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GEORGE LUKE WHITNEY & JULIA ANN WARDELL

The George Luke Whitney Family of St. Thomas

Written by a daughter, Afton Whitney Hannig

This is the story of Luke and Julia, as they were called by their many friends. Those who were bound more closely by the bonds of kinship, lovingly called them Uncle Luke and Aunt Julia. But to us, who are their children, they were known as Papa and Mama all through our growing up years, and later, as Dad or Father and Mother. How proud we were of them and how we loved them. And how our children enjoyed the visits with Grandma and Grandpa and the farm--sitting around Grandma's bounteous table or feeding the chickens and hunting eggs in the barn or mangers, riding on the hayrack to the field while Grandpa quoted poetry or sang his funny little songs. Although they have been gone from us for many years, we still gather around the campfires at our reunions and speak of them, sometimes with tears in our eyes, but often with happy laughter, for ours was a happy home in spite of hard work and trials. We shall call them Luke

and Julia until we, their children, enter the stage.

Julia Ann Wardell was born 23 June 1868 in Parowan, Iron County, Utah, to Solomon and Ellen Matheson Wardell. Her growing up years were spent in Parowan, with her loving parents and six brothers and sisters, except for two or three years that the family spent in colonizing Snowflake, Arizona in answer to the call of President Brigham Young.

Because of an accident while crossing the plains, her mother was an invalid most of the time, so Julia had the care of the family from the time she was very young. Because of this early training, she was a very fine cook and seamstress, and her home was always neat and attractive. Julia grew into a beautiful slender young woman with long dark hair and lovely brown eyes. And throughout her long life she never lost that beauty, although the years turned her hair to a white crown, and the burdens bent her body.

A few months before she was nineteen years of age, Julia married Alfred Luke

Syphus in the St. George Temple (17 Feb. 1887). She went with him to Panaca, Nevada where the Syphus family lived, but a short time later they moved to St. Thomas, Nevada where her husband Alf had a contract carrying mail to some of the mining camps in Arizona.

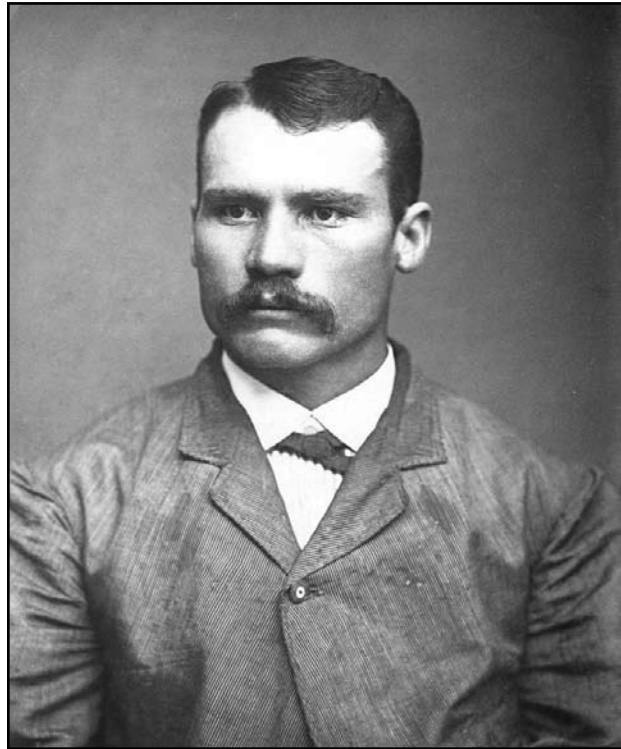


Julia Ann Wardell

At this period of time, St. Thomas was beginning to be settled for the second time. The valleys from Pioche to St. Thomas were infested with desperados and outlaws. It took a day to carry the mail to the mining camps and a day for the return trip. Since Alf had to be away every other night, he built a platform high up in a cottonwood tree, and there Julia had her bed. Nights when her husband was away, the young bride climbed up to her perch in the tree, pulled the ladder up after her, and lay trembling with fear as the drunken desperados rode the streets shooting their guns and yelling out foul language.

At the end of that year, Alf and Julia were back in Panaca where their first child was born, 7 December 1887. They named him for his father, Alfred Luke. The next several years were spent in Panaca except for a period when Alf worked at Eldorado

Canyon. Julia was the only white woman living at Eldorado, and young Alfred learned the Indian language before he could speak English. He had a fine time playing with the Indian children.



Alfred Luke Syphus

The next child was born in Panaca, 14 Nov. 1889 and they named her Ellen Lovina, but she was called Nellie. This lovely little girl lived only fifteen months. She passed away 3 Feb. 1891. Almost sixty years later I asked Julia if she had a picture of Nellie. "No, not the kind you want," she said, "But I have a picture of Nellie here," and she touched her dear gray head. "It has always been here, and I can see her now, walking up the path, her sweet smile--and her hair shining in the sun." Another little girl came to bless the Syphus home 24 Jan. 1892. They named her Agnes Dean.

In the fall of 1893, Alf and Julia and the children moved to St. Thomas. There Levi Wilford was born 24 February 1894. Soon after their arrival in St. Thomas, Alf began building a large adobe room on the corner lot south of the place where his sister, Ellen, and her husband Harry Gentry had their

home. The adobe walls were up and the tulle (cattails) and dirt roof was on when tragedy struck the little family again. Alf became ill and passed away 16 May 1894, leaving the lovely Julia a widow with three small children in an unfinished house and with no means of support. But the resourceful Julia tacked canvas up to the unfinished doors and windows and tried to make a living for her little brood by sewing for Aunt Ellen, and for others as families began moving into St. Thomas.

We shall leave Julia and her little family in their unfinished adobe room for the moment, and turn back twenty years to Panaca Nevada, and to the hero of our story.



Alfred Luke, Agnes Dean, Levi Wilford Syphus

George Luke Whitney was born 3 Aug. 1874 in Panaca, Nevada. His father was George Burton Whitney, and his mother, Lovina Syphus, eldest sister of Alf Syphus (Julia's husband). (Luke's father, George

Burton Whitney, had worked for Lovina's father, Luke Syphus, before they were married, and had been converted to the church by him. They were married in the endowment house in Salt Lake City and then made their home in Panaca).

Luke was the first child born to this couple. His father earned a meager living for the family teaching school and freighting ore from Delamar to Pioche. For several years between 1879 and 1885 the family lived in the Virgin Valley, where they had been called by Pres. Brigham Young. There Luke's father taught school in Bunkerville and Mesquite. The following account of this period is in Luke's own words taken from the history of George Burton Whitney:

"When George Burton moved his family from Panaca to Mesquite the oldest son, Luke, was six years of age. Father built a small one room, rock hut with a dirt roof. The first winter was spent in clearing land and hauling salt from the salt mines. Although they did not make much, the little they did get helped to provide them with a little flour and a few clothes."

"The following summer father thrashed a little wheat. We had it ground in Bunkerville. In the summer of 1881, Father and I came down with the chills and fever and we were sick most of the time - poor mother. How she worked milking the cow, looking after the cow, looking after the little crop and the hundred and one other things to be done on a new place in a new country with very little to get along with. That fall, October 18, 1881, the fourth child, Luella May, was born to George B. and Lovina. October of that year was spent in hauling salt and getting more land cleared and planted. It began to look as though we would be able to establish ourselves there permanently. But it seemed that the time had not yet come for the establishing of a permanent settlement there because in June in the year 1881 we were struck with one of those thunderstorms that this arid west is sometimes subjected to in the summer. This storm filled the ditch up in places and washed it out in others

and took the dam out which they had put in the Virgin River to divert the water into their ditch. This was a real calamity for everyone. They did not seem to have the heart to begin all over again. I think Father and Mother were probably hit worse than anyone else."

"I well remember that terrible storm; it came during the night. Mother had been washing that day and was in bed earlier than usual, so were all the other children except myself and a boy, Andy Pulsipher by name, who was living with us at the time. I remember mother saying to father, "Why don't you put the light out and go to bed; the flies are so bad I can't go to sleep."



George Luke Whitney - 1951

"Father said, "I'm watching that storm," but he put the light out and he and I stood in the south door and watched the black clouds come clear across the southwest horizon. The lightning was so vivid it lit up everything. Presently the thunder began to rumble and as the storm approached, it became a roar;

then it just seemed to crack and the storm was there in a regular deluge. My, how it did pour down; it seemed to come in bucketsful. The water began to come through the dirt roof and father began putting pans and buckets on the beds and all around to catch the water; then all of a sudden it came roaring through the back window. That was a signal for action. Father gathered Mother and the baby up and started for the hill just back of the house; the water was up to his waist. He took her and then came back and took the rest of us children up on the hill by mother. He returned for a few quilts to put over us; then he left to go and help Johnny Hansen and his wife."

"I never will forget that night; my two sisters, Chrissie and Ellen and myself lying there on the hillside with a quilt over us; mother sitting there with the baby, little Luella May in her arms and a quilt over them and Andy, the boy of about 12 there with us. The rain was pouring through those quilts; the lightning flashed; the thunder rolling and rocks rolling down the hillside; it seemed a long time to a seven-year-old boy. When Father came back, he moved us up into a cave that was in the side of the hill where the Indians used to cache or hide their dried dogberries and pine nuts... We children were soon asleep when we got to a dry place." (For Luke's story in detail refer to the history of George Burton Whitney.)

