

***"Get Out of Life What You Can"—Jesse and
Lettie Matilda Hammon Stoker: Their Family
of Roy Utah (1874 to 1975)***

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Jimmie "B" Stoker

The Lee Hammon Stoker Family

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Dedicated to my wife, Ann, and children, Matthew, Maia, Megan, and Daniel

"Get Out of Life What You Can"---Jesse and Lettie Matilda Hammon Stoker: Their Family of Roy, Utah (1874-1975)

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Preface

I wrote and compiled most of this historical biography about my paternal grandparents, Jesse and Lettie Matilda Hammon Stoker, from conversations that I had with my dad, Lee Hammon Stoker, and his brothers and sisters over a period of years. Several allowed me to photo copy their written recollections. In 1995 I wrote up what I had and printed it in three installments, "The Jesse Stoker family of Roy, Utah from 1874 to 1920," "The Jesse Stoker Family from 1921 to 1922," and "The Jesse Stoker Family from 1942 to 1975; Focus on Lettie," that accompanied a family newsletter that I edited, *Stoker Newsliner: News for and about the Lee Hammon Stoker Family*. Sorry to say I could only support that newsletter for a couple of years with its final issue dated December 31, 1996.

In January 2001 I was asked to make a presentation about writing family history for persons attending a March Pasco LDS Stake Family History Conference. As I was preparing for that presentation, I realized that I should package my grandparents' story in better wrappings. I have done little with the main text, but I have added a table of contents, and tried to make the material more user friendly to my readers. I must admit that I still consider this rendering rather inadequate. As far as the content, I'm sure that others can step forward and give further insight into my Stoker grandparents.

I realize that all families have information that may not be always positive. I have attempted to share some of the less favorable aspects in my grandparents' lives. One case in point would be my grandmother's nervous breakdown. How much can the human spirit take? She provides a good example. My grandfather had problems with tobacco. Yet he finally threw it away. These progenitors are very human. I love them for that quality. I hope that the material is balanced with the wonderful things they accomplished. I tried to put their lives in context to what was going on around them. It's hard to understand people's actions if we don't know what the circumstances are that they encounter.

The title that I'm using for this material is Lettie's quote, "*Get out of life what you can.*" In 1971 her great grandson, Ben Reeves, interviewed her for a Weber State College Oral History Project. He asked her, "...What do you feel is the heritage that you yourself have left for your grandchildren and great grand-children?" In her high pitched graveling voice, she answered, "*I'd want them all to keep an education; get the best education they can. Get out of life what you can. I don't believe in crouching around and all of that kind of thing. I think that a person should keep their body clean; they should be mentally awake, and know what good and evil are, and to teach their children—educate them to the best of your ability.*" She continued with a lengthy response which starts on page 89.

Much of my writing biography is compiling the facts and other's views, and then reaching inside myself and drawing my own conclusions. That's the troublesome part. It is not easy to judge. May I let my grandmother's voice be heard again in her response to Ben. *"And be careful of the little things. Don't ever say anything idle that you don't think about. And if somebody gives you heck, take it and smile about it. When they get through telling it, thank them and that will be it. If you want to whip anyone, you want to listen to them, and when they get through, tell them thanks but you can hold your head up and do that. That's the truth!"* My grandmother told me on more than one occasion about my grandfather. *"Jess was not afraid of god, the devil, or no man!"* She used some overstatement, yes. But can one overstate a love? Can love be bounded? Grandmother loved him. Absence made her heart grow fonder. Emotionally, she was well grounded. Please keep in mind that I respect my family roots passionately.

I know my grandmother would allow me to present her story with all its problems. If there are no problems in a person's life how can he or she learn anything. And how can we as readers learn? We often learn from others vicariously. As grandmother said, *"And if you ever see anybody down, try to help 'em. Cause there's none of us perfect and everybody makes mistakes. I've made thousands of 'em. I've made more mistakes than anything else. But that's the way you learn."*

Grandmother found it difficult to live alone in her declining years. She resented the idea that others would have to care for her. She was very independent and would fly in the face of those who worried about her welfare. One of the facts of life is that for the aged, as the body wears out, others must step in and provide the needed care. After living for periods of time with her children, they decided that she would be better off in a care facility. About 1973 or 1974 while I was living in Salt Lake City, my wife and I visited my grandmother who'd been placed in a resthome in Bountiful area. She did not like the confinement and regimentation of living there. She gladly accepted our invitation for her to go for a car ride with my wife and me. Just before returning, she asked if she could stop at a drug store. She promptly bought over-the-counter drugs which she thought would improve her health. I did not have the heart to take them from her, but I knew she shouldn't have them.

