wilmer was left in charge of the ranch in Upalco, driving the cattle to Yost "all night and all the next day" a few months after the rest of the family had settled into the Yost ranch house. Ellis was then sent to the Uintas until operations were closed out there and the sheep were sold.<sup>213</sup>

Most of the cattle were allowed range freely across the land, while the barnyard was full of pigs, chickens, turkeys and dairy cows that provided food for the family table and some excess to sell locally. "Wilmer and I milked five cows every morning and every night in Yost. I was out there at six in the morning before school every day," said Gladys. "We kept enough milk for drinking and making butter and sold the rest. Wilmer used to separate the milk and had two ten gallon cans of cream he would sell over at the store. We lived on the cash from that cream."<sup>214</sup>



*The abandoned Mecham ranch house in 2009.*

## The House and Yard

Warren set about replanting the fields with alfalfa and grain, caring for the extensive peach orchards with the constant worry of drought, since few farms had access to irrigation water. At harvest, hay was brought in from the fields by wagon, then pitched to the hayloft door on the second level of the barn. The younger children were stationed in the hayloft where they tramped down the hay to allow maximum storage capacity. Rats and mice were always problems in the barn, but they were kept down by a family of cats kept for pest control.

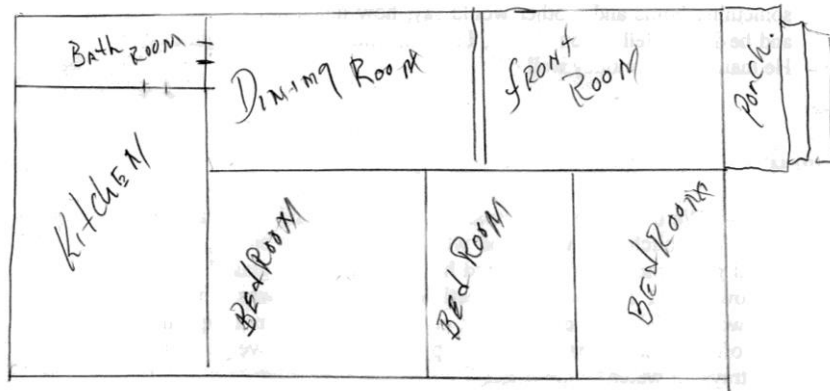
There was a variety of other outbuildings, including a chicken house, hog house, smoke house and several granaries. Machinery such as plows, cultivators, mowers and wagons were often parked outside along the fences or in the bunkhouse when not in use. A special saddle room off to the side of the bunkhouse was the perfect place to store “all kinds of bridles and saddles,” according to Toni.<sup>215</sup> The tin roofed ice house not only served to shelter blocks of ice packed in mounds of sawdust against the summer heat, but served as a make-do slide for the girls.

The white frame ranch house was built on the bench above a long valley. There was “a covered front porch with a big lilac bush on the side of it,” recalled Toni. Inside, the rooms featured hardwood floors and large, double-hung sash windows. “There was big kitchen, a dining room with a table where the whole family sat together”<sup>216</sup>

around the oak table with pressed-back chairs. As mud and manure was constantly tracked in from the yard, the linoleum floor covering in the kitchen made clean up easier than it had been when all the floors were wood. Lula wove several rag rugs to accent the kitchen, placing them in front of the sink and tin-topped wooden counters.

There was no electricity like there had been in Upalco. “We had only old fashioned kerosene lamps to take to our bedroom, and the rooms were dark,” said Toni. “Daddy would say, ‘Look out, a bear is going to get you! Then he would laugh. He wasn’t afraid of anything. I always felt protected with him around.”<sup>217</sup>

Without electricity, Lula cooked on a wood burning stove and stored small amounts of milk, butter and meat in the ice box, an insulated, tin-lined oak box that held a chunk of ice over the top of the food. The melting ice drained into a container that had to be emptied often. Water for cooking, cleaning and bathing was hauled into the house from the nearby well, and trips to the outhouse instead of an indoor toilet were a necessity. Without plumbing, dirty dishwater, kitchen slops, and, worst of all, the contents of overnight chamber pots had to be removed from the house by hand.



*Toni sketched this floorplan of the Mecham's home in Yost.*





*Yost in the 1930s consisted of a few important buildings such as the gas station (above), recreation hall (center) and grocery store (below).*



## Lula's Life

The majority of the family's food came from the kitchen garden and surrounding fruit trees. "We always had a big garden," said Toni. "We raised everything that we could eat."<sup>218</sup> The potato patch was especially large, and Lula also planted plenty of green beans, lettuce, sweet corn, peas and tomatoes, which kept everyone busy hoeing down the weeds all summer long. Supplementing the commercial peach orchard were cherry and apple trees. "We used to go out and sit in the cherry tree by the house and eat cherries 'til we popped," recalled Toni.<sup>219</sup>

Food not immediately consumed by the family was preserved for the winter by processing and canning in glass jars. "Mother bottled meats like turkey, chicken, pork and beef because we didn't have any refrigeration outside of the ice house," said Toni.<sup>220</sup> Even with the windows open, the heat from the stove in operation all day long made for a grueling workday. Once bottled, the winter food storage was carried down into the root cellar. Hearty fruits such as apples could be stored whole by wrapping them individually in old newspapers or turned into preserves such applesauce, apple jelly or apple butter for sweet treats all through the winter.

Preparation for the large noon meal and other housekeeping took up much of the morning. Bread making alone required several hours for each batch. The ingredients had to be mixed, the contents allowed to rise, then kneaded, rolled into loaves and allowed to rise again for at least an hour before the final baking of thirty to forty minutes. Yeast

was kept from one batch to be used in the next day's batch of bread. Because one loaf of bread was never enough at any meal, Lula "made homemade bread all of the time," said Olive. "When we would come home from the dances and get us a great big bowl of bread and milk before we went to bed."<sup>221</sup>

Lula was used to cooking for large numbers of people and hungry farm hands, so meals were hearty. "We had so much food when we were on the farm that Mother might fix for breakfast pork chops and bacon and all the fixings, like cooked cereal and biscuits. For breakfast we would have more than what we would have now for dinner. At night we just had bread and milk because the big meal was at noon, and during the summer we had the all the people who helped on the farm and we fed them. We always had cake and ice cream. Mother always made a lot of homemade ice cream because we had so much milk and cream from our cows," said Toni.<sup>222</sup>

After the supper dishes were washed and dried, Lula's work was not finished. Evening was the time when she sat in the living room chair with her sewing basket and a pile of mending at her side. There were always shirts, pants or dresses that needed patching, as clothes were worn until they were outgrown. Socks with holes worn through them were darned by hand, and knitting or other needlework was attended to once Lula worked her way through the mending pile.