Returning now to Afton Whitney Hannig's story of Luke and Julia Whitney:

Returning to Panaca, the father turned to freighting to support the family which had now grown to six children and which would in the next several years, grow to ten. Because of the many mouths to feed, Luke had to quit school at the age of nine or ten and go to work with his father on the freight wagons. At that time Pioche was a wild, rip-roaring town, and the only places Luke and his father could get in to warm their chilled bones were the saloons. So they worked out a system. They would sidle quietly into a saloon, look the situation

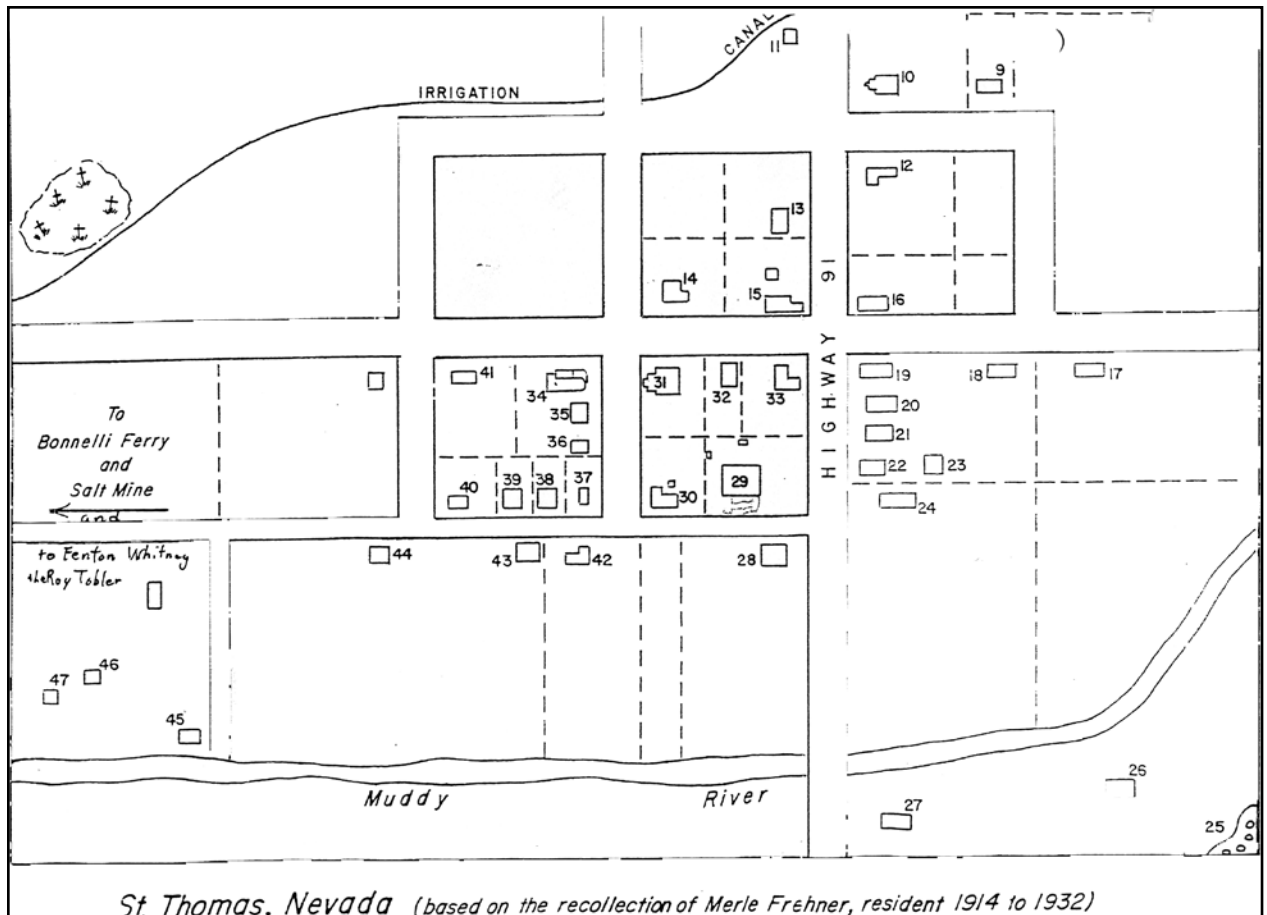
over, and decide on the safest place to dive for if the bullets began to fly.

of the gospel. Among those principles were chastity and the Word of Wisdom, which forbade the use of coffee, liquor, tobacco and other harmful habits.

Luke was reared in a good Mormon home and he early learned the principles

Map of St. Thomas

8-Roxton Whitmore	16-St. Thomas Garage (V. Howell & H. Lord prop.)	24-Jacob Baver Home and Blacksmith Shop	32-First School House	40 Frank Getzel
9-S.E. Whitney	17-Adams Louis	25-Lost City Pagent Stage	33 J.F. Perkins	41 Alred Syphus
10-New Frehner Home	18-George Pearson	26-Everett Syphus	34 Gentry Hotel	42 Harry Frehner
11-Fenton Whitney	19-Sellar's Café and Pool Hall	27-Will Liston	35 Gentry Store	43 Charles Foxley 1914, H. Gentry, Jr. 1920, St Thomas Post Office 1929-1932
12-Frank Bonelli	20-Hannig Ice Cream Parlor	28-R.O. Gibson	36 First Post Office	44 Jim Poxley 1914-, Robert Chadburn 1917-1932
13-R.E. Bunker	21-Garage	29-St. Thomas School	37 G. Luke Whitney	45 Joe Pearson
14-Ed Syphus	22-Nutter Store	30-M.A. Bunker	38 Vern Howell	46 Jim Sellars
15-Moses Gibson	23-Preston Hay, Nutter Grain Storage	31-Samuel Gentry	39 Albert Stresser	47 Lyman Armfield



While Luke was still in his teens his faith was put to a severe test. Since his father had gone back to teaching school in the winter months, Luke was either alone or in the company of rather rough characters. As they traveled the rough roads between Delamar and Pioche in the freezing cold, the steaming coffee, liquor, tobacco, seemed to be a godsend to the cold freighters. The gambling and the girls in the warm saloons were enticing. One freezing day as Luke rode his freight wagon over the lonely road, he began thinking of this enticing life, and of the way of life he had been taught in his home. He knew he would have to choose one way or the other. There was no middle ground. That night when he made camp he knelt by the wagon wheel and prayed. And there alone with his God he chose the good way and in all his life he never left it.



Julia Ann Wardell

Soon after this, late in 1893 or early in 1894, the Whitney family moved to St. Thomas. Here his father taught school and young Luke went to work for his Uncle Alf Syphus, helping to build the adobe room,

and also helping with the cattle that grazed in the surrounding hills.

After his Uncle Alf's death, Luke was very concerned about the welfare of Julia and her children. During the next several years he had many serious talks with his father and mother and the ward Bishop concerning them.

Luke was a studious boy and early in life he developed the habit of carrying his Bible and Book of Mormon on the wagon seat. He would read as he drove his teams, and even at the age of twenty he knew the scriptures. Those passages in the Old Testament, which teaches that if a man die his next of kin should marry the widow and care for her children, impressed him. Uncle Alf's brothers were all married except one bachelor brother. The blonde, earnest young Luke went to him, read him the scriptures, and asked him to marry Julia and care for her and the children. But his Uncle refused. More serious talks with his parents and the Bishop followed. People were taking advantage of the young widow. Cattle were disappearing from the hills and she was not getting the money for them. There was not enough dressmaking money in the little town to provide food for the family; and they were still living in the adobe room without doors or windows. It seemed the only solution was for Luke to marry Julia since he was the next of kin after the bachelor Uncle. But this was a serious situation. Luke, having a thorough understanding of the Gospel, knew that, since Julia was sealed to his Uncle Alf in the Temple, he (Luke) could not be sealed to her and so would be denied the privilege of having a wife and family in the hereafter. But so great was his sense of duty and so great his admiration for the lovely widow, he courted her and she consented to be his wife. They were married 10 Jan. 1897 when Luke was twenty-three and Julia was twenty-nine years of age. It was a happy marriage and Luke cared for his Uncle Alf's children as devotedly and lovingly as his own.

It is now that we, who are the children of Luke and Julia, begin making our entrance onto the stage of this little drama of the “Olden Days”, as our children call that period of time. Clarice was born 24 Nov. 1897, George Fenton 27 Nov. 1899, Flora 14 Aug. 1903, and I, Afton Lovina, was born 7 March 1906. We were all born in St. Thomas in the adobe room, but now it boasted good doors and glass windows instead of the tacked-up canvas. I like to think there were wild flowers blooming on that dirt and tulle (cattail) roof the spring I was born. A few years after my birth, a shingle roof took the place of the dirt one. But I can still remember the factory (unbleached muslin) ceiling, and how mama would undo a few inches of seams here and there to let the dirt out that had filtered down through the tuelles. Then once or twice a year the whole ceiling would be taken down and washed, then tacked back up with carpet tacks.

And what a luxury was the woven rag carpet. Twice a year the carpet was taken up, hung on the clothesline and given a severe beating. We would each take turns with the paddle and how the dust would fly, for our modern cleaning tools were undreamed of in those days. After the beating, clean, fresh straw was spread on the floor and the carpet tacked down over it. My, what a luxury to stretch out on that carpet. And when Aunt Ellen and Uncle Bub Perkins would come from Overton with their ten children to spend a few days with us, beds would be made over every inch of that carpet. How we did enjoy those visits, and our visits to their home. Sometime before the carpet days, two lean-to rooms were added to the adobe room. With those and the granary room over the cellar (which held kids more often than grain) we felt that we had plenty of room.

Papa and Mama worked hard providing the necessities of life for their little flock of seven children. Papa farmed and freighted, and Mama still sewed for Aunt Ellen and others in St. Thomas. There were always cows, chickens and gardens to supply milk, eggs, meat and vegetables. When we were

babies, cotton was raised on the home lot. Mama would make a bed in a tub or clothes basket for the baby, and while she helped with the cotton picking, the baby would lie under a cotton plant sleeping or watching the leaves dance in the breeze. As we grew from babyhood to childhood each was assigned certain chores to do. The little ones would gather a pan of chips from the woodpile for firewood, and the larger boys chopped the wood. There were cows to feed and milk, horses to curry, chickens to feed and eggs to gather and put in a lard bucket so they could be taken to Uncle Harry’s store to exchange for groceries. And there were errands to run. If something happened to Mama’s start of yeast, she would put a cup of sugar in a clean quart jar and we would take it over to Aunt Eleanor’s or Sister Gibson’s or Sister Bunker’s to exchange it for a new start of yeast.