After returning her to the care center, I told the administration what had happened. Thunder came down on my head. I was reprovved for allowing my aged grandmother the freedom of her actions. I should have stepped in like a parent and said, "No," to my grandmother. I was too young; I had too much respect for her to deal in that restraining responsibility, or was that just my own weakness coming through. I've thought about my decision through the years. I often wage the war in my heart about my own actions. When do we know in our bones what to do? Yet, as I read her history and talked about her with my father, my grandmother, when caring for her own mother, had to intervene periodically and become the mother instead of the child to her own mother. It then follows, a rule of thumb undoubtedly, that the mother would sink into the role of the child. At some point "for the love of it" takes on the mantel of "for the duty of it." Can we deliver "for the duty of it" with compassion? When are mother's "for the love of it," not far removed from the "for the duty of it?"

Historically and in all generations the aged, according the poet Dylan Thomas in referring to his own father, "Should not go gentle into that good night. But should rage." What a question to re-

solve for all of us. How do we relate to the aging of our loved ones? I feel that the purpose for historical biography is to allow us to hear the stories of our forebears and see how they came to grips with life. Truly we can get out of life what we can, either actively or passively. Where does religion play in the scheme of things? Grandmother and Grandfather valued religion. No, they were not saints, but they were aimed in that direction...trying to leave the sinning part of their lives behind. As Grandmother told Ben, "*...keep yourself spotless from the sins of the world so that you can go back to your Heavenly Father with a clear conscience is the best thing there is on earth.*"

The older we become, the deeper life's lessons resonate within us from our own experiences and from communicating with others. I can take a lesson from my grandmother. She speaks true. I hope you enjoy reading about her and Grandfather. I give you just a glance at the tip of the iceberg. My grandparents could tell us so much more.

Jim Stoker
Basin City, Washington

The Jesse Stoker family of Roy, Utah from 1874 to 1920

by Jimmie "B" Stoker, June 1995

Jesse's home in Bountiful, Utah

Jesse's birth

Jesse Stoker, born July 17, 1874 in Bountiful, Utah to John Stoker, was not an "only child"—by no means. Older than him in his polygamous father's first family with wife, Jane McDaniel, were an adopted 39-year-old brother, Alma,¹ half-brothers, 34-year-old Hyrum, 32-year-old deceased Franklin, and 30-year-old David; and half-sisters, 27-year-old Zibiah Jane, and 23-year-old Sarah Ann. Older siblings in his father's second family with wife, Harriet Susan Willis, included a half-sister, 11-year-old Katherene, and a half brother, 7-year-old, John.

Children born earlier than Jesse to his mother, Jane Allen, the third and youngest wife of John Stoker, were 14-year-old Mary Ann, 9-year-old Henry, 7-year-old Lorenzo, a deceased 5-year-old sister, Clarissa who had lived for 18 months, a deceased 3-year-old brother, Jude, who had lived for 17 months, and a deceased 17 month-old brother, Albert, who had lived only 1 week. Essentially, Jesse was treated as the youngest of his father's living children.

Clearly Jesse's mother had been through the valley of the shadow and the darkness of death had claimed her last three children at a tender age. Being a polygamous wife created the problem that one did

not have the sole attention of one's mate. In Jane's case her husband was shared by the entire community of Bountiful. John Stoker had served since 1851 as the bishop of the North Canyon Ward, administering the needs of a hundred or so families. The 23 years of serving had drained her 57-year-old husband of his energy. In failing health, he was released as bishop on August 4, 1874², nearly three weeks after Jesse's birth. He was succeeded by Anson Call, who had earlier served as a bishop in Bountiful.

It is quite possible that Jesse's mother, 33-year-old Jane, was bolstered by the emotional and physical support of her own children, and by that of her 19-year-old sister, Eunice Clarissa Allen, the wife of Bountiful resident, Heber Cotton Wood, who also had the distinction of being the first baby born in the settlement. Jane and Eunice's father, Jude Allen, had moved his family from Bountiful to Calls Fort, a few miles north of Brigham City, Utah, in the spring of 1861, about a year after the death of his wife, Mary Ann Nicholas. The circle of help that surrounded Jane included her husband's family, and the members from the church.

Contention in Bountiful at the time of Jesse's birth

The Utah scene into which Jesse was born was rapidly changing from the early pioneer period. With the coming of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, Utah was no longer isolated from the rest of the nation. In the wake of the economic panic of 1873, the church leaders were energetically encouraging each settlement to establish co-operative in-