Laundry was a challenge on the ranch, where dirt encrusted clothing had to be soaked overnight in tin tubes to loosen the barnyard grime. "That was in the day when we had wringer washers," Toni related. "After wringing out each piece separately through the ringer, the clothes had to be hung out on the clothesline perfect. You couldn't hang a short one here and a long one there. They all had to be uniform, so the long ones went here, the short ones went there, the sheets went another place, the towels went there. Everything was hung to perfection on Mother's line or you did it over. It had to look good. There was also a right day to do laundry and it wasn't on Sunday. Once we went by a place that wash hanging out on a Sunday and Mother said, 'If I never got to wash, I wouldn't do it on a Sunday.' To her it was a sin to wash and hang clothes out on a Sunday."<sup>223</sup>

Most women did not stop work until 9:00 p.m. or later, making for a fifteen hour day and a six and one-half day week. Before the family retired, it was usually Lula who read to the family. "Mother did most of the reading out loud. In those days, we didn't have electricity in Yost, so we didn't have the radio like we did in Upalco. Instead, we sat around our big table and Mother used to read to us all the time at night, mostly religious type books," said Toni.<sup>224</sup>



## Darn It

*Mending clothing of all types was standard procedure in all families. Cloth patches were sewn over tears in dresses and shirts, denim squares covered holes in jeans and socks were repaired by a stitching technique known as darning, in which a threaded needle was worked back and forth in a weaving pattern through the knitted fabric. This was accomplished with the aid of a darning egg, an oval-shaped porcelain or wooden object inserted into the toe or heel of the sock to hold it in the proper form and provide a firm foundation for repairs. When the repairs were finished, the darning egg was removed.*

*Buttons from old clothing were always saved and reused. Every home had a screw-topped jar of used buttons to be pressed into service for repairs or sewn onto newly constructed garments.*

## Button Box

*Buttons, generations old,  
Horn and bone and plated gold;  
Plastic, wooden, pearl and brass,  
Teardrops, hearts and bells and bows,  
Filigrees and cameos;  
Plain and sturdy ones to spare  
For overalls and underwear.  
Two-eyed, four-eyed, sometimes fed  
With a snarl of faded thread;  
Orphans, mates and families,  
Familiar friends and refugees;  
Crest and symbol, shield and wreath,  
(Here's one of Buddy's baby teeth!),  
Odds and ends of alien stuff,  
But nothing for the other cuff!*

*Cosette Middleton*

## Daddy's Temper

Warren dressed for the day in a pair of denim overalls with built-in suspenders and a cotton work shirt. His forehead was marked by a line from wearing a wide brimmed hat in the desert sun. His face was heavily tanned, as were his arms, at least up to the elbows where he rolled up his long sleeves for a day of hard work. He was usually smiling, but when he wasn't, a glance from his icy blue eyes was enough to make the children "straighten up." Olive remembered how her father's eyes "just pierced you. Daddy would look down over his glasses and one of my friends who used to come and visit all the time said, 'When your daddy looks down at me over those glasses it just scares me to death!'"<sup>225</sup>

"Daddy was the kindest man on earth, but everyone was scared of him because he told you what he thought. Nobody pushed him," said Toni. "The second night after we moved into that house in Yost, Daddy heard a commotion out in the chicken coop, so he picked up an ice pick handle and went out there to see what was going on. He caught some kids trying to steal his chickens. Daddy put the fear in them in a hurry. He called the sheriff the next day and for their punishment he turned all the chickens out of the chicken coop and said, 'Now you kids count all these chickens with the sheriff right here to see if there is even one chicken missing.' You know how chickens run around. It was the funniest thing I ever saw in my life. Those boys never, ever bothered us again, and nobody else ever bothered us, either. I guess the word got out: don't go causing trouble at the Mecham place. He don't mess with you.

"One night a few years later Gladys and I had been some place and we came home riding the horses with some boys who wanted to make sure we got home alright. When the boys saw the light come on in the house they turned around and rode out of there on a high run. Everyone was scared to death of Daddy. He would just laugh. He couldn't figure out why everyone was scared of him, but boy, were they scared of him.

"When Wanda was seventeen, she and Glen<sup>226</sup> went off and got married without talking to Father Mecham first," said Toni. "Wanda was so smart and could spell anything; I don't know how many spelling bees she had spelled everyone down. Daddy was so proud of her and wanted her to get an education. There wasn't a high school in Yost, so he had sent Wanda down to Brigham City to go to school, not knowing that Glenn was driving all the way down to there to see Wanda all the time.

“After they got married, Glen said, ‘I’ll go talk to Dad.’ Daddy was in the barn, so Glen went out there and told Daddy that him and Wanda just got married. Daddy just come unglued. That just burst his bubble. He grabbed the pitchfork and took it after Glen. Everybody was just scared to death of Daddy anyway, I don’t why. Glen was running for the car as fast as he could go, trying to get into the car. Finally, Daddy dropped the pitch fork and said, ‘Come on back, Glen, I won’t hurt you. Come on back, come on back,’ but Glen backed the car into the ditch trying to get out of there. Finally, Daddy calmed down enough to get Glen out of the car and Daddy talked to him, but he sure was mad to start with,” said Toni.<sup>227</sup>



*The Mechams gather for a picnic in a nearby canyon. Back, left to right: Wilmer, Glady, Valera, Ellis, Toni holding Glen. Front: Marlow, Gayla, Olive holding Velma, Lula, Warren, Deloy.*

## Meeting at Church

Attending church every Sunday in the town's original 1899 building was one of the week's highlights, affording the family a chance not only to worship together, but to socialize with their neighbors.<sup>228</sup> "We thought it was really neat to go to church. Everybody knew everybody else and there was never any bickering, which was wonderful. People got along real well," said Toni. "We had very good meetings. I remember our bishop hitting the pulpit; you know how some of them used to preach."<sup>229</sup>