George Luke Whitney

The following is an excerpt from G. Fenton Whitney's life story of this period in his father's life:

"It was terribly difficult in these early 1900's to earn a little money to buy shoes, equipment and other things that a family could not produce for themselves. Father did everything he could to make a few dollars. He would buy and raise produce, chickens, pigs and what have you, and haul them to the mining camps in the (Whitehill) Searchlight and Eldorado Canyon."

"This trip to White Hills, Searchlight would take two weeks to make a round trip, and, if he cleared \$10.00, he was very lucky. But we got along. This was before the railroad was built. The railroad came into St. Thomas in 1912. It was during this period of time that the Grand Gulch mine was running."

"The ore was hauled from the mine by six, eight, or ten horse outfits, over very treacherous roads. There were hills with

such names as "Syphus's Ladder", the "S", the "Shelf," and "Bitter Spring Narrow." The names more or less indicated the nature of the road. The Syphus Ladder was a very steep dugway with many sharp turns. A lot of it had nearly 50% grade. The Bitter Springs narrows was a narrow box canyon with barely enough room to get through. The wheels of the wagons would rub on both sides."

"One time Jess O'Donnell was driving Uncle Harry's freight outfit through the canyon. A cloud burst came up suddenly back up the canyon. The flood caught him in the canyon. A wall of water, 20 feet high caught him, drowning four of the six horses and almost taking the life of Jess. This flood washed two new wagons down into the Virgin River."

"When I was five years old I started going with father on these trips to the Grand Gulch mines. It was hot in summer and cold in winter but this was the only way we had of making a living. Father would set on the

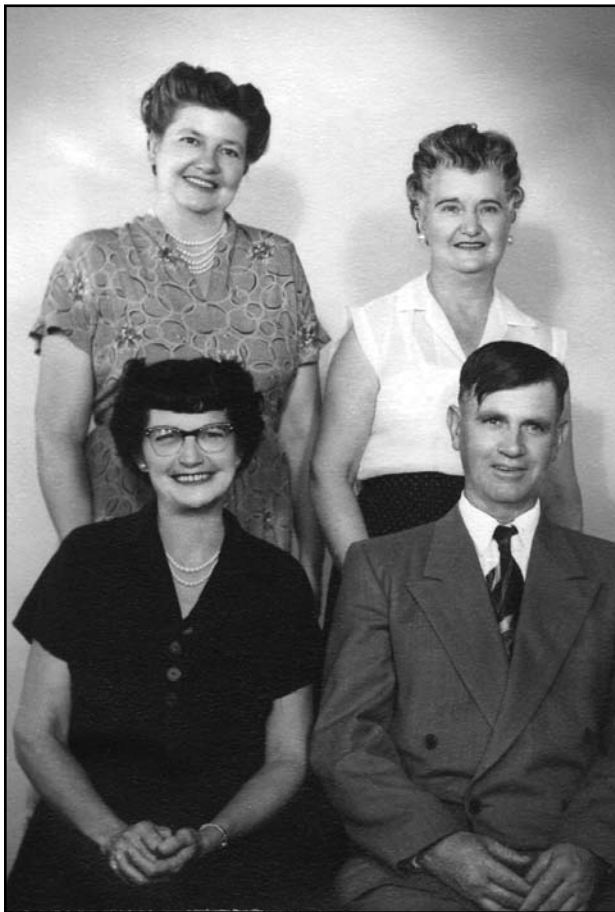
Flora Whitney Nay, Julia Ann Wardell Syphus Whitney, Verda Syphus Murphy



wagon seat with six lines in one hand, his foot on the brake, book in the other hand and read aloud to me out of the Bible, Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price, and out of such novels as *Added Upon*, *Pinney Ridge Cottage*, *Mormon*, and many others.” (Life story of G. Fenton Whitney)

And again from Fenton’s life story the Indian story of “Old Mouse”:

“This is the story of ‘Old Mouse’ who went on the warpath in the 1890’s and the part that my father Luke Whitney had in his capture. When an Indian went on the warpath, he was a menace to not only the white settlers but also his own tribesmen.”



George Luke Whitney & Julia Ann Wardell’s Children: (Front Row) Flora, George Fenton, (Back Row) Afton Lavina, Clarice (all Left to Right)

“The trouble started, as I remember my father telling me the story, with his squaw

and another Indian. He killed the Indian and then started to kill white men whenever he was able. This started around Las Vegas Springs and then as pursuit was made, he escaped, northeast to the area of Bonelli Ferry on the Colorado River and across the river, in the area of the White Hills mining district. This area is where he killed most of the nine white men that he killed, but as he got very desperate for food, he moved back up west of St. Thomas and hid out in the red ledges of the Valley of Fire (now a park).”

“The St. Thomas and Overton citizens became aware of his presence when he began gathering something to eat out of people’s gardens and chicken coops. They didn’t care so much about the loss of a few chickens and produce, but they did not like to meet such a man when out watering their fields by night. The white people went to the Indians and demanded the capture of Old Mouse. So they organized the Indians in groups and Father was put in charge of one of these groups of Indians. They tracked him for days but he was hard to track in the sandstone formation. The only time they could find a track was when he was forced to cross a sand-wash.”

“This went on for some time, but due to hunger Old Mouse decided to make a run for it in the night. They picked up his tracks and chased him down a long mesa, overtook him, but he would not give up until they had killed him. He put his rifle over his shoulder, and fired as he ran until they were able to stop him by their bullets.” (Taken from the life story of G. Fenton Whitney)

Returning again to Afton Whitney Hannig’s story:

Several years after my birth, Mama became quite ill. Our drinking water was bad because it had to be dipped from the irrigation ditches into barrels to settle. This, with the extreme summer heat worsened her condition. So in 1910 Papa bought a ranch twenty miles east of St. Thomas in the Bunkerville Mountains.

Account of purchasing the ranch taken from Fenton's life story

"In the year 1910, in May, we all loaded into a white-top buggy, and took a long journey that changed our lives very much. We traveled east for many hours, and seemed like many miles, but it was only twenty. Thus my father and mother took their four young children Fenton, Flora, Afton and Clarice, to investigate the possibility of buying a ranch in the Bunkerville Mountains east of St. Thomas. This ranch was owned by Bert Nay, an Uncle of Allen Nay, who later married my sister. I still remember how beautiful the flowers of the desert were on this first trip. The next 15 years were mostly wet years and the desert flowers were truly beautiful..."

"I remember very well this first trip. We left in the afternoon, and traveled most of the night. After a long, hard night we reached the ranch. The Nays had a little bed of strawberries about sixteen by thirty feet in size. They were ripe at the time. All in all, it looked like paradise. The climate at the ranch is the best in the world. It is high enough so the heat is not too bad, and far enough south so the winters are very mild, and the warm water makes things grow early. The water was really something. We stayed two or three days."

"In August, we made our second trip, as mother was so bad we had to leave St. Thomas. The peaches were ripe, and we had a glorious time even if we had to camp out in the rain. It was on this trip that father made arrangements to buy the Arivada for \$1,500. A lot of money in those days."

"During the years at the ranch, Father's family cleared the hillside of the rocks and used them to build walls to form three terraces. The terrace above the cabins is in line with the spring and helps form the walls of the pantry they built around the spring. The cabins and reservoir were on the second terrace. The reservoir was used for irrigation and certainly is a pleasant place with weeping willow and cottonwood trees

all around it. Other tents and cabins were on the third terrace along with fruit trees. Mother said the Arivada was a pregnant woman's paradise in summer, and many came to get away from the terrible heat of the Muddy.

Below this lower terrace my father planted all kinds of fruit trees and all kinds of berries." (Life story of Fenton Whitney)



George Luke Whitney

The weather at the Ranch was cooler and the water flowing from the small springs was cool and good. Mama's health improved and we all worked hard clearing rocks and brush from the land, planting and harvesting crops. For the next eighteen years we earned our living raising and selling fruit, vegetables, berries, cream and eggs. All during the summers our Father would take wagonloads of these things to St. Thomas, Overton and the Grand Gulch Mine, where they were sold for money or exchanged for things we needed.

We usually picked and prepared the produce Friday. That evening when the

wagon was loaded, Papa would leave for town, traveling in the cool of the night. Mama would get her paring knife, assemble all the large kettles and pans, put a chair near the buckets and tubs of over-ripe fruit and berries and begin preparing them for jams, jellies, and preserves. She would sit there far into the night, sometimes until morning, peeling fruit and picking the stems from gooseberries or strawberries, then spend the next day putting them in bottles.

Papa would arrive in town Saturday morning, peddle the produce, do the shopping, pick up the mail and attend to any necessary business. Sunday he would attend to his church duties and leave that evening for the ranch. He would go directly to his farming activities without benefit of sleep except for the little catnaps he had snatched as he drove the team and wagon home.

After we moved to the ranch, Father was in the stake presidency, and in those days, conferences started on Friday night and lasted until Sunday night. Father rode old Babe, our hard-riding horse, over to Key West Road to meet the other brethren. When he reached the road, he would turn old Babe loose and she came back to the ranch alone. When conference was over, and they returned by car, he got out and walked back to the ranch (20 miles) taking the whole night.”

The kindness and generosity of Luke and Julia and their love of people was never more apparent than in their 4th of July celebrations at the ranch. It seemed that a goodly portion of the town of St. Thomas would come out to spend the day. The coolness of the ranch was such a refreshing change from the blistering heat of St. Thomas. Julia and Luke always welcomed everyone warmly and all had a wonderful time together. Luke would always get up at the crack of dawn and set off some gun powder (something explosive at any rate) Of course, this was very exciting to all the kids and set the mood for the day.