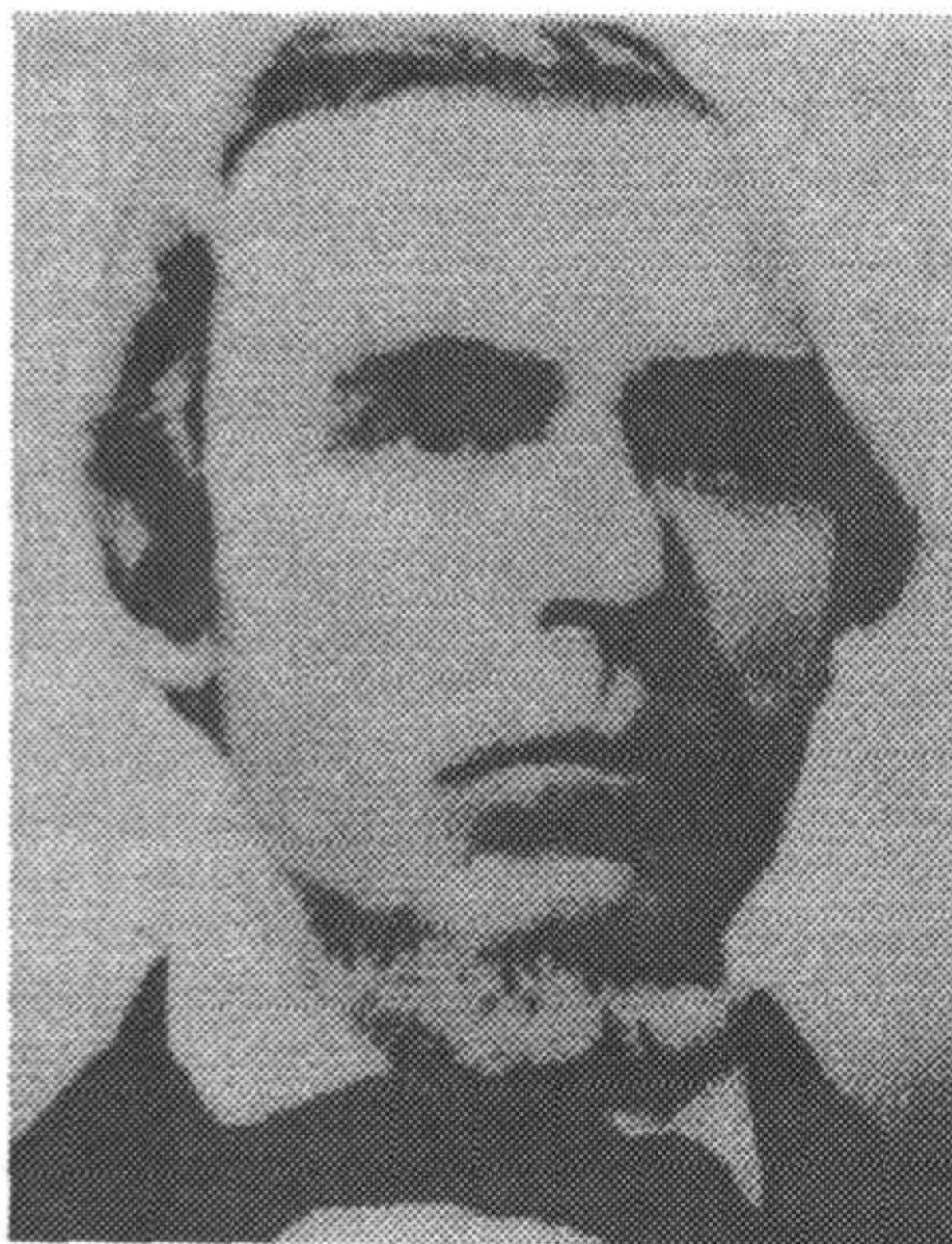
-
- 1 Jane McDaniel's first son, Alma, born six weeks before John's marriage to Jane, was considered and treated as John Stoker's own son. Family tradition says that Alma's father was not interested in the Mormon religion and John adopted Alma after his marriage to Jane.
 - 2 Eunice Stoker Southwick, "John Stoker."

dustries as a way to remain protected from the boom bust cycles of business. As early as March 12, 1869 the Co-operative Mercantile Institution of Bountiful was formed with Jesse's father, John Stoker, president. In 1873 a two story brick building was built to house the co-op's store.

In 1874 Brigham Young was convinced that the conditions were right for establishing united orders throughout the church. By the end of the year, over two hundred united orders were established in the Mormon settlements, including settlements in Idaho, Nevada, and Arizona. A month before Jesse was born a branch of the United Order was formed in the Bountiful with Anson Call as president, and John Stoker as one of two vice-presidents. Many non-Mormons saw these ventures as monopolies designed to bankrupt any competitors who were not of the faith. An era of distrust was growing.³ For the most part, these orders did not endure. Many were abandoned by 1877.⁴

Not all the distrust in Bountiful should be blamed on the Mormons. There were unscrupulous men who came in on the rails and attempted to chisel any money, goods, or services from the trusting local population. Bishop John Stoker tried to protect the members of his congregation. Six months before Jesse was born, the bishop had taken action to discourage one such individual, who posing as a school teacher, was taking advantage of the Bountiful people. One of the bishop's stalwart members, Thomas Briggs, wrote:

On the 26th of February 1874, the Bishop



Bishop John Stoker

[John Stoker] came to my home, very early in the morning, and wanted me to go down to the depot with him, as we had a Gentile school teacher, by the name of Wilkins, who had been borrowing money, and getting all that he could, without paying for it. He had also taken things to the depot at night, to be shipped away, which did not belong to him.