Lula insisted on a punctual arrival, and Warren sometimes threatened to leave without the children if they weren't in the car on time.<sup>230</sup> As Primary President, Lula returned to church in the middle of the week to direct the children's program. "Mother gathered everybody up and we went to all of those meetings. I remember it was good times we had. We had Christmas parties and New Year's parties and dances and Gold and Green balls," said Toni.<sup>231</sup>

Warren and Lula often travelled to Salt Lake City to attend church conferences, "especially for the October church conference, because the crops would be in by then," said Toni. "I remember how fun it was to eat in restaurants, stay in hotels and go to conference in the tabernacle."<sup>232</sup>

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>209</sup> Interview with Afton “Toni” “D” (Mecham) Davies, 30 May, 2005. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>210</sup> Frederick M. Huchel, *A History of Box Elder County* (Salt Lake City, Utah State Historical Society, 1999), page 414-421.
- <sup>211</sup> Interview, Afton “Toni” “D” (Mecham) Davies, 30 May, 2005.
- <sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>213</sup> Daphne Draper, “Life Sketch of Wilmer Phillips Mecham,” 4 December, 1995, typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>214</sup> Interview with Gladys (Mecham) Clayton, June, 2010. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>215</sup> Interview with Afton “Toni” “D” (Mecham) Davies, June, 2010. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>218</sup> Interview, Afton “Toni” “D” (Mecham) Davies, 30 May, 2005.
- <sup>219</sup> Interview with Afton “Toni” “D” (Mecham) Davies, 30 May, 2005. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>220</sup> Interview, Afton “Toni” “D” (Mecham) Davies, June, 2010.
- <sup>221</sup> Interview with Lula Olive (Mecham) Woodard, 2 February, 2010, by Sean Seth Davies. Transcript held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>222</sup> Interview, Afton “Toni” “D” (Mecham) Davies, 30 May, 2005.
- <sup>223</sup> Interview, Afton “Toni” “D” (Mecham) Davies, June, 2010.
- <sup>224</sup> Interview with Monte “J” Davies and Afton “Toni” “D” (Mecham) Davies, 9 June, 2002. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>225</sup> Interview, Lula Olive (Mecham) Woodard, 2 February, 2010, by Sean Seth Davies.
- <sup>226</sup> Glen Batty Loveland (1914-1974).
- <sup>227</sup> Interview with Afton “Toni” “D” (Mecham) Davies, 4 July, 2000. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>228</sup> The ward included a membership of one hundred and seventy-six, which included forty six children.
- <sup>229</sup> Interview with Afton “Toni” “D” (Mecham) Davies, 8 July, 2001. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>231</sup> Interview with Afton “Toni” “D” (Mecham) Davies, 9 June, 2002. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*



## Chapter 5

# Moving into Town

### Salt Lake City

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*Warren and Lula in 1944.*

Several years after buying the Yost ranch, Warren began to suffer with serious blood pressure and heart problems which left him physically unable to keep up with the work. He was also suffering from complications caused by the mining accident thirty years before.<sup>233</sup> He and Lula decided to retire from the rigors of ranch life when he reached the age of sixty-four, and move to a more settled area where he could receive better medical care.<sup>234</sup>

Lula, Gladys and Toni stayed with Lula's mother, Grandma Phillips, in Ogden for three months after the Yost property was sold while Warren searched for a new place south of Salt Lake City. "We had a trailer that we parked in the back of Grandma's house," said Gladys, who was seventeen at the time. "We used her bathroom and shower and we had our meals in the trailer."<sup>235</sup> Warren lived alone while he searched for a new situation. "Daddy was a staunch Democrat and

Grandma Phillips was a staunch Republican, I mean a staunch Republican. She even had Hoover roses,” Toni remembered. “Grandma Phillips and Daddy couldn’t be in the same room for ten minutes until they was arguing about politics. Both of them were very strong willed.”<sup>236</sup>

Warren eventually made arrangements to buy forty acres of peach orchards in Pleasant Grove, a small town thirty-five miles south of Salt Lake City.<sup>237</sup> Wilmer and his wife Orpha<sup>238</sup> followed in 1939, buying a house not far from his parents. Warren was no longer able to do much physical labor, but his mind remained as active as ever. He spent enough time watching the traffic patterns near his new home to come up with a business idea. “Daddy used to count the cars that went by in so much time. He was a very visionary man and he knew how to do things,” said Toni. “He would say, ‘I ought to put a service station right there on that corner. I would make millions.’ He was too old to do it and he was having a lot of trouble with high blood pressure, so nothing ever came of it.”<sup>239</sup>

Leaving the Yost ranch meant Lula could finally take advantage of the household technology that had been revolutionizing women’s lives. She was able to trade in the old ice box for an electric refrigerator, the wood stove for an electric range and the kerosene lamps for electric lights wired into every room. The Mecham home was heated with a furnace, which also provided hot running water for bathing and household tasks. Consumer products were readily available from nearby stores, including attractive new home furnishings and inexpensive glassware items that were sometimes given away as premiums in items such as laundry soap.

Living in Pleasant Grove must have indeed seemed pleasant at first, but the Mechams eventually came to dislike the town. “I hated Pleasant Grove,” said Toni. “They were snobbish people. If you had been born and raised in Pleasant Grove, you was one of them, but if you moved in there when you were older, you were an outsider. That’s how some of those communities was, you know, you never fit in. Mother was always so active in church, but even she wouldn’t go to the ward we belonged to because she hated it. We always went over to the Manila ward with Wilmer and Orpha when they moved there.”<sup>240</sup>

Perhaps part of the unhappiness with the ward and community was due to hormonal changes. Lula was well into midlife when the family moved to Pleasant Grove, and it soon became all too apparent that she was “going through the change,” as menopause was referred to at the time. “My mother almost died going through ‘the change’ and she turned into a witch,” said Toni. “She was as ornery as sin for a while.”<sup>241</sup> I don’t remember her being that way before menopause. Mother had always been timid and didn’t want to stir any water up. Daddy and Mother usually got along really well. The only time I know of them fighting was when we lived in Pleasant Grove and I will never forget it. Daddy was sitting at the table, getting ready to eat, and Mother was on one of her tantrums and she swore at Daddy. I had heard Daddy swear, but I never heard Mother swear. Daddy got up out of that chair, pointed his finger at her and said in a firm voice, ‘Lula, if you ever speak to me like that again and I’ll flatten you.’ I’ll tell you, she never spoke to him like that again. Nobody talked disrespectful to him that way. That was the end of that argument. She wasn’t going to act up after that.”<sup>242</sup>

## Life in the City

Warren’s health continued to decline until he was hardly able to walk. It soon became obvious he was in need of advanced medical attention that was unavailable in Pleasant Grove. Warren and Lula turned over their property to Wilmer and Orpha and moved to Salt Lake City on 21 January, 1942,<sup>243</sup> in hopes that access to better medical care would make a difference.