Tables were set out all along the terrace under the trees and these were filled several times and the tables stacked with the most delicious food that had been in preparation for days in advance--fried chicken, noodles, mashed potatoes, vegetables of all kinds, fruits and berries, watermelons, grapes, homemade ice cream, and those pies--dozens of cream pies of every sort. My, how they must have worked for hour upon hour to prepare all that delicious food for so many people. And as the people were eating, Luke would be bustling through the crowd to see that everyone was well taken care of--joking and chatting with their guests. It was truly a memorable occasion and left many pleasant memories for many people.



George Luke & Julia Ann Whitney

From Fenton’s story a description of father Luke Whitney’s philosophy:

“My father always said that a man lives by his liberality, or if you give freely to others, the Lord gives freely to you. Mother and Father always sold a little milk

and eggs at the door and they always put the money in a glass dish in the top of the cupboard. If anyone ever had a fire or if a special donation was called for, Dad came home and said to Mama, so and so needs this, or someone had a fire, or something for a missionary, and ask mother what she thought they ought to give. She would say, "How much is there in the dish?" nodding to the cupboard. Whatever was there, went. It might be only 20 or 30 dollars. It might be 90 or 100 dollars but none was ever kept for themselves. It wasn't long before there was more in the dish.

"In the early days before the railroad came through the country, transient men worked at Pioche mines. When they were laid off, they would hobo it down through the country to White Hills, Cloride and other mines located east of the Colorado River. They would walk and beg for food. Mama

has fed as high as 40 men in one day. One night, three men broke into our cellar and stole milk, eggs, meat, potatoes and went on. Next morning, Father went after them, following them nearly to Bonelli's Ferry twenty-five miles down river. He brought them to the ranch. They had no money so Mama and Dad fed and bedded them that night and in the morning gave them more food to take with them than they had stolen in the first place."

Returning again to Afton's story:

Our mother liked to be outdoors. She always had a vegetable garden and beautiful flowers growing for her. Agnes, Clarice, and Flora were fine cooks and housekeepers and as each came into their teens, they took over the work in the house so Mama could be out in her garden. I was the maverick. Having inherited my mother's love for the

George Luke & Julia Ann Whitney



outdoors, and having a great distaste for cooking and housework, I was always out in the field with my brothers, or out with our dogs chasing squirrels, or up in an apple tree reading my favorite magazine when Flora or Clarice called for me to come help with the dishes. But of course I could never hear their call. But since it was outdoor work, I usually consented to hang the dozens of socks and long black stockings on the fence on washday.

Our father and mother were always kind and gentle with us, although strict enough to keep us on the straight and narrow. They joined in all the fun--water fights, chicken and quail roasts. They took us over the mountain to gather pine nuts; over to the caves for picnics; and when we were in town, they would bundle us all into the wagon or white-top buggy and take us fishing down to the creek. All the hard work was a family affair--and we always managed to crowd in some fun--we with our antics, Papa with his funny little songs and poetry, and Mama with her stories of pioneer life. Is it any wonder we have such fond memories of our parents?

By the time the Hoover Dam was built and the water was creeping nearer to St. Thomas, we were all married. Flora and her husband's family bought the Ranch. Our father and mother sold their property in St. Thomas and moved to Hurricane, Utah. For the first time in their lives they had some of the modern conveniences--running water in the house, a bathroom, electric appliances, and a large home where hordes of children and grandchildren could come visiting. Their beautiful rose garden and flowers were the talk of the town, and as mother's health began failing, our father would patiently help her with the flowers and the housework.

They had lived a long and useful life. Mother had been in the Relief Society presidency when the ladies earned the money to build the St. Thomas Relief Society hall where we went to school, held church and attended plays and dances in our growing

up years. Our father was a counselor in the Moapa Stake Presidency from 1912 until 1932 when they moved to Hurricane. He traveled all over the stake--Alamo, Panaca, Bunkerville, Littlefield, Mesquite, Overton, and Logandale. He had many good friends in all these places. And weekends while he was traveling, mother would keep the home fires burning--milking cows, caring for the crops and with the help of us children, doing all the chores. They sent two children on missions--Fenton to Canada for two years, and I to the California mission for two years.

After moving to Hurricane, George Luke Whitney was set apart as Patriarch of the Zion Park Stake, 12 November 1933 by President George Albert Smith. A position he filled with humbleness and devotion until he was released 30 September 1951. He served 18 years.

Certainly no man lived closer in tune with God than did he--and in giving patriarchal blessings this great spiritual communication was in great evidence--in his manner of speaking, in the touch of his hand--and from the radiance of his countenance. And in all the blessings he had given, not one of them was ever known to be wrong. On one occasion it looked as though the blessing he had given a certain young man would never come to pass. It was during the Second World War, and in his blessing this young man was promised that he would return from the war and serve in the church many years. But then his parents received word that he was missing in action and many months passed and they received no word of him. Everyone was sure he must be dead. Luke felt very bad that what he had promised under inspiration to this boy had not come about, and he couldn't understand it. But the boy was not dead--A shell had exploded next to him, wounding him badly in the skull and for many months he didn't know who he was and where he was from. But he did return home and he did work many years in the church. So even this blessing that

seemed was not being fulfilled, did turn out right after all.

After moving to Hurricane, our father continued being active in Church and Civic affairs. We have seen him come limping home from the field on an evening so tired he could hardly put one foot before the other, but he would clean himself up and go downtown to give some dear bedridden, or crippled soul a blessing. He would come home walking on air. His church work always seemed to buoy him up. When he was in the Moapa Stake Presidency, he sometimes walked the twenty miles from Riverside to the Ranch rather than miss a conference or assignment. What faith and courage.



Chloe Berry Howe Whitney - 1951

When his dear Julia passed away (26 July 1950, age 82), he was heart-broken. He sold his farm and home and went to St. George to work in the temple, refusing to come and live with any of us for fear he

would be a burden. His great wish was to “die with his boots on” and the wish was granted two years later. But first he had one more commandment to keep. Since his beloved Julia was sealed to Uncle Alf, he must find a wife to be sealed to him. So putting a box of candy under one arm and his worn Doctrine and Covenants under the other, he set out to find her. When he felt he had found the right one, he presented the box of candy and opening the Doctrine and Covenants to the right passage he convinced her that they should be married in the Temple of the Lord. In December 1951 he and Chloe Berry Howe were married in the St. George Temple. Now he had fulfilled all the commandments. His work on earth was finished. About nine months after their marriage, on Sunday morning as he was getting ready for Priesthood meeting, he felt a hurt in his chest. Chloe, his wife, persuaded him to stop in on his way to his meeting to see the doctor. This he did and as he sat talking to the doctor his head dropped forward and his life here on earth was ended. This noble prince who cared so lovingly for Julia and her children; and who had ministered to hundreds of suffering and lonely people, went as he wished to go, “with his boots on” so he would not be a burden to anyone. His death occurred 22 September 1952.

A Tribute From A Granddaughter

by Wilma Adams

As a granddaughter, I too, would like to pay tribute to my grandfather, George Luke Whitney.

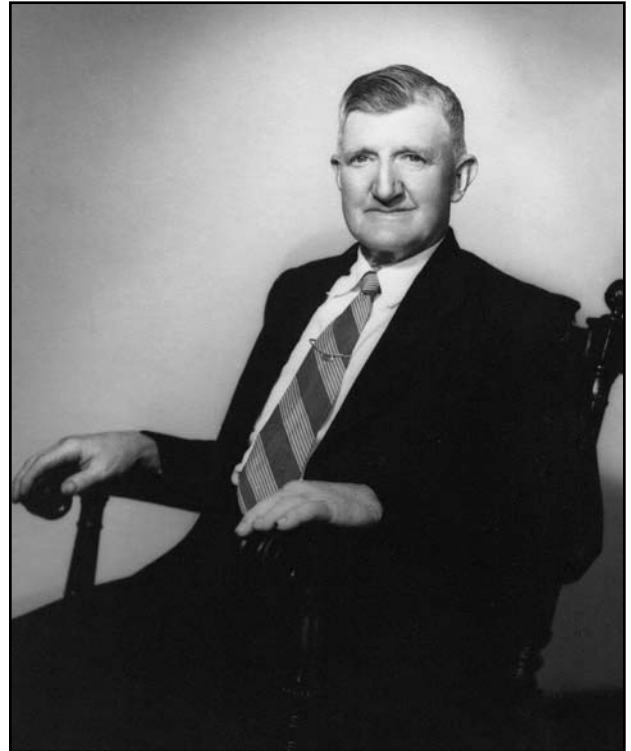
In reading over this wonderful story of his life, I have been deeply moved by his devotion to his duty as a son of God; by his innate goodness, and by the great strength of his character. Certainly, this is a wonderful heritage that we as his posterity fall heir to. The goodness of his life has prompted me to examine my own life--to re-dedicate myself and resolve to make my life a better one.

Although grandpa had only four years of formal schooling--he had great wisdom and understanding. He was a self-taught man--He loved to read, and many lonely hours were passed while riding in his wagon freighting or on other trips, reading the scriptures, books of poetry, or other books that he could get hold of. He continued to read in his spare time throughout his life. Also, through his dealings with all kinds of people, he gained much understanding and tolerance for the weaknesses of his fellow men. He seemed to have a special insight into the soul.

I remember what a wonderful speaker grandpa was—such deep sincerity and humbleness, yet he would speak with such conviction and authority. Also, he had such a ready command of the scriptures. I don't believe there was anyone who was more familiar with the scriptures than he. And though his words were not as eloquent, as perhaps a college professor, yet he spoke in a homey, warm sort of way that touched the heart.