After some little talk with him, we agreed to let him go, as many of the people, who were now in office, have said there is no law for a Mormon. We hired Jaren Tolman to teach in his stead, and these were very troublesome times.⁵

The Mormon control was slipping

A most revealing notion that should be underlined in Brigg's account was "...we agreed to let him go, as many of the people, who were now in office, have said there is no law for a Mormon." The courts were in the process of being taken out of the Mormons' hands. The government of the United States had declared war on the Mormon practice of polygamy. With the enactment of the Poland Law in June 1874, the United States government repealed the Utah statutes that had created the Territorial Marshal and Attorney General, offices that had administered much of the territory's legal work. The matters of the court were now placed in the lap of federal authorities who were not sympathetic to Mormon interests. This was the scene when

3 Leslie Foy, *The City Bountiful*, pp. 141-142.

4 *Church History in the Fulness of Time*, prepared by the Church Educational System. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989. pp. 403-404.

5 *History of Thomas Briggs*, Provo: J. Grant Stevenson. p. 59.

Jesse was born.

A large family circle helps in time of need

At home Jesse was surrounded by many people and his home was a hive of activity. He grew and was loved, tended by his mother and family members. Sometimes Jesse's Aunt Harriet, John Stoker's second wife, dropped by and showed interest in the family. More remote was John's first wife, 65-year-old Jane McDaniel and members of her family who were all adults, many with families of their own. Increasingly, Jesse's ailing father would put in appearances.

The fact that John Stoker was failing in his health is evident from the March 1, 1875 minutes of the county court. Over the years the court had routinely assigned John Stoker to be the water master over the North Kanyon ward. On this date the court provided him with four assistants, Sydney B. Kent, Charles W. Mann, John Moss, and Thomas Briggs, to ease his work. Furthermore, at the October 5, 1875 session, the court remitted \$8.96 of John's county taxes and \$2.99 of his territorial taxes. Such acts of charity were given those families that were in distress. The fact that John was appointed water master without any assistants at the Court's March 6, 1876 meeting, suggests that John had recovered some of his health. At this same meeting Jesse's half-brother, David Stoker, was appointed a term as road supervisor in District 2. At the February 9, 1877 meeting the Court appointed David Stoker to fulfill the vacancy in the office of justice of peace in Bountiful⁶

On May 13, 1877 more than two months before Jesse's third birthday, his mother gave birth to his sister, Harriet Eunice. The baby was probably given the names of two people close to her mother, Jane Allen. The first was Janes's her sister wife, Harriet Susan Willis Stoker, then her sister, Eunice Clarissa Allen Wood. Jesse's mother never recovered from the child's birth. She lingered nearly three weeks after Jesse's third birthday before she died on August 5, 1877. The baby followed on August 23, just six days before the death of Brigham Young, the Lion of the Lord, who died after a week's illness. A

bewildered Jesse observed his father mourning for those he loved.

Harriet Susan Stoker became the mother figure in Jesse's life. His own sister, 17-year-old Mary Ann, must have mothered him as well. His brothers, Henry and Lorenzo, showed Jesse how to climb trees, herd cows, and gather wood for fires in the home. Most vividly etched in Jesse's memory was the association of his father, John Stoker. Jesse's daughter, Jane, wrote:

My father talked of a close association for the next four years between his father and himself. His father took him with him as he visited in the homes of his other two wives and their children as they were still living in polygamy. He remembered well a pair of red boots bought him by his father. These were envied by his older brothers and sisters.⁷

Jesse and his father, John Stoker

The old work horse, John Stoker, was brought back into church leadership. On December 1, 1878, under the hands of John Taylor and Apostle Franklin D. Richards, John Stoker was ordained a member of the High Council of the Davis Stake of Zion and a Patriarch which offices he held at the time of his death. Often John left his family to visit the wards in the Davis stake on his new assignments.

In February 1879 diphtheria became such a threat to the lives of children like Jesse that members of the settlement were advised not to hold any meetings or gather in any public places. At one time in 1879, fifty families in Bountiful needed help.⁸ Although no longer responsible to the members of his ward as a bishop and clearly showing the signs of diminished health, John would be counted on to direct members of his family to assist the poor when needed. Sometimes there was a fine line between who was poor. At sometime or another, most everyone in Bountiful was in need. As a patriarch, John gave blessing to many in the Davis stake to give them solace in their lives.

6 Davis County, Utah, *Court Records, 1852-1900*. Family History Film #0484601.

7 Jane Stoker Venable, "The Story of the Life of Jesse Stoker as Remembered by Jane Stoker Venable."

8 Leslie Foy, *The City Bountiful*, pp. 144-145.

The death of Jesse's father

In the spring of 1881 the boy, Jesse, was with his father near the side of the Stoker family's old well when the 64-year-old man suffered a stroke, rendering him helpless. Crying for help, Jesse ran to the house. Within minutes the speechless man was brought into the house and placed on a bed. News of his condition was sent to the elders of the church who were requested to come immediately to administer to the stricken bishop. One of the summoned men, Thomas Briggs, wrote on April 8, 1881:

Brother Davis came to me to go with him to see ex-Bishop John Stoker, who was very ill. We concluded to change his clothing, as we did not think he would last long. We administered to him, and he seemed to have something to say to us, but was too weak to speak. We asked the Lord if it was his will to give him his speech, so that he might speak to us once more.