The Mechams purchased a small brick house on a wide, tree-lined street in a quiet residential neighborhood only minutes from the center of town.<sup>244</sup> Lula found a job to help support the family while Warren slowly faded away at home. “Warren’s health didn’t improve very much,” said Lula.<sup>245</sup> Eventually he was unable to bend over due to his arthritis and he began walking with the aid of a cane and a leather walker.<sup>246</sup>

Warren was fortunate to find Dr. Stevens, whose office in the medical arts building opposite the Lion House on South Temple Street was only a few minutes’ drive from Eighth East. “Daddy was never in the hospital, he just received care at home,” said Toni. “All we had to do was pick up the phone and dial the doctor and say, ‘Dr. Stevens, Daddy is sick,’ and he would say, ‘I’ll be there in five minutes.’ He would be there like he didn’t have any other patients”<sup>247</sup>



*The Mecham home at 515 South Eighth East in Salt Lake City.*

Not long after moving to Salt Lake, Warren's blood pressure once became elevated to the point that he lost consciousness and was not expected to live. "The doctor had said nobody had ever lived with blood pressure that high and he told Mother that he would die," said Toni. "Wilmer had gone to get the Elders and someone come around to the school to get Gladys and I to come home. We happened to walk into the house the same time as the Elders did. Daddy was lying there on the bed and the Elders put their hands on his head and started to pray. As soon as they got through, he sat up on the edge of the bed and talked to us. It was immediate. He told us that when the Elders started to pray it was like an electric shock. It went from the top of his head down to his feet and back. He lived several years after that, but he would often get ill and pass out. When he had those spells I would rub him all over with alcohol and work with him and bring him back with the alcohol."<sup>248</sup>

During this time Toni became especially close to her father as she attended to his needs. Every morning she lathered up her father's face and gave him a shave. "I was the only one who could shave him," said Toni. "He showed me how to do it with a straight razor. Wilmer shaved him one time when I wasn't home, and Daddy told him, 'Well, you did all right, but you can't shave me like Afton does.' Wilmer didn't baby him like I did. I would shave him and trim his moustache. I was the only one who could touch his moustache."<sup>249</sup>

Under the weight of her husband's illness, Lula's temperament took a turn for the worse. Toni remembered an instance when her mother struck out at the family under the strain in the summer of 1944. "Mother had gone up to Burley, Idaho, on the bus to stay with Wanda. Daddy had hurt his ankle one time and he wore these high top boots that tied up to support his ankle. He wasn't able to bend over and lace them up because of his arthritis, so he would call me to come in and tie up his shoes. I went in to get him one morning he couldn't walk, so I put my foot under his and walked him to the bathroom, then to the table for breakfast and then to his chair. I walked him through the house like that.

"Mother came home from Burley about noon with a chip on her shoulder. She was ornery, and I said to her, 'Daddy can't walk.' She didn't say anything, she just went in and started fixing lunch. I heard her hollering, 'Daddy, get in here! Lunch is ready.' He said, 'Lula I can't walk.' She said, 'Get in here!' Just as I come in there she was dragging him to the table. He was trying so hard to walk and he fell. I come unglued. I grabbed him and was never so mad in my life. It just broke my heart and I almost hit her. I said, 'I told you he couldn't walk. Now leave him alone, he can't walk!' So I got him up and I got him to the table."<sup>250</sup>



*Lula was captured walking on Salt Lake City's Main Street in the late 1940s candid photo.*

Warren never walked again. "I think he had a stroke in the middle of the night and he couldn't walk after that, I've never been sure," said Toni.<sup>251</sup> From that moment on, Warren was confined to his bed.<sup>252</sup> With little else to do, he sketched out ideas for finding the lost Rhodes mine. "That's all he thought about was that Rhodes mine. He would say, 'I've got it all figured out now. I know exactly where that Rhodes mine is,'" said Marlow.<sup>253</sup>

As Warren's physical health failed, so did his emotional strength. He had always been able to stand up for himself, but with the increased physical deterioration, he focused all of his strength on survival. "One time when Mother was ornery she took his food into him and there was a table right by the bed and she slammed it down so hard it broke. Daddy was just going to eat it, glass and all," said Toni. "Olive's daughter Velma said, 'You're not eating that, Grandpa. I'm going to get you another one.' So she went in and got another plate and took it to him. Daddy never wanted to be a burden to anybody. That's the one thing he always said, 'When you're old and gray you're only in the way.' That was Daddy's saying. He said, 'I never want to be a burden to anybody.'"<sup>254</sup>



*The Mecham family. Back, left to right: Gladys, Marlow, Lila, Ellis, Olive, Wilmer, Gayla. Front: Toni, Warren, Lula, Joseph.*

## Warren's Death

By December, 1944, Warren's condition was grave and he knew it. Several days before Christmas, he hinted of his approaching death when he noticed Toni and her friend leaving the house one afternoon. "He called to me and said, 'Where are you going?' I said, 'Oh we're just going to Edith's to wrap Christmas presents.' He said, 'Is mine there?' I want to see it'. Daddy had never been one to act like Christmas was anything to him. My friend said, 'Toni don't you dare let him see it. It's only two days before Christmas.' I said, 'I don't care, if he wants to see it he can see it.' Daddy said 'I want to see it. I won't be here for Christmas.' I said, 'Oh Daddy, you will to.' He said, 'No, no, I won't be here for Christmas.' To this day I'm so sorry I didn't ask him how he knew, because he would have told me how he knew he would be gone if would have only asked him. I never did have pictures taken very often, but my girlfriend had talked me into having one taken and that's what I gave him for Christmas. I can still see him holding that picture up and the tears just streaming down his face when he looked at it. We still we went on our merry way, young and dumb, and why I didn't ask him," said Toni.<sup>255</sup>