One of the earliest memories I have of Grandpa, is looking out of the kitchen window and seeing him drive in the lane to the barn with team and wagon, and hearing him call out, "Whoa there!" as he climbed off the wagon, and with his long striding, hurried steps, walk down the path and into the kitchen with a cheery "Good morning" and, "How's everybody this morning?" and laugh, as if he enjoyed immensely his own joke. He had a way of laughing that made you feel good all over just to hear him. I know he seemed to bring sunshine in with him when he came in. The pleasant conversations between him and my dad as they discussed the day's work. Perhaps they would be hauling hay this day. They would work together to get daddy's hay put up, then they'd both go and do grandpa's hay. I don't believe that any father and son ever worked more harmoniously together than did my grandfather and father on their farms.

Before Uncle Alfred died, all three of them worked together, helping each other at all times. I remember too, how Uncle Alfred used to come over of an early morning, especially in the wintertime, when it was too cold to be outside working, and would visit and chat awhile. He had such an interesting way of talking and telling a tale. It was easy to sense the real harmony and love and devotion for each other that existed between this father and son and stepson.



George Luke Whitney

I remember how we kids used to always like to run errands up to Grandma and Grandpa's house, because they would always find a little treat of some kind to give us. I remember Grandma's beautiful smile--the kindly way she always talked to us--I remember how she loved her beautiful flowers and what delicious meals she always prepared--especially on Thanksgiving day.

And I don't believe anyone could be more generous than Grandpa and Grandma were. Daddy told me that it was their motto to always give enough of food and substance to those who came, to make up for the money they had spent on gas for the

trip. I certainly know this to be true from my own experience--Whenever my husband and I and family would stop for a visit they would treat us like royalty and rush around finding things to give us--fresh vegetables from their garden, jams and jellies, and best of all, delicious homemade butter. And to us who were used to eating margarine, this was the greatest treat of all.

When Grandma became too ill to take care of the home, Grandpa sold the farm and devoted his time to taking care of her and taking care of the home. It just amazed me how he seemed to enjoy cooking and bottling fruit and bustling around keeping the house neat and clean.

I remember, especially, one occasion, he handed me a little jar of jam and beaming proudly he told me it was his very own recipe. And the jam was really delicious. How devotedly Grandpa took care of Grandma during her long illness. How kind and patient he was to her and how solicitous of her needs.

I'm sure Grandpa George Luke Whitney was very much beloved of our Heavenly Father, and I feel that because of his great faithfulness and his great devotion to duty--that his desire (not to be a burden to anyone through sickness) was granted to him and in death he simply went to sleep. I think it was very fitting for a man who had devoted his life so unselfishly to the work of the Lord--should be called home on the Lord's Day.

And even though Grandpa has been dead for quite a few years, I still think of him quite frequently and in my mind's eye I see his face and his kindly smile. And I feel sure that he is still very much interested in us all and is doing all in his power to influence us for good.

Back to Afton Whitney Hannig's story:

This part of our story is a brief account of the children of Julia and Uncle Alf. Because of our Father's wonderful attitude

toward Uncle Alf's children, we were all given the same love and devotion. The older children appreciated this and loved Papa as we younger children did. Agnes was a favorite with all of us children and holds a special place in our hearts. The same year we bought the Ranch, Agnes was married to Jesse Francis Murphy (26 October 1910) in the St. George Temple. A two-room frame house was built down under the mulberry and pear trees on our lot in St. Thomas. There they set up housekeeping and there the older children were born. Later they moved down in the fields to the old Murphy home where their other children were born. They were the parents of eleven lovely and lively children. Agnes made attractive clothes for them and kept them and the home and surroundings clean and neat. She was a remarkable and lovely woman. With all the work of rearing a large family she found time to play and laugh with her children and with us. She made life merry for all of us with her clowning and stories.

After we bought the Ranch it was necessary for Mama and Papa to stay out there until the first of November to harvest the fall crops and get things tucked in for the winter. Then they would have to leave St. Thomas in March or April to get the spring crops planted. So, to get our schooling in, we younger children stayed in town with Agnes and Jess several months of each year. How kind she was, and how we loved our sister. Money was scarce in those St. Thomas days and very little of it changed hands. But in exchange for caring for us, Mama and Papa kept Agnes supplied with fruit and vegetables, goods and the things we raised on the Ranch.

When the Hoover Dam was built and our town vacated, Agnes and Jess moved their family to a lovely new home above Overton. But a few years later, tragedy struck this fine family. As Agnes and Jess were walking along the shoulder of the highway on their way to Sunday School, a car hit them fatally injuring them. They passed away 20 February 1938 and were buried in the St. Thomas cemetery, which

had been moved to a hill at the lake's edge. Each year, on Memorial Day, their children lovingly spread a blanket of Oleanders on their grave.

Our brothers, Alfred and Levi inherited the dry wit of the Syphus family. They had a special way of telling stories.

There were no high schools in the country when they finished grammar school, so Mama and Papa saved and borrowed enough money to send them to Beaver, Utah to school for a year or two. When he grew to manhood, Alfred earned a living farming or working on jobs near to home. In 1915 he married Verda Hannig. Part of the time they lived at the Ranch where Alfred farmed. Later they lived in the old family home in St. Thomas, and when it burned down, they built a basement house on the home lot. Four children were born to them in St. Thomas. Alfred worked at the Sand mine and mill above St. Thomas for many years. When the Dam was built he moved his family to Hurricane, Utah, where he farmed for several years. Then on the 18th of August 1939 he passed away after a long illness and was buried in the St. Thomas cemetery.

Our brother, Levi, never married. In his youth he began working in the mines. He worked in many of the deep mines of the west. At the beginning of the First World War he enlisted in the army. After training in Texas he was sent overseas and was in most of the big battles of the war. He was in Germany with the Occupation forces for six months after the Armistice. When he returned home his health was bad due to poison gas and shell shock from the war. But he continued working in the mines and the dust worsened his condition.

During the last years of his life he was quite crippled with arthritis and was in and out of Veterans' hospitals. He was in a hospital in Colorado when he passed away 25 June 1949. He was brought home and buried in the St. Thomas cemetery.

And so all of mother's children by her first marriage preceded her in death. Later, in 1950, she would be taken home and laid beside Uncle Alf and three of her children. We, who are the children of Julia and Luke, are still living (1965), and since Clarice and Fenton have written their life story, and Flora and I hope to write ours soon, I will not write more concerning our lives after we were married. But we have our memories of our life with our beloved parents, and they are good memories--stories, which we feel, will be of interest to their grandchildren and other kinsmen.

Because of the inventions and the progress in the past thirty or forty years, living today is much different than in the "Olden Days". Although we had none of the conveniences and comforts of the present generation, living was good--faith and fun, peace and happiness all intermingled with the trials and hard work. The rest of our story is composed of the written memories of our growing up years with a wonderful mother and father.

Other Memories of Luke and Julia

I remember when I was very small, a great flood came down the wash and out of the hills to the west of St. Thomas. We had an extra lot of baby chickens that spring and even turkeys. I remember Mama outside wading knee-deep in muddy water gathering chickens and turkeys into her large apron. Then they were brought in the house and put in tubs around the wood stove to dry out.

There were so many incidents, which tried the patience or provoked laughter. On one occasion when Clarice and Fenton were in their teens, Mama asked Clarice to go down in the cellar and get a bottle of fruit for supper. It was a real dark night and Clarice said she was afraid to go, whereupon Fenton made fun of her. "Afraid" said he. "There isn't anything to be afraid of." And forthwith he proceeded to show her what a brave boy he was by marching out to the cellar, with Clarice close at his

heels. When they got to the cellar steps, Fen dramatically shouted, "Boo! Come out of there!" And it came. A huge cat came bounding up the steps. Fen let out a blood-curdling yell and beat Clarice to the house, almost breaking the door down in his haste to get inside.

Other episodes that always provoke laughter when we speak of them were our owl hunting adventures. We always had chickens to supply our table with meat and eggs, and it was usually when Papa was away on a freighting trip that the owls came looking for our chickens. It was when we were all settled for the evening when they sent out their challenge, "Whoo? Whoo? Whoo?" That was the signal for all of us to take action. Huge cottonwood trees grew in front of our house, and we always supposed the owls were in them. Fenton would load the old shotgun and lead the parade. Clarice would follow close with a lighted coal oil lamp, and Flora would stand at the gate with another lamp. Mama would give advice and directions from the open doorway, while I, who have always been a coward, clung to her long skirt. Often the owl was over in O'Donnell's trees or down by the graveyard, which of course was out of bounds for us unless Papa was around to protect us. But sometimes the owl was in our trees and the blast of the old shot gun would bring the villainous bird down if the moon and the oil lamp made enough light.

There were sorrows and tragedies, too. There were no doctors in the country. Mama did not have a doctor when any of her babies were born. When Clarice or Fenton were born, an old drunk woman traveling through the country helped her, but by the time Flora and I arrived, things were better. Aunt Ellen Gentry ushered us into the world. Mama and Papa gave her four ducks for one of us and some bottled fruit or something for the other.

Fenton was a very sickly baby, and Mama despaired of his life many times. One night, when Papa was away on one of his freighting trips, she was sure Fenton

wouldn't live until morning. She sat all night with him on her lap, and by the light of the oil lamp she made a little shirt from a scrap of silk left over from sewing she had done for Aunt Ellen. The little silk shirt was to be Fenton's burial garment. But as she sewed, she prayed, and when morning came he was better.