Jesse's father had the prayers and faith of his neighbors. Members of the Stoker family fasted and prayed for his recovery. The bed-ridden John Stoker did not recover, but lingered for an additional two months as he was nursed along day-by-day. He was aware that his 21-year-old daughter and Jesse's sister, Mary Ann, had plans to marry James Hack. On May 19, 1881 the two were married and started a household of their own. It's doubtful that the father of the bride attended the wedding. John Stoker was fighting for his life.

On John's last day alive, Thomas Briggs recorded in his diary:

I called to see Brother Stoker on my way to the City, which was about 3 a.m., the usual

time for us to go to town with our loads. Brother Stoker was asleep and resting well. When I arrived home at 7 p.m. he was still breathing, but shortly after he died. He was one of the oldest bishops in the church.⁹



Harriet Susan Willis, John Stoker's second wife

John Stoker died on June 11, 1881, at his home in Bountiful, Utah. His obituary in the *Deseret News* reads as follows:

His funeral services were held at the Tabernacle, Bountiful, June 18, at half-past 10 o'clock. On the stand were Counselor Layton, of the Davis Stake, Bishop William Brown, of South Bountiful, Bishop Muir, of West Bountiful, Bishop Hess, of Farmington, several of the High Councilors of the Stake and Elders from various parts of the country, while the Tabernacle was filled with sympathizing friends from miles around. Addresses were delivered by Counselor Layton, Elder Galbraith from Kaysville, Bishops Hess, Brown and others. Appropriate anthems were sung by the Bountiful

Choir, Edward Thomas as leader. The services being over, the large congregation viewed the remains of the deceased, and between four and five hundred persons followed them to the Bountiful Cemetery.

Without their father or mother, Henry, Lorenzo, and Jesse, were orphans, however not in the forbidding sense. Their father's second wife, Harriet Susan Willis, opened her arms to take them into her life. Five years earlier, Harriet's only son, John Stoker, had died at nine years of age. Harriet's only daughter, 18-year-old Katherene, married Theodore Edwin Wood on July 28, 1881. Harriet was left without any children bustling under her roof. The 16, 14, and 7-year-old sons of John Stoker and Jane Allen were

⁹ "The Diary of Thomas Briggs," *Our Utah Heritage*, compiled by Kate Carter, Vol. 3, p. 300.

welcomed. Henry, the oldest of the boys, was slow and rather different from many of those his age. He needed special attention.

Jesse earns his keep

Like the other children of his time, Jesse was expected to help with the chores around the home and farm. He learned how to feed the livestock, to gather eggs and water the chickens and to fetch the wood and kindling into the house for building fires for heat and cooking. He probably carried out the ashes from the fireplaces and stoves. During the cold, winter months, Jesse attended school and learned to read and to do numbers. When the weather turned warm, Jesse and many of the other boys in Bountiful rounded up the village cattle and took them to the hills. His daughter, Jane, wrote:

As a boy he herded cows on the hills east of Bountiful...for some of the neighbors and for this service he received a small amount of pay. Many times he told me of a lunch he carried with him that consisted of fresh bread and a piece of homemade cheese. Other boys of the community did the same kind of work and they played together on the hills at the same time keeping a close watch on the cattle so they wouldn't stray away. Times were hard and money was scarce so it was not felt a necessity to buy shoes in the warm weather. They trailed the cows bare-footed and many times had blisters and needles in their feet from the wild prickly pears that grew on the hill slopes. He laughed as he told of an old widow woman who spoke broken English because she would always say he would get pay when she came from peddling.¹⁰

Another daughter, Verda, said the boys often would take the cattle into the hills south of Bountiful where the boys would cross the ridge and look down into Salt Lake City. They could see the activity of the workman building the temple.

When the boys brought the cattle back to Bountiful, the owners would come to the corrals and take

their cows back their home quarters to be milked. The streets were often dusty and marred by gullies made by flooding water. According to Jesse's history written by Granddaughter, Ora Stoker Whittier, the boys herding cattle were rewarded as follows:

There were about 100 cows in the community herd and the boys were paid about 50 cents a month for each cow. This would amount to \$50 a month. Each boy's share was \$12.50 a month.¹¹

The pains of being in the lesser family of a polygamist

Unfortunately part of the folklore handed down in Jesse's family or at least expressed by his son, Lee Hammon Stoker, was that members of John Stoker's first family distanced themselves from the children of John's two younger wives. Snide comments referring to Jane Allen were said to have been made. One that passed down through the family referred to Jesse's mother in the following derogatory way, "When's the sow going to have another litter?"

Apparently Jesse had been teased about his position in a tenuous polygamous family. Probably much of this teasing was the typical banter by his fellow playmates aimed at seeing how mad he would become, and what tantrums he might make for their amusement. That was obviously the first seed planted in Jesse's mind.