It was all too obvious to Lula that Warren was failing. She notified the older children of their father's impending death. Wilmer and Orpha travelled up from Pleasant Grove two days before Christmas for a final visit. "We went up the day before and stayed all night," Orpha wrote of the event. "On the morning of the 24<sup>th</sup>, he seemed so much better that we were preparing to come home."<sup>256</sup> With their father's condition stabilized, Toni and Gladys left as usual that morning for their jobs at the arms plant on Redwood Road, but things soon took a turn for the worse. Dr. Stevens "had gotten in his car to go see someone else, and he heard a voice that said, 'Go to Mecham's.' He heard it two or three times, so he turned the car around and went to the Mechams," said Wilmer. Toni and Gladys were already at work when they were called to rush home, as their father had become unresponsive. Toni was standing at the foot of the bed when Dr. Stevens arrived. "Daddy looked up with his piercing blue eyes and watched the doctor. I'll never forget the way his eyes watched the doctor go around that bed. Daddy didn't speak. The doctor put the stethoscope on Daddy's chest and listened and said, 'He's going very easy.' At least Daddy went easy. No struggle at all."<sup>257</sup> Dr. Stevens diagnosed the cause of Warren's death as a three year battle with chronic myocarditis, an inflammation of the heart muscle due to a viral infection, complicated by hypertension. He was sixty-nine years old.<sup>258</sup>

“We tried to make Christmas as jolly as possible on account of the kids,” Orpha recalled. “We had his funeral the following Friday.”<sup>259</sup> The morning of 27 December dawned cold and snowy. The funeral was conducted at the Tenth Ward chapel at 480 Eighth East Street in Salt Lake City. Friends were asked to call at the family home.<sup>260</sup> “I don’t remember much about his funeral, but it was nice,” said Toni. “It was held in a church up on the east side of Salt Lake and the roads was really steep coming down. I remember this car couldn’t stop at the stop sign and almost hit the hearse as it came in. It scared me to death.”<sup>261</sup>

The family formed a line of cars behind the hearse as it drove through the streets to the city cemetery, where Lula had chosen a lot not far in from Hillside Street in W Block.<sup>262</sup> A brief service and grave dedication was performed by the bishop, after which mourners placed bouquets and arrangements around the casket and embraced each other before slowly leaving the grave site.



*Warren’s grave decorated with funeral flowers.*



## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>233</sup> Interview with Gladys (Mecham) Clayton, June, 2010. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>234</sup> Lula Maud (Phillips) Mecham, "Life History of Lula Maud Phillips," 26 January, 1968, manuscript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>235</sup> Interview, Gladys (Mecham) Clayton, June, 2010.
- <sup>236</sup> Interview with Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 8 July, 2001. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>237</sup> Mecham, "Life History of Lula Maud Phillips," 26 January, 1968, manuscript.
- <sup>238</sup> Orpha Adel (Taylor) Mecham (1914-1965).
- <sup>239</sup> Interview with Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 17 August, 1997. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>240</sup> Interview, Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 17 August, 1997.
- <sup>241</sup> Interview, Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 8 July, 2001.
- <sup>242</sup> Interview with Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 4 July, 2000. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>243</sup> Interview with Lula Olive (Mecham) Woodward, 2 February, 2010, by Sean Seth Davies. Transcript held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>244</sup> The house was located at 515 South 8<sup>th</sup> East in Salt Lake City.
- <sup>245</sup> Mecham, "Life History of Lula Maud Phillips," 26 January, 1968, manuscript.
- <sup>246</sup> Interview, Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 4 July, 2000.
- <sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>256</sup> Letter from Verla (Mecham) Jones to Shelley Dawson Davies, 9 January, 2003. Held by Shelley Dawson Davies. Ms. Jones (daughter of Wilmer and Orpha) quoted Orpha's diary entry on Warren's death, dated 7 May, 1945. "She was catching up," according to Ms. Jones.
- <sup>257</sup> Interview, Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 4 July, 2000. Wilmer reported that ""When he came into the Mecham house, he said to Warren, 'Well, how are you today?' Warren gave one little kick and then died." Letter from Verla (Mecham) Jones to Shelley Dawson Davies, 9 January, 2003.
- <sup>258</sup> Warren Percival Mecham, death certificate no. 2159 (1944), Utah Department of Health, Salt Lake City.
- <sup>259</sup> Letter from Verla (Mecham) Jones to Shelley Dawson Davies, 9 January, 2003.
- <sup>260</sup> Warren Percival Mecham obituary, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, Salt Lake City, Utah; 26 December, 1944.
- <sup>261</sup> Interview, Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 4 July, 2000.
- <sup>262</sup> Plot West Block 2, Lot 103, Tier East grave 1. Salt Lake City, Utah; Owner of Deeds, Sextant's Index and Cemetery Index, Plat A microfilm 6, reel 1.

## Chapter 6

# Going On Alone

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### Keeping Busy



*Lula dressed in her best in a portrait taken around 1945.*

Lula had known Warren her entire life. She had grown up next door to him and his family and spent forty years as his wife. Now, at the age of fifty-eight, she was left to go on without him. She found it difficult to be alone in the house after Warren died. “She lived by herself for a couple of years, but she didn’t like that; she was too lonesome,” said Glady.<sup>263</sup> She may also have felt vulnerable due to her health problems.<sup>264</sup> Lula moved in with Toni and her husband Monte Davies<sup>265</sup> for a few years when they were living in Salt Lake. Toni remembered her mother “was helpful with the babies, but she never stayed around in the daytime. Mother was gone all day long. She would get up and go and be gone until night.”<sup>266</sup> Lula later rented an apartment upstairs from Toni and Monte, but by 1953, she had moved in with Glady and her husband Bud,<sup>267</sup> in Boise, Idaho.