Such love and faith, and kindness! And how we loved our father and mother. She would make pretty dresses for us girls from Aunt Ellen's old clothes. We were the envy of the other girls in town. I remember running to meet Papa as he came home from his trips. I would climb up on the high wagon seat and tell him of some pretty dress Mama had made or something nice she had done. How good to sit close beside him on the wagon seat and feel his strong arms around me. Or walk along with my hand in his rough calloused one. It seemed that some strength or goodness flowed right through the roughness into me. And how we remember the old overalls quilt on the wagon seat and Papa's worn Bible and Book of Mormon and Book of Poetry lying on the quilt. ■

Here Was A Man

A TRIBUTE TO GEORGE LUKE WHITNEY

By a granddaughter, Wilma W. Adams

Here was a man. - A noble son
Of mighty faith and convictions strong -
His eyes held high and head aloft--
Courageously steadfast- -he served
The Lord as he went along.
And moral courage so great had he,
There never was compromise or in between.
Firm he stood for what was right- -
Sure in his knowledge of the gospel light;
A man of honor and integrity- -
A man of lofty ideals was he--
Here was a man--A noble son!

Here was a man -A devoted man -
To God and to his fellowman.
Valiant he was in his quest for truth--
To serve God his desire from earliest youth!

Came this youth with his father freighting,
To a mining town, wild, with trouble waiting,
In a western land still untamed--
Where with companions rough and rowdy,
And oftentimes with drink inflamed,
He sought his way of life.
“Choose ye this day whom ye will serve”
Was the creed he sought to follow;
He knelt in prayer--his answer given--
“I will serve the Lord, my God in Heaven.”
And from this course he never wavered,
And of man and God he was highly favored,
Here was a man--A devoted man!

Here was a man--A dutiful man.
With courage and Conviction to follow through-
The scriptures he knew, he had studied them hard,
And was determined to follow the word of the Lord.

Bound by what he knew was right,
His heart was tugged by a widow's plight.
His Uncle's wife, so young was she
When he died, leaving her with youngsters three;
And an unfinished cabin with canvas for a door
With stretched muslin for ceiling and a dirt floor.
Her cattle depleted by the unscrupulous few--
And the man knew what he should do.
He believed the scriptures that a man should wed
And care for the widow of his next of kin.

The winsome widow he took as his wife,
Whom he loved and adored all of his life.
Throughout his life, as the years passed by,
What 'ere the Lord asked--he never questioned "Why?"
Yes, here was a man--A dutiful man!

Here was a man- -An understanding man--
A man of wisdom and of knowledge,
Though it came not from school or from college--
His years of formal schooling were not more than four--
But all his years of living was opening the door
To a depth in understanding and a knowledge sure.

Though taken out of school at the age of nine or ten,
To help his father who was freighting then
From Pioche to Delamar and back again;
Yet, he never ceased in learning, in building up his mind,
In reading from the best books that a boy then could find.
Jogging along in the wagon, across the lonely way,
He would read and study to the last sunlit ray;
Beside him there on the wagon seat always there would be
His Bible, the standard works and a book of poetry;
Over the years many such a trip he took,
Many hours for study and meditation with a book.
And when the time came to take his young son along,
He would read to him the scriptures
And teach him right from wrong.
On his freighting trips, characters he met of every sort--
A chance to study human nature and look into the heart.
He learned to "Love the sinner, but to hate the sin, "
He learned about compassion and it became a part of him.
Here was a man--An understanding man!

Here was a man--A father beloved---
A man of warmth and tenderness--
Devoted he was to his own children four-
Two girls, a boy, and a girl once more;
And the older three, though not his own
He loved the same, with no partiality shown.

Life at home for the children was gay,
But they missed their father when he was away.
At the first sound of wagon and horses trudging feet,
Up the road they dashed their father to meet;
Greeting them happily he hoisted them up
Beside him there on the wagon seat,
As he snuggled them close, one under each arm,
They felt secure in his love and cozily warm.
Or to walk along side of him matching his stride,
A child's innermost yearnings in him to confide.
A small hand inside of his large calloused one grasped,
Seemed to flow through them, his strength and his goodness

When their hands were clasped.
How they giggled at his funny little songs and poetry-
In reading the scriptures, they were awed by his sincerity.
And for fun, he was as much of a kid as they,
For picnics and fishing trips and games to play;
In a mad wagon dash down a steep hill,
Whoopin' and. hollerin' --unafraid of a spill.
The little kindly things he always seemed to do--
For his gentleness and devotion too.
Here was a man--A father beloved!

Here was a man--A man who loved life-
Who lived to the fullest each day--
He found beauty in nature- -in poetry and prose,
In the freshly tilled soil--the smell of a rose.
He found a joy in the living--in work--in being;
A joy in sharing, in giving--in doing!

Through all his years he loved the soil,
To see it blossom from his toil,
The old Whitney ranch, how he loved it there,
An oasis in the desert, with clear fresh air;
A spot of beauty – well kept and neat,
Cool sparkling springs--a summer retreat.
Choice berries and fruits he lovingly grew
On the terraced hillside--with vegetables too.
By the sweat of their brow, how they worked
Julia and he, their products for market to prepare,
He took pride in the best,
And in all his dealings was more than fair.
Carried by wagon he rode through the night,
Arrived at St. Thomas market by morning light.
His business finished he sought out his friends,
Went to his meetings, and his church duties attend.

Then followed the years--full, happy spent years;
Though there were disappointments and occasional tears.
His roots in St. Thomas, his old home town,
But back and forth migrating from the ranch and down.
The great Hoover Dam built—the lake threatening their home--
They moved to Hurricane to make a new home--
A new life--yet the love of the soil was still a dominant part
Of his being--And the new farm brought joy to his heart.
Around their home a rose garden they grew--
The most elegant roses of every hue,
How they loved them and cared for them so tenderly,
A garden of beauty--a showplace for all to see.
Here, Julia and he, content were they
With son and stepson just a few blocks away;
Working together on their farms as a team,
Each held the other in high esteem.
Here was a man--A man who loved life.

Here was a man--A generous man--
A man who knew the joy of giving;
To share with others was his way of living.

Those fourth of Julys out on the ranch,
When he invited to come all of the St. Thomas bunch—
The busy preparation for days in advance,
To run out of food, they did not take the chance;
It took lots of food to feed such a mob,
Fried chicken and noodles and corn on the cob
Cream pies and lemon pies--pies by the score.
Ice cream and watermelons and such a lot more.
But jovial and happy, the tables he'd tend,
Passed around more food and joked with his friends.
He gave of his substance--he gave of himself.

He loved people--he loved to have them come and stay
And before they could ever get away,
He'd laden them down with good things to eat,
Fresh, creamy butter and jellies that were really a treat.
He'd fuss and fret over them like a mother hen,
He made all feel welcome and wanting to come back again.

In the closing years of Julia's life,
She became quite ill - not able to do the duties of a wife.
He sold his farm and took care of her devotedly,
And the household chores he did up efficiently.
Like a little old wife he took pride in his cookery,
Especially his own jams and jellies turned out deliciously.
Beaming proudly he lavished them on all who came,
And his fresh garden vegetables he gave still the same.
His motto was "to give food enough"
So the trip would cost them nothing to come.
Yes, here was a man--A generous man!

Here was a man--A man of humor and wit,
A man who knew when to laugh,
A hearty laugh that came with ease,
A man who could joke and sometimes tease.

He could find humor from experiences he had,
So witty and jolly, he wouldn't let you be sad.
And such an infectious laugh had he,
His eyes would twinkle with merriment and glee.
To his little granddaughters he would frequently say;
"Well, how are you little boys today?"
But they knew that with love and affection 'twas said,
And they giggled and twittered and ducked their heads.
Here was a man--A man of humor and wit!

Here was a man--A man devout- -
Who served his God with all his heart,

And mind and strength!
Who labored zealously in the vineyard of the Lord
All his life, and from His teachings did ne're depart.

Although there was always much work--A big family too,
He never neglected his church duties to do.
For 20 years in the Moapa Stake Presidency,
And though many miles away at the ranch was he,
He performed his duties faithfully.
The conferences in Bunkerville he'd always attend,
Rode "Old Babe" to the Riverside bend,
Then turn her home again as he met his friends,
And rode on in with them--Then at conference end
Rode back once more to the Riverside bend,
And walked from there all through the night,
And reached the ranch by morning light.
When he moved to Hurricane,
As Stake Patriarch he was ordained,
And in this calling he was sustained--
Many blessings were given at his hands--
Faith and hope restored of Celestial lands.
Many times so tired he'd come home from the farm
He could hardly put one foot in front of the other,
But he'd clean himself up and go into town,
A meeting attend--or a blessing give
To an unfortunate brother.
Then all buoyed up; he'd come home floating on air,
His fatigue had vanished--he was without a care.

As a speaker of the gospel he could touch the soul,
Inspire his listeners to seek a higher goal,
Serene at the pulpit, but with a confidence too,
And an inner glow from a spirit attune;
There was a warmth in his speaking--
Compassion--a feeling--
From his command of the scriptures--his gospel knowledge--
His understanding of life--Came words warm and appealing.
He spoke with humbleness, yet with authority too,
The heart was touched and the spirit knew
Wherein he spoke was true

Here was a man--A noble son- -
He met the race of life and won
'Twas on a Sabbath morn--
His Priesthood meeting preparing to attend,
When suddenly, quietly he was called home.
He had lived actively and fully to the end of his life,
Not a servant of helplessness--unbowed was he;
"He died with his boots on"--his wish fulfilled,
And his mission here on earth was sealed.
His life was his testimony for all to see--
May it be a testimony for you--a testimony for me!

And this I believe—where 'ere he may be,
He's still influencing his posterity!
Prompting us, guiding us--showing the way,
That we might all meet him there someday.

Here was a man--A noble son!