Other seeds probably included the United States government efforts to choke out the practice of polygamy in the 1870's with court cases against no less a figure than Brigham Young. The Supreme court heard the case of Brigham's secretary, George Reynolds, in 1879 and upheld the judgment that had been brought against him for unlawful cohabitation. The passage of the Edmunds Law in 1882 gave the courts stronger teeth to prosecute the unfortunate polygamists. It also disfranchised them from voting or holding political office.

Thomas Briggs reported the tension that was caused in Bountiful:

Many of our brethren had been taken to jail, and the women and children did not have all that they needed; but none in our settle-

10 Jane Stoker Venable, "The Story of the Life of Jesse Stoker as Remembered by Jane Stoker Venable."

11 Ora Stoker Whittier, "Life Sketch of Jesse Stoker and Lettie Matilda Hammon Stoker." May 1978.

ment had to go hungry though many a night we did not know what our breakfast would amount to.¹²

On October 15, 1883, Jesse's half-brother, 39-year-old David Stoker, appeared before the county

those cases out of the probate judges' jurisdiction. Another seed that may have been planted in Jesse's mind about John Stoker's first family not being supportive to the plight of the John's other two families may have stemmed from the age of those



Levi Byram Hammon family, 1888

Back row: Polly Adeline (faded out) and Jane **Middle row:** Levi Byram, Levi Derlin, and Martha Jane **Front row:** Lettie Matilda, Amasa Marion, and Rhoda Luann.

court to be commissioned as a probate judge.¹³ Before the Poland act became law in 1874, Utah probate judges held great power in hearing the cases initiated against polygamists. The Poland Act took

half-brothers and sisters, who were so much older. Obviously over time, members of that family tried to gain more respectability and as such they may not have embraced the children of the John's lesser

12 "Thomas Briggs Diary," *Our Pioneer Heritage*, compiled by Kate Carter, Vol. 3.

13 Davis County, Utah, *Court Records, 1852-1900*. Family History Film #0484601.

wives. Much of this action was, no doubt, unintentional, but rather came from a benign neglect to keeping in touch as often happens in large families as the children cut the family ties to rear their own families. Unfortunately, the effect on young Jesse's mind created rather hostile feelings toward those whom he should have felt a kinship.

The Stokers meet the Hammon family

Sometime before 1888, Lorenzo Stoker, met Miss Polly Hammon who was visiting some relatives in Bountiful.¹⁴ She was probably at the home of William Prescott whose wife, Martha Jane Hammon, was a sister to Polly's father, Levi Byram Hammon. Polly's cousin, Elizabeth Alice Prescott, was the same age as Polly, both being born in 1873. Nearly ten children lived under the Prescott roof.

During the polygamy attacks that raged between 1883 and 1888, Polly's father sought to help another of his sisters, Luann Bird Hammon, who was the polygamous wife of Henry Manning. As a Hammon history tells it:

Many times the officers of the law forced Luann to take her children and hide anywhere she could, while they searched the house for her. Upon one occasion while she was living in Hooper, she fled to the home of her brother, Lee Hammon. He took her and her children in a wagon box under a

load of hay to Bountiful to the home of Martha Prescott to prevent the law from taking her. They finally caught up with her husband and he served six month in the penitentiary.¹⁵

Jesse's years with the sheep



Lorenzo Stoker and Polly Adeline Hammon

Jesse begins tending sheep

It is improbable that Jesse was aware of his brother, Lorenzo's, new found girl friend and the romance he was involved with. Since he was thirteen, just months of Lorenzo's meeting Polly, Jesse had been working for Bountiful neighbors, John Moss and Orin Hatch, who had offered him a job as a *camp jack*¹⁶ and novice shepherd in their Moss Hatch Sheep Company. In 1891 their sons and other relatives incorporated the

business into the Deseret Livestock Company which became the fifth largest land and livestock company in the United States.¹⁷

Jesse was getting started on the ground floor of the burgeoning sheep industry. At its peak the Deseret Land and Livestock Company was to run 65,000 head of sheep and own 220,000 acres of land. The young sheep industry was growing remarkably. By 1889 more than a million head of sheep were on the

14 Jane Stoker Venable, "The Story of the Life of Jesse Stoker as Remembered by Jane Stoker Venable."

15 Frank L. Manning and Ethel Hammon McEntire, "Luann Bird Hammon Manning," *Levi Hammon and Polly Chapman Bybee: Early Utah Pioneers*, compiled by Betsy Robena H. Greenwell. Kaysville, UT: Inland Printing Co., [CA 1869] p. 351.

16 According to Lee Hammon Stoker, Jesse's son, a campjack was a boy who drove the sheep wagon, did some of the cooking and generally ran errands, and other jobs the sheepmen ordered.

17 Information obtained from the pamphlet, "Bountiful Cemetery Centennial Historical Walking Tour," September 25th and 26th, 1992, p. 15.

Utah ranges. Before the turn of the century this number would grow four fold.