“Mother lived with me for a few years,” said Gladys. “Then she got up one morning and had a chip on her shoulder and she said, ‘I’m going back to Salt Lake.’ Just for no reason at all. So she took the bus back to Salt Lake. After she left my place, she never lived with anyone again. She was always alone. She eventually got herself an apartment on Third South and Seventh East.”<sup>268</sup> Lula took a variety of jobs to support herself, including cleaning homes and office buildings,<sup>269</sup> selling Avon beauty products door-to-door for several years, and “taking care of children while the parents went on vacations, for mostly doctors and their wives. Sometimes they would be gone for two and three weeks,” said Lula.<sup>270</sup>

## On the Go

A few months after Warren’s death, Gladys and Bud invited Lula to visit them in Portland, Maine, where Bud was finishing up a construction job. Lula asked Toni to accompany her on the bus back east. “It took us ninety-two hours to make the trip from Salt Lake City, with no overnight stop. Gladys was at the bus depot to pick us up,” said Lula. “We enjoyed it there a lot and saw a lot of Maine. We went on a tour one day on the Atlantic Ocean. We saw a lot of islands with homes on them (Will Rogers and others). It was a lovely trip.”<sup>271</sup>

When it was time for Bud and Gladys to move west for the job, Lula and Toni travelled with them. “The four of us came home in a little tiny car,” said Toni. “Bud knew a woman who had one of those little Model A convertibles. He saw that in her garage and he hounded her until she sold it to him. He had a personality that could charm anybody. He hooked up a big trailer onto this little tiny car and that’s how we drove back across the country.

“Only two people could ride in the car, so someone had to ride in that trailer, which was against the law. One time when we was going through New York, Mother was up riding front with Bud and Gladys and I were in the trailer, when we were stopped by the police. Both Gladys and I was skinny enough that we hid in the clothes closet, so when they opened the trailer door they couldn’t see us. We came all the way across the country like that.

“We pulled into New York City with the trailer, and we had to park parallel with that long trailer. We had never been there before and we didn’t know from nothing. We happened to end up out in Brooklyn. We left the car there, got on the subway and went into Manhattan. We went up the Empire State Building, then watched the skaters at Rockefeller Center. We road on double decker buses and we could see all over. We spent the whole day there and saw as much as we could and had a ball.

“It was late at night when we was going back to the car. Bud looked at Gladys and said, ‘I don’t have the foggiest idea where we left that car.’ Mother and I said, ‘Well, we don’t know, either.’ Gladys said, ‘I do.’ We got on the subway and she took us right to where we was to get off and there was the car. She was the only one who paid any attention to where we was going.”<sup>272</sup>

Lula had the opportunity to revisit New York City several years later when she joined a church history tour.<sup>273</sup> “While there I climbed the steps to the top of the Statue of Liberty and looked out the window of her crown,” she said. “I have also been to the top of the Empire State building in New York. It is so tall they have a glass filled almost full of water and the building sways so much the water slops over the top of the glass. We ate lunch up there.”<sup>274</sup>



*Manhattan's skyline in the 1940s.*

In the spring of 1950,<sup>275</sup> Lula joined a tour which took her on a “beautiful luxury liner” to Hawaii. “Oh, how beautiful it was,” she wrote. “We landed at Honolulu, visited two other islands while we were there, also went through the temple two sessions. Saw a lot of the missionaries while there. We went to some of their meetings. There was seven missionaries came home the same time we did, also President Smith who had been mission president. It was fast day while we were on our way home so they held fast meeting. There was about two hundred of us at the meeting. We surely heard some very wonderful testimonies, some I will never forget.”<sup>276</sup>

## Travel Fund

*Lula was able to finance her many travels after selling the Pleasant Grove orchards. “Ellis and Wilmer were always furious about Mother selling that property,” said Glady. “Daddy told Mother right on his death bed, ‘Lula, I don’t want you to ever sell that farm in Pleasant Grove. If bad times come, all my kids and my grandkids can live on that farm if they have to and they will never starve. I don’t want you to ever sell that farm.’ But she did it.” Below: a postcard Lula sent while visiting Hawaii.*



## Temple Excursions

*Lula's commitment to the church remained strong and she made it a point to attend sessions at all of the temples in the United States that were open at the time. "I was at the dedication of the Idaho Falls Temple and have been there quite a few times since," she wrote. "If my health stays good I plan to go to Washington State to my son Marlow's this summer [1968]. They will take me to the Canadian Temple. I am looking forward to making the trip."*

*She was not only able to visit the Alberta, Canada, temple, but she set aside time to attend the temple in Salt Lake on a regular basis. "I do a lot of work now in the Salt Lake Temple and I enjoy it very much," she wrote in 1968. Below: Lula at the Cardston Alberta temple.*



Lula often travelled to visit her children and grandchildren, as well. "She always seemed so excited to see us," said Jolene. "I loved being with her. I remember always feeling so loved when I was with her." When she wasn't travelling, Lula's favorite activity remained cooking for herself and her family. "I still make my own bread and I still like to cook," she wrote in 1968 at the age of eighty-two.<sup>277</sup> Her cakes, cookies, and of course her bread, were legendary among the grandchildren. "Grandma made delicious spice raisin cookies. Whenever we went to her house there were always cookies in the cookie jar," said granddaughter Debbie Demeurs.<sup>278</sup> "I used to say,

‘Grandma, I think I can hear a cookie talking in the jar,’ so she would give me one. Whenever she came to visit our house, she would make bread for us. We would wake up in the morning and smell Grandma’s bread. She must have been up at five in the morning to have bread ready so early.”<sup>279</sup> Jolene Fink<sup>280</sup> remembered her grandmother’s scones with particular fondness, especially when they were eaten “dripping with lots of butter and jam,” as well as her special cherry crumb pie.<sup>281</sup>

Lula “could make a wonderful dinner out of almost nothing,” recalled Toni, who learned to cook only after she had left home.<sup>282</sup> “Mother didn’t teach me to cook. She didn’t teach Toni, either,” said Gladys. “Her recipes were all in her head and they went with her when she died. She didn’t want anyone to touch her kitchen. It was her kitchen and she didn’t want anyone in it. We were on our own. She cooked until the day she died.”<sup>283</sup>

Lula spent evenings in front of the television watching her favorite programs, which included wrestling matches, “not boxing,” according to Jolene.<sup>284</sup> She was part of the first generation to be entertained by television, but she wasn’t about to be found idle while watching, and often kept her hands busy in the blue flicker of the TV by crocheting doilies, hot pads and other projects.



*The Mechams in the 1960s. Back, left to right: Joseph, Gladys, Wilmer, Ellis, Olive, Marlow. Front: Toni, Wanda, Lula, Lila.*





## Gone Fishin'

*One of Lula's favorite pastimes was fishing. She often accompanied Ellis and Valaria on their fishing trips around the west. She remembered in particular a ten day trip to Yellowstone National Park where she "surely had a lovely time," and an excursion to Strawberry Reservoir in the Uintas where she "caught four fish and had my limit. We have had some real good times together. I always look forward to summer and the fishing season to open. I do love to fish."*

**Land o' living,  
Lula Mechem  
loves to fish**

Mrs. Lula Mechem puts down a plate of homemade bread, a plate of homemade cookies and a dish of homemade relish in front of her guest and announces: "Land o' living, I just simply, dearly love to cook."