St. Thomas

by Afton Whitney Hannig

It was small--Our Town--
Where pioneer parents had pushed the desert back
And held at bay mesquite and chaparral;
Then dared them raise their boughs within the fields
Where grain and lucerne grew.
The homes were small--
But filled with prayers and tears and laughter
Of kindly folk and happy children.
And we recall the tree-lined streets where cars and wagons vied for right-of-way
As lazy cows trod home from fields at close of day.
In memory we see the yards where rose and oleander bloomed;
The cisterns, and beyond them gardens and corrals;
A little town--
Where memories were made.
But then the wheels of progress turned;
Decreed the little town should be no more.
Surveyors came; a dam was built
Across the mighty Colorado.
Our town was doomed.
The value of the homes and farms were set.
But all the money in the world
Could never buy sentimental values there.
So one by one the families moved away
Taking their household goods and memories.
Houses were moved or fell in ruin,
The trees cut down
And in the desert rushed
To fill the fields and streets with brush.
Mesquite and chaparral grew up
Where once the rose and oleander bloomed.
And desolation claimed our town.
Sadly we watched the water creep a little nearer.
To bury desolate ruins of the place
That once was home.
What sorrow fills the hearts of us
Who know we cannot now return
To walk the shady streets of long ago;
Nor visit old time frinds in time worn homes;
Nor catch a glimpse of landmarks
Of our childhood days.

We only have our memories.
Yes, all we have are memories-

Afton Whitney Hannig's Memories of St. Thomas

Several times St. Thomas has surfaced from the waters of Lake Mead. Sometimes it has surfaced after periods of drought. Another time St. Thomas surfaced was after Glen Canyon Dam was built near Page, Arizona. This was due to the filling of Lake Powell.

Afton Whitney Hannig visited her old home sites during the 1940's and was prompted to write these memories.

This old dead cottonwood, lifting its ghostly arms as if in supplication, reminds us of other trees. The giant cottonwoods were the monarchs. High in these grand old trees the early pioneers slept in their tree beds for protection from the desperados that infested the valley in those early days. The old May Day trees casting its shade for May Day celebrations when little girls in ruffled dresses and Mary Janes joined with small boys in button shoes and knee britches in braiding the May pole. Now- whatever became of that holiday?

The mulberries--these were the climbing trees, where the fellows dared the girls to climb the highest boughs. The fig and pomegranate trees furnished sweet refreshment. It seemed each home had a special tree or shrub or garden. Ours was a lovely pear tree that dawned a fairy ballet costume each spring and wore a glossy green suit each summer which autumn turned to red and gold; but it stubbornly refused to bear edible fruit. Early each spring the purple lilac on the Gentry Hotel lawn wafted its fragrance on the air. All summer John's and Nellie's roses and oleanders made their contribution to the beauty of our little town, while Bunkers' and Bishop Gibson's cherries tempted young appetites beyond endurance. Nor will we forget the rows of tamarack--osage

orange hedges here and there, and the row of tulips marching up the Strasser walk--the Chadburn orchard and the Murphy asparagus field. The almond orchards were a breath of loveliness in early spring and in autumn and winter Uncle Ed's golden store of casabas stashed in the huge straw shack tempted the same cherry appetites of the summer and this reminds us of the watermelon patches. But if we are the angels we pretend to be, we best forget the melon patches.

Other towns may count their widows, but ours was noted for its bachelors--big ones, little ones, tall, lean ones and portly ones--Big Levi and Little Levi--and the one who courted every generation of girls from Agnes and Della and Helen to Laura and Clarice and Doris and down to Fae and Flora and Ada. We remember Agnes' hilarious account of the night he came courting while she was soaking her tired feet. Hurriedly she spread her full long skirt over pan and feet. An hour went by while they chatted and the water cooled--another hour and the water was really cold. Still another hour he stayed then left all unawares of the wrinkled feet beneath the full skirt.

Nor can we forget the bachelor with two broad rows of gleaming golden teeth. Certain boys could give vivid description of him in his anger when they teased the burros that roamed the countryside. And we have heard of the novel way he put stocky body a deft swift whirl --and presto! Wrapped in the quilt as neatly and snugly as a cocoon he would drop to his pillow for a night of untroubled dreams.

Then there was the tall lean bachelor who had the first radio in town (Hugh Lord). Each night his little room was crowded with members of the Spit and Argue Club listening to Amos and Andy and the news. Next day at the garage the rest of the male population gathered to hear the news secondhand and embellished. This long, lean, lanky one with a twinkle in his eye declared he would not leave St. Thomas

unless it was in a boat and he kept his word.

But, earlier the news was dispensed at Uncle Harry's Store, with the pot-bellied stove in the center and the post office cubicle in one end. Here you sat on stools or the counters, or leaned on stacks of overalls, or boxes of shoes and corsets and other dry-goods, and there amid the mingled fragrance of salt pork, candy, leather, cigarette smoke, new dry goods and lemons you waited for the mail to be called out and listened to the latest news and gossip. It was here all the town problems were solved.

Ah! What memories of Uncle Harry's Store. It was the duty and the coveted privilege of the children to carry lard buckets full of eggs to the store to exchange for groceries. And what matter if there was not enough left over for a bag of candy. Uncle Harry's generous hand went beneath the counter to the row of wooden candy buckets. And each child left the store with cheeks puffed out with hard tack or jelly beans.

Later there was the Hannig Store and ice cream parlor. What luxury to sit at the small tables--a fancy stemmed dish filled with the cold goodness. But these old snaggles of cement are all that are left of the store and ice-cream parlor.

Nor can we forget the Sellers Cafe where the first root beer and other luscious beverages and concoctions were dispensed.

The church and school--first in a tent--then a hard-won miracle--the Relief Society Hall. The sisters, bless them, earned the money for it in the time-honored system of ice cream socials. On the day of the socials they would assemble their cream and eggs and precious little hoards of sugar and make the cake and ice cream. Then in the evening they would assemble their husbands and children and the pin money sugar bowl and buy the goodies from themselves. Lucky was the day when the

Grand Gulch freighters were in town and in a spending mood.

When the Relief Society Hall was finished, it was there we went to church and school. A curtain stretched across the center of the hall and made two school rooms, and many were the notes and stuff tossed over the curtain. Through the years there was a parade of teachers, but the most beloved was our Anna Mulchay and our own home grown ones, the Syphus girls and later Inez.

School was good and recess fun with baseball, steal sticks, marbles and many other games. It was at the old Relief Society Hall school where one recess the girl in the button shoes borrowed a marble from Leonard Pearson. After playing their game Birdie, Mary Foxley and the girl made a dash for the little house in the rear before the bell rang. While she unbuttoned her panties from the panty-waist the girl in the button shoes kept the marble in her mouth for safe keeping. But alas! She swallowed it. And to this day Leonard doesn't know what happened to his marble for she dared not tell him.

Yes, all we have are memories. What fun we had--home parties, oyster suppers and chicken roasts--Easter and end of school outings to the Virgin River beach, or on the sand hill or out to Bitter Spring Wash. There were excursions to the clay hillside and fishing trips, the Fourth of July and Christmas celebrations. Our dances were family affairs--mothers, fathers, grandfathers, and grandmothers as well as the young folks dancing the waltz, the Virginia reel, the fox trot to the lilting tunes of the fiddles and organ. When the little ones became tired they were put to sleep on the benches that circled the Hall. And when the dancing was over in the wee hours of the morning, the sleeping youngsters were carried home while neighbors laughed and chatted along the way.

After we moved to our grand new two-story brick school building, Brother Hannig

showed the very first movies. What a thrill sitting on the hard benches in the darkened room watching May Pickford and the antics of Charley Chaplin.

And the music of our town. The wonderful voices of Viola and Harry and Sister Gibson and the others. Nor can we forget Brother Bunker leading the singing in Sunday School and Meeting, his toe tapping out the rhythm of our beloved church hymns.

Good things remembered are like a shining star to warm our hearts and guide us on our way. ■

A Choir In The Desert

Taken from a story about St. Thomas written by Afton Whitney Hannig

I heard the choir long ago when I was fresh-grown to womanhood. I listened to the beautiful voices as I sat on a sand hill several miles from St. Thomas, Nevada, the little town that now lies beneath the waters of Lake Mead.

As a setting for my story I must give some history of my town and family. My mother, Julia had come to St. Thomas in its early history as the young bride of my great uncle, Alf Syphus, who had a contract to carry mail from St. Thomas to the mining towns along the Colorado River. Of necessity, he was away from home every other night. Because the town was infested with outlaws and desperadoes, Uncle Alf built a platform high up in a cottonwood tree which stood near their small adobe cabin. The nights he was away, mother would make her bed in the tree and pull the long ladder up beside her. Then she lay in terror as the desperadoes went through the streets on their drunken sprees, shooting their guns and cursing.

After the contract was completed, Uncle Alf and mother spent several years in Eldorado Canyon and Panaca, Nevada before returning to St. Thomas. Soon after

their return Uncle Alf passed away, leaving mother with three small children. A few years later she and my father, Luke Whitney were married. In the course of the events, we four younger children came along, I being the youngest. By then the desperadoes were gone and the town had grown into a friendly little farming community of fifteen or twenty families, with ore freighters adding to the economy and the excitement of the town.

In 1910, Mother became ill and because the intense heat of our summers worsened her condition, Father bought a ranch in the Bunkerville Mountains about twenty miles from town. There we spent our summers and in the early autumn we children would go to town to attend school, leaving our parents at the ranch to harvest the late fruit. Then they would spend the winters in town with us.

The weekly trips between ranch and town were made with team and wagon. We forded the Virgin River until cars came into common use. Then the Arrowhead Trail, later known as Highway 91, was built. Its route was from Las Vegas through the Valley of Fire to St. Thomas, and then on to Bunkerville and Utah. A bridge was built across the Virgin, and since we followed the graveled highway about seven miles before we turned off the dirt road to our ranch we did not have to ford the river.

However, several years later a controversy began, with some of the county residents and officials wanting the highway moved about twenty miles to the north, passing over Mormon Mesa as it does now. There ensued a fierce battle of words and politics until, mysteriously, the wooden floor and approaches to the Virgin bridge burned, leaving the twisted steel spans standing grotesquely on the pilings. I believe the fire went on record as an accident, much to the surprise of the St. Thomas residents, who seemed convinced that it was no accident. Of course, "the powers that be", decided the cost of rebuilding the bridge was too great

so the new highway was constructed across the mesa and we had to ford the river.