One of the important discoveries that the sheepmen had made was that Utah's dry deserts had enough precipitation to make them ideal winter pastures for the sheep, which ate snow and thrived on the desert brush.¹⁸ Unfortunately, the winters could also be deadly, Jesse's son, Leslie Willis Stoker, told of his father's experience of loosing several thousand head of sheep out near the Nevada line one year. One day during the winter months a drenching rain fell. During the night a cold front came in, freezing the sheep to the ground so firmly that many of those which were not frozen, were incapacitated so they could get to feed or water.

Lorenzo gets meat for people in Bountiful

Lee Hammon Stoker, Jesse's son, says that Lorenzo Stoker and others from Bountiful drove wagon into northern Utah around the Park Valley mountains where they hunted deer to provide meat for their families. The men brought back a wagon load of dressed-out deer to provide venison for their family larders. Much of the 1880's were difficult for the families in Bountiful, whose polygamous men and women were on the underground, trying to escape the federal marshals, and other authorities.



Lorenzo and Jesse Stoker

Lorenzo gets married

Lorenzo courted Polly Hammon while Jesse was away with the sheep. He married Polly on July 16, 1888 in Hooper, Utah. Less than a year later, on February 28, 1889, they were sealed in an LDS temple. Their first child, Clarissa Jane Stoker, was born on September 18, 1889 in South Hooper, near Polly's parents residence. Within months of their baby's birth, the young couple moved to Preston, Oneida County, Idaho. During February 1890 the baby was stricken with erysipelas.

Polly's mother, Martha Jane Belnap, responding to the needs of her eldest daughter's plight, caught the train to Preston. She bundled her own year-old daughter, Betsy Robena, for the trip and brought 7-year-old Lettie Matilda as well. Snowbound at Colliston, the train stalled until crews were able to dig it out three days later. The train arrived in Preston at 1 A.M. Because she would not think of staying in a saloon overnight, Martha, carrying Robena, in her skirts with Lettie trailing behind, trudged through the snow drifts to Lorenzo's home. Unfortunately, the sick baby, Clarissa Jane, died on March 9, 1890, within the week of her grandmother's arrival.¹⁹

Jesse finds a home with Lorenzo

In 1891, when Jesse was seventeen, he was faced with another sadness. Harriet Susan Willis Stoker, the woman who had taken the place of his mother, was taken ill. Jesse left the sheep camp and came back to Bountiful to help care for her. Within a few months, she died.²⁰ Jesse returned to his work with

18 Charles S. Peterson, *Utah: A History*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1984. pp. 124, 126-127.

19 Levi Hammon and Polly Chapman Bybee: *Early Utah Pioneers*, pp. 208, 210-211.

the sheep.

Often Jesse's work took him through Box Elder County where he crossed the paths of his mother's family, which included Jesse's grandfather, Jude Allen, and several of his children who were living in Calls Fort, present-day Honeyville, a half dozen miles north of Brigham City, nestled at the foot of the Wasatch Mountains. Other times he met Allen cousins who were living at Rockland, Idaho. Many of these Allen relatives had stopped at the Stoker home in Bountiful.

The closest family relationship developed between Jesse and his brother, Lorenzo. It's likely that Jesse visited Lorenzo and Polly's home in Preston when short respites from his job were given him. Lettie, Jesse's wife, furthermore, mentioned, "In the winter of '89 he went to stay with Ren and Polly in Preston and in the spring went back to herd sheep."²¹

Lorenzo and Polly were blessed with another daughter, Leona Pearl, on March 20, 1891. Jesse enjoyed his role as an uncle when visiting. Jesse's sister, Mary Ann Stoker and her husband, James Hack, had several children, and, according to Eunice Stoker Southwick, all of her children died shortly after their births. These deaths brought on a spell of gloom to Mary Ann so pervasive that she was eventually incapacitated.²²

The probate of the John Stoker estate

Over a decade lapsed from Jesse and Lorenzo's father's death until his estate was probated. On January 9, 1893 David Stoker petitioned the Davis County Probate Court to become the administrator of the estate. On January 23 Probate Judge Hector W. Haight ordered that David take the oath and file a bond of \$1,000 to act as the administrator.

That same day the Court assigned Joseph L. Holbrook, Thomas Briggs, and Jed Stringham to appraise the late John Stoker's estate. On February 9, 1893 the appraisers delivered the following report:

Inventory and Appraisement

Cash that has come into the hands of the administrators, none.

Real Estate:

All of Lot 3 in Block 45 Plat "A" Bountiful Townsite Survey valued at the sum of \$500.00

100 rods of Lot 4 in Block 21 Plat "A" Bountiful Townsite Survey valued at the sum of \$500.00

21 acres of land or thereabouts in Sec 23, T2 N.R. 1W \$425.00

15 acres of land in Block Plat Bountiful Townsite Survey valued at the sum of \$1,875.00

[Total] \$3,300.00²³

In December 1893 James Hepworth and Peter Olsen "presented and filed their petitions praying that a decree of this court [Davis County probate court] be made authorizing and requiring the administrator ...to convey to them certain real estate belonging to" the estate.²⁴ David Stoker reported that a total amount of \$3,434.90 had come into his hands as the administrator and the \$74.30 had been expended, leaving a balance of \$3,360.60.