Mrs. Mechem is 87 and lives alone in a three-room downtown apartment. A picture of Lawrence With smiles down benevolently from the wall in her kitchen, where last fall she put up 19 pints of tomatoes, 12 pints of mustard pickles and 12 pints of succotash squash relish.

"I'm thankful to be able to do the things I do," she says.

Mrs. Mechem does all her own cooking, baking, cleaning and washing. She's up by 4 every morning, and on Mondays has run all her wash through the wringer by 8:30.

Her greatest pleasure, however, is fishing. She caught her first fish about 20 years ago in Deer Creek. That same day she caught 15 more.

"Oh my sakes alive," she reminisces, "we had such good times."

She fishes with marshmallows, cheese and angie-worms in Fish Lake, Moon Lake and Strawberry Reservoir.

Mrs. Mechem was born in 1896 in Oakley, Utah. After she married, she, her husband and their two children moved to Mountain Home in the Uintas Basin, where they homesteaded.

For the first few years they lived in a tent in the summer and a sheep wagon in the winter. She thinks young people today don't appreciate all the conveniences they have.

She is fond of remembering a five-day trip she took in 1919.

"We were so hungry for fruit," she recalls, and there was none available in Mountain Home, even in cans.

So she drove a wagon full of women, children and fruit boxes for five days, through a heavy rain storm, to Ferns, where they picked and put up all the fruit they wanted.

Things are not as hectic for Mrs. Mechem nowadays, but 19 children, 26 grandchildren, 61 great-grandchildren and 1 great-great-grandchild keep her busy crocheting little gifts.

"I always try to keep a smile," she says, smiling up her disposition.

"Smile and the world smiles with you" is my motto."



## Downhill Health

“Mother used to get sick around Christmas sometimes and she would say, ‘Oh, I hope I don’t go during Christmas,’ because she didn’t want to die around the same time Daddy did,” said Toni. “She used to spend Christmas with us and this one Christmas she got up and said, ‘I can’t hear.’ You know how noisy little kids are when they are opening presents, and I said, ‘Gee, you’re lucky, Mother.’ She said, ‘No, I really can’t hear.’ She got to feeling kind of lousy and went in to lie down. I called the doctor. He said, ‘She’s probably having a heart attack. Just let her rest and watch her.’

“Toward evening she got tired of being in the bedroom by herself, so she said, ‘Do you care if I come out and lay on the couch?’ I said, ‘Of course not.’ Well, this gal straight across the street from us named Gerry, she had to come over to see what we got for Christmas. She drank and had the rottenest mouth. Mother would gasp when Gerry said some of these awful words that Mother hadn’t ever heard in her life, but Gerry didn’t pay any attention to her. Now people use those words and its common, but then it was unusual to hear those words, especially coming out of the mouth of a woman. Every time mother would hear that she would gasp. She couldn’t take it. I was so nervous Mother was going to have a heart attack just having Gerry there. I was so relieved when she left and Mother started feeling better. I laughed and said, ‘Well, I guess Gerry’s filthy language must have shocked your heart into beating again.’”<sup>285</sup>

Lula remained relatively healthy as she aged, and kept up her busy pace. “Mother was the kind of person who couldn’t be five minutes late for anything. She was always in a hurry, hurry, hurry!” said Toni. “She was a goer and a hard worker all her life. When she in her eighties, she and Wanda were walking around Salt Lake City and afterwards, Wanda said, ‘She just about walked my legs off.’ Mother often said, ‘I don’t have an acre of pain anywhere in my body.’ She used to touch her toes in bed every morning.”<sup>286</sup> Olive remembered her mother as having “good, strong bones. She ran for the phone once when she was in shower and started to fall. She stopped her fall with her arms. They bothered her for a while after that, but she didn’t break a bone.”<sup>287</sup>



*Top: Lila and Lula celebrate a double birthday in 1975.  
Below, left to right: Olive, Wanda, Lula, Wilmer,  
Lila, Toni and Glady.*

As active as Lula was, she eventually became so frail that she was unable to continue living by herself. Olive, who was living nearby in Salt Lake, moved her mother into a spare bedroom where she could keep an eye on her.<sup>288</sup> From that moment on, Lula looked forward to the end of her life. “Mother more or less willed herself to die. She prayed every day that she could go,” said Toni. “Six months before she died she said, ‘I’m the last one left on my side of the family and on Father’s side of the family. I don’t know why I have lived so long.’ From then on she just went downhill. She was almost ninety three and she was just tired of living. Olive said she overheard Mother saying her morning prayers, and she would ask the Lord to please take her today. She really wanted to go.”<sup>289</sup>

“Jolene really loved her grandmother because she was around so much when Jolene was little. As she grew older Jolene used to rub Mother’s fingers and kind of baby her like I babied my dad,” said Toni. “One day I called Jolene and said, ‘If you want to see your grandmother you’d better come out. I don’t think she’s going to live much longer.’ So I took her to visit Mother and Olive. Even then, Mother was a force to be reckoned with. She wanted to take Jolene up and show her the apartment, so Jolene and I was babying her, holding her on each side as we went up in the elevator. When we got to her floor and the elevator opened, she just took our hands and threw them away from her and took off like a speedball. Mother was always a fast mover. Down to that apartment she went and unlocked the door and showed Jolene everything in her apartment.



*Hot pads crocheted by Lula in her later years.*

“We were sitting in the front room chit chatting about some exercises I had been doing and Mother said, ‘Well, I can do that.’ Olive said, ‘Now Mother, don’t you dare try that. You will fall flat on your face.’ Mother said, ‘Oh, I will not.’ She just got up, bent over and laid her hands flat on the floor, just like that and sat back down. You would have thought she was sixty years old, not over ninety.