By the time I was in high school, my brothers and sisters were married, and I stayed alone at our home in town while my parents were at the ranch caring for the crops. Even after my graduation, I came to town early each autumn to help in the church organizations.

One evening I was lonely, and since I was expecting my parents to bring a load of fruit to town, I decided to walk out and meet them. I wandered past Bishop Gibson's vineyard and the square block building that served as a school, church and social center; on past the tree where my mother had slept many years before. Then I turned the corner where Jacob Bauer's blacksmith shop had stood and walked down the lane between the fields of ripened corn and across the Muddy River Bridge. Dusk had deepened to night as I reached the edge of town where the road left the fields and twisted its way through the foothills. A bright moon was rising and the desert seemed warm and friendly, so I went on, thinking I would soon hear the sound of the horses and wagon. But I did not hear them when I reached the summit of the foothills, nor when I was walking down the steep dugways on the other side.

A short distance from the Virgin was a sand hill. I would wait there for my father and mother. It was a warm autumn night, and I sat with my chin on my knees dreaming young-woman dreams and reminiscing as I listened to the wind in the chaparral bushes. Then I realized it was not the wind in the chaparral I was listening to, but a choir ... a beautiful choir. I could distinctly hear the soprano, the tenor, the bass; the rich alto. I could hear the mighty crescendos, the beautiful harmony of sound coming from the river channel beyond the old bridge. At first I thought it must be my imagination, but as I listened, I knew that I was actually listening to a choir.

Suddenly an agonizing fear took possession of me, leaving me helpless. I knew that by no earthly means could the singing come to me. A radio never entered my mind, for they were not in common use at that time and the only one in town was used with earphones and car radios were unheard of.

I don't know how long I sat there helpless with fear. I realized my parents would not be coming at that late hour. I knew that, somehow, I would have to get back to town alone. When I found strength to get to my feet, my impulse was to run, but reason told me I would be exhausted before reaching the summit of the hills. By sheer willpower, I made myself walk up the dugways. With all my heart, I wished for the company of some living thing. Even the howl of a coyote or the shadowy outline of a desert fox would have been welcome.

As I crossed the summit my fear lessened, and when I was out of the hills and could see the dim light of the coal-oil lamps in a few windows my hurt was gone. As I entered my town, I could feel its warmth and friendliness shielding me from all harm although the streets were empty. I paused a moment beside my mother's bedroom tree and felt a nearer kinship, for now I knew what real fear was; I knew what Luke meant when he said, of the shepherds on the Judean hills, "And they were sore afraid."

As I lay alone that night I pondered the marvelous things I had heard. Now the fear had gone and a wonderful faith and hope warmed my heart. I knew I could tell no one of my experience for I would be ridiculed and laughed at. Of course my father and mother would understand. Papa would hold my hand in his rough, calloused one and quote a bit of scripture or poetry. And a special glow would light Mama's beautiful eyes and face.

The ensuing years brought changes to our town, and to us who had lived there so many years. There were rumors of a dam

to be built across the Colorado river. The rumors became a reality and government men came to appraise and buy our homes and farms for the waters of the lake would cover our town. The news brought mixed emotions to the people. Some, who were tired of the heat, the lack of modern conveniences, the hard work necessary to make a meager living, looked forward with pleasure to the change. But to those who had pushed back the desert to make their homes and farms, who had borne and raised their children in the modest adobe and frame houses, it was a time of sadness. For here they had laughed and danced and worshiped together, and here they had buried their dead. ■

Family Group Record for George Luke Whitney

1

Husband		George Luke Whitney		
<small>LDS Ordinance Data</small>				
Born	3 Aug 1874	Panaca, Lincoln, Nevada	B	3 Aug 1882
Christened			E	10 Jun 1897 SGEOR
Died	22 Sep 1952	St. George, Washington, Utah		
Buried	24 Sep 1952	St. George, Washington, Utah		
Father	George Burton Whitney (1846-1927)		SP	BIC
Mother	Lovina C. Syphus (1854-1934)			
Marriage	10 Jan 1897	St. George, Washington, Utah	SS	DNS
Other Spouse	Chloe Berry (1881-1956)	18 Dec 1951 - St. George, Washington, Utah	SS	18 Dec 1951 SGEOR
Wife		Julia Ann Wardell		
Born	23 Jun 1868	Parowan, Iron, Utah	B	Jun 1876
Christened			E	26 Oct 1882 SGEOR
Died	26 Jul 1950	Hurricane, Washington, Utah		
Buried	Jul 1950	Overton, Clark, Nevada		
Father	Solomon Wardell (1841-1914)		SP	26 Oct 1882 SGEOR
Mother	Ellen Mckell Matheson (1848-1887)			
Other Spouse	Alfred Luke Syphus Sr. (1861-1894)		SS	17 Feb 1887 SGEOR
Date	17 Feb 1887 - St. George, Washington, Utah			
Children				
1	F	Clarice Whitney		
Born	24 Nov 1897	St. Thomas, Clark, Nevada	B	24 Nov 1905
Christened			E	9 Mar 1971 SGEOR
Died	10 Dec 1973	Overton, Clark, Nevada	SP	BIC
Buried	12 Dec 1973	Overton, Clark, Nevada		
Spouse	Sheridan Ballard (1894-1979)	6 Jul 1917 - Las Vegas, Clark, Nevada	SS	9 Mar 1971 SGEOR
2	M	George Fenton Whitney		
Born	27 Nov 1899	St. Thomas, Clark, Nevada	B	7 Jul 1908
Christened			E	6 Dec 1919 SLAKE
Died	21 Oct 1985	St. George, Washington, Utah	SP	BIC
Buried	24 Oct 1985	Hurricane, Washington, Utah		
Spouse	Lettie Tobler (1902-1997)	14 Jun 1922 - St. George, Washington, Utah	SS	14 Jun 1922 SGEOR
3	F	Flora Whitney		
Born	14 Aug 1902	St. Thomas, Clark, Nevada	B	14 Aug 1911
Christened			E	10 Oct 1965
Died	30 Jun 1971	Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah	SP	BIC
Buried	3 Jul 1971	Parowan, Iron, Utah		
Spouse	Robert Allen Nay (1898-1979)	30 Nov 1922	SS	
Spouse	Robert Warfield Schneider (-)	12 Jul 1952	SS	
Spouse	Allen Nay (-)	30 Nov 1922 - , Clark, Nevada	SS	
4	F	Afton Lovina Whitney		
Born	7 Mar 1906	St. Thomas, Clark, Nevada	B	1 Nov 1914
Christened			E	13 Jun 1926
Died	7 Nov 1973	St. George, Washington, Utah	SP	BIC
Buried		Parowan, Iron, Utah		
Spouse	Joseph Julius Hannig (1905-1999)	1 Jan 1931 - St. George, Washington, Utah	SS	1 Jan 1931 SGEOR

Last Modified: 6 Oct 2008

Produced by Legacy on 1 Dec 2008

Family Group Record for Alfred Luke Syphus Sr.

Husband		Alfred Luke Syphus Sr.		
<small>LDS Ordinance Data</small>				
Born	22 Dec 1861	Santa Clara, Washington, Utah		B 1869
Christened				E 17 Feb 1887
Died	10 May 1894	St. Thomas, Clark, Nevada		
Buried	16 May 1894	Overton, St. Thomas, Clark, Nevada		
Father	Luke Syphus Sr. (1827-1915)	Mother	Christiana Long (1832-1918)	SP BIC
Marriage	17 Feb 1887	St. George, Washington, Utah		SS 17 Feb 1887 SGEOR
Wife		Julia Ann Wardell		
Born	23 Jun 1868	Parowan, Iron, Utah		B Jun 1876
Christened				E 26 Oct 1882 SGEOR
Died	26 Jul 1950	Hurricane, Washington, Utah		
Buried	Jul 1950	Overton, Clark, Nevada		
Father	Solomon Wardell (1841-1914)		SP 26 Oct 1882	SGEOR
Mother	Ellen Mckell Matheson (1848-1887)			
Other Spouse	George Luke Whitney (1874-1952)	10 Jan 1897 - St. George, Washington, Utah	SS DNS	
Children				
1	M	Alfred Luke Syphus Jr.		
Born	7 Dec 1887	Panaca, Lincoln, Nevada		B 31 May 1896
Christened				E 18 Jun 1919 SGEOR
Died	18 Aug 1939	Hurricane, Washington, Utah		
Buried	Aug 1939	St. Thomas Cem., Overton, Clark, Nevada		
Spouse	Verda Lorena Hamig (1898-)	7 Dec 1915 - , Clark, Nevada	SS 10 Jun 1919	SGEOR
2	F	Ellen Lovina Syphus		
Born	14 Nov 1889	Panaca, Lincoln, Nevada		B Child
Christened				E Child
Died	3 Feb 1891	Panaca, Lincoln, Nevada		
Buried	Feb 1891	Panaca, Lincoln, Nevada		
Spouse			SS	
3	F	Agnes Dean Syphus		
Born	24 May 1892	Panaca, Lincoln, Nevada		B 1900
Christened				E 26 Oct 1910 SGEOR
Died	20 Feb 1938	Las Vegas, Clark, Nevada		
Buried	22 Feb 1938	St. Thomas Cem., Overton, Clark, Nevada		
Spouse	Jesse Francis Murphy (1891-1938)	26 Oct 1910 - St. George, Washington, Utah	SS 26 Oct 1910	SGEOR
4	M	Levi Wilford Syphus		
Born	24 Feb 1894	St. Thomas, Clark, Nevada		B 4 May 1902
Christened				E 5 Oct 1950 SGEOR
Died	25 Jun 1949			
Buried	1949	St. Thomas Cem., Overton, Clark, Nevada		
Spouse			SS	