On July 15, 1894 Lorenzo Stoker assigned his step-brother and half-brother, Alma and David Stoker, his interests in the estate. Furthermore, on July 19, 1894 he filed a petition to be appointed the Guardian of Henry Stoker, Mary Ann Hack and Jesse Stoker,

...the same being heirs of John Stoker, deceased, and interested in the estate of said deceased and it appearing to the court that said Henry Stoker and Mary Ann Hack are incompetent persons, and Jesse Stoker, a minor, and said heirs having presented this court their request in writing for the appointment of said Lorenzo Stoker...²⁵

On July 30, 1894 the court divided John Stoker's

20 Jane Stoker Venable, "The Story of the Life of Jesse Stoker as Remembered by Jane Stoker Venable."

21 Lettie Matilda Hammon Stoker, "History written by Lettie Stoker in her own handwriting about 1944," photo copy in possession of LeOra McCrary, Farr West, Utah.

22 Conversation with Jim Stoker.

23 Davis County, Utah, Probate Court Records, Book E, 1991-1896, p. 163. FHL #0484392.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 218.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 221.

estate among his heirs, except for Lorenzo and Catherine Stoker Wood, who had given their rights to Alma and David. Jesse and his sister, Mary Ann Hack, were recipients of a parcel of Bountiful land.

Counting sheep

Jesse advanced in his employment. According to the later memory of his wife, Lettie:

Around 1892 he started to work for James Hamblin and Thomas Mercer. They had sheep. It wasn't long after this until he was their forman. They had several herds. They had them grazing land out in and around Soda Springs, Idaho [and wintered them near] Tremonton.²⁶

By the time of the birth of Lorenzo's first son, Lorenzo Earl Stoker, born on September 16, 1893, Lorenzo had returned with his family to live in Hooper. Lettie tells of how Jesse and Lorenzo got into a sheep business partnership.

[James Hamblin and Thomas Mercer]... became acquainted with Wren at this time. As Jim Hamblin had a 160 acer of land at Roy. He decided to Rent this place to Wren after a summer or two.

Jim and Thomas decided to split their pardner ship. So Jess and Wren decided to go into pardnders. So they leased the farm also the sheep on share basis. This was in 1894.

On May 9, 1990 while traveling in a pickup from Washington to Utah in the vicinity of Blue Creek before coming into Tremonton, Utah, Jesse's son, Lee Hammon Stoker, pointed out to Jimmie Stoker landmarks familiar to his father when herding sheep. According to Lee, his father spent a lot of time in the Salt Lake valley with the sheep when they were lambing in the late winter, quite often herding them in an area on the west side of the Great Salt Lake.

When spring came and the lambs were strong enough, the men moved the flocks north around the lake and into the foothills. Lee told of a spring near the Thiokol turn off where Jesse used to water the

animals. Later in his life while traveling with his family to Burley, Idaho, Jesse pointed out this spring to his children and because they were thirsty, he stopped to let them drink. The kids took one taste of the water, just enough to slake their thirst. It tasted of sulfur. Jess chuckled. His sheep were thirsty enough to drink the water, but his children were not.

Closer to Bothwell, Lee pointed out another spring which Jess had called Blind Spring which although small was also used in water the band of sheep.

Lee said the sheep were pastured and driven from the foothills north of Tremonton towards Lava Hot Springs and along the Blackfoot River leading to the summer pastures near Star Valley, Wyoming. At the end of the summer, after the lambs were grass fattened, the herds were moved back down from the mountains. The lambs were separated from the flock, loaded in railroad cars and sent east to the market. The hoo was then driven south back to the familiar Salt Lake Valley. The bucks were put in with the ewes during the autumn so that the spring cycle of lambing would begin the following year.

It was probably the spring of 1897 when the Stoker brothers made their arrangements with the sheepmen. Lorenzo's daughter, Fuchsia, who was born on October 28, 1896 in Hooper, wrote:

When I was about six months old the family moved to Roy, Weber Co., Utah, where they rented the old Hamblin home on Cousin Row. There, mother bore Jesse Lee, Goldie Marie, and Betsy Motlena. We had some happy days together. ...At this time my Uncle Jesse Stoker, Father's brother, lived with us also.²⁷

Lorenzo's granddaughter, Armenta Stoker Higley, tells of one incident that her father, Earl, experienced with his Uncle Jess:

One cold winter night while Jesse was staying at Lorenzo's home, he had been out and was thoroughly chilled when he returned home. He was to sleep with his nephew, Earl. Earl was hogging the middle of the bed, and Jess tried several times to get him

26 Lettie Matilda Stoker, "History written by Lettie Stoker in her own hand writing, January 10, 1949." Photo copy in possession of LeOra McCrary, Farr West, Utah.

27 Fuchsia Erma