“When we started to leave that day, Mother followed us out to the car. As long as I can remember, Mother would never say ‘goodbye’ when we left, she would always say, ‘No, so long.’ But that day when I said, ‘Goodbye,’ Mother said ‘Goodbye’ back. I told Jolene ‘We’ll never see Mother alive again.’ Just a month later she was gone.”<sup>290</sup>

Olive kept a close watch on her mother over the next few weeks. "One day she started throwing up blood so I called my husband's sister Hazel to come and help me bathe her," said Olive. "We took her up to the hospital and I stayed up there late that night. Mom made me promise her that I wouldn't do anything that would prolong her life, but the doctors wanted to put a tube in her vein so she wouldn't be in as much pain. I said they could do that, so they tried to put that in her and she jerked her arm back and said, 'Olive you promised me!' I said, 'Mommy, this is just so you won't be in as much pain,' so she let them put it in. I stayed with her until we got her settled down.

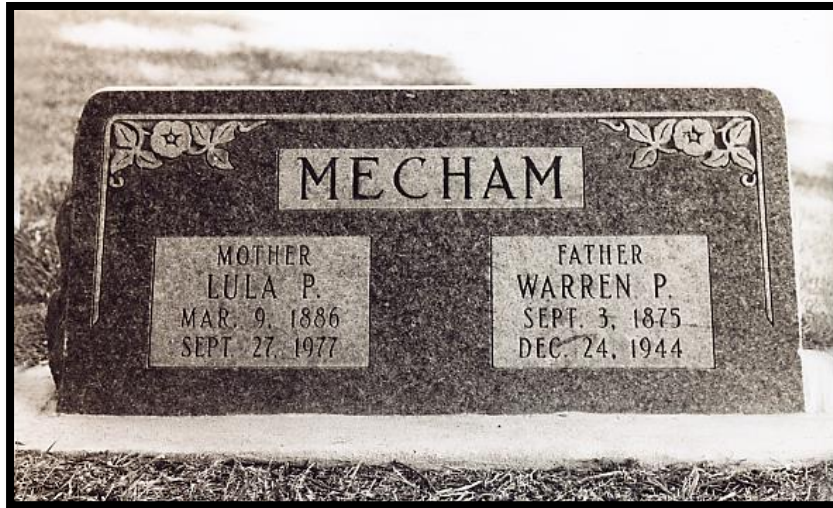
"I went home around eleven o'clock, and as I left I said, 'I'll see you in the morning, Mommy,' and she said, 'I hope so.' I come home and washed her clothes out to get the blood out and hung them up on the line. Not long after I finished, the hospital called us and said she had passed away."<sup>291</sup> It was 27 September, 1977.<sup>292</sup>

Lula was survived by ten children, thirty-one grandchildren, ninety-three great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren, many who attended her funeral services at the Salt Lake Second Ward chapel.<sup>293</sup>

"Mother had a good life," said Toni. "She had ten children and raised nine of them, and with all those kids living on a farm where a lot of accidents happen, we didn't have broken arms and broken legs, and we never had any serious sicknesses. Mother was feeling sorry for herself one day and I said, 'Mother why would you say things like that? Look at the blessings you've had. You was really blessed raising all of those children and not having any problems.' She sat and thought about it for a minute and said, 'I was blessed, wasn't I? I certainly was.'"<sup>294</sup>

*I meet my God in the morning  
When my day is at its best,  
And his presence comes like sunshine  
Like a glory in my breast.  
All day long his presence lingers  
All day long he stays with me.  
O'er a sometimes troubled sea  
So I think I know a secret  
Learned from traveling down life's way,  
You must seek God in the morning  
If you want him through the day.*

*Undated poem written by Lula Meham.*



## ENDNOTES

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<sup>263</sup> Interview with Gladys (Mecham) Clayton, June, 2010. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.

<sup>264</sup> . "My health was very poor at that time," Lula wrote. Lula Maud (Phillips) Mecham, "Life History of Lula Maud Phillips," 26 January, 1968, manuscript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.

<sup>265</sup> Monte "J" Davies (1927-present), #LNDN-58M, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

<sup>266</sup> Interview with Monte "J" Davies and Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 9 June, 2002. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.

<sup>267</sup> Alfred Earl "Bud" Williams (1916-1948), #KZB3-6VK, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

<sup>268</sup> Interview, Gladys (Mecham) Clayton, June, 2010.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Mecham, "Life History of Lula Maud Phillips," 26 January, 1968.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> Interview, Monte "J" Davies and Afton "Toni" "D" (Mecham) Davies, 9 June, 2002.

<sup>273</sup> The church history tour took place 1949.

<sup>274</sup> Mecham, "Life History of Lula Maud Phillips," 26 January, 1968.

<sup>275</sup> Lula Mecham entry; SS Lurline Passenger Manifest: departed Los Angeles 7 April, 1950, arrived Honolulu, Hawaii, 12 April, 1950. Honolulu, Hawaii Passenger Lists, 1900-1953. NARA Film Series A3422, Roll 257.

<sup>276</sup> Mecham, "Life History of Lula Maud Phillips," 26 January, 1968.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Debra (Davis) Demures (1954-present), #LNDN-5FY, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)

<sup>279</sup> Interview with Debra (Davies) Demures, June, 2010. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.

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- <sup>280</sup> Jolene (Davis) Fink (1949 -present), #LNDN-5F6, [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)
- <sup>281</sup> Interview with Jolene (Davies) Fink, 18 July, 2012. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>282</sup> Interview with Afton “Toni” “D” (Mecham) Davies, June, 2010. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>283</sup> Interview, Gladys (Mecham) Clayton, June, 2010.
- <sup>284</sup> Interview, Jolene (Davies) Fink, 18 July, 2012.
- <sup>285</sup> Interview with Afton “Toni” “D” (Mecham) Davies, 4 July, 2000. Transcript held by interviewer Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>286</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>287</sup> Interview with Lula Olive (Mecham) Woodard, 2 February, 2010, by Sean Seth Davies. Transcript held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- <sup>288</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>289</sup> Interview, Monte “J” Davies and Afton “Toni” “D” (Mecham) Davies, 9 June, 2002.
- <sup>290</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>291</sup> Interview, Lula Olive (Mecham) Woodard, 2 February, 2010.
- <sup>292</sup> “Warren Percival Mecham and Lula Maude Phillips family group sheet,” supplied 1997, by Afton “Toni” “D” (Mecham) Davies. This sheet offers only a generic list of materials consulted.
- <sup>293</sup> Lula Maude (Phillips) Mecham obituary, *The Salt Lake Tribune*, Salt Lake City, Utah; 28 September, 1977.
- <sup>294</sup> Interview, Afton “Toni” “D” (Mecham) Davies, 4 July, 2000.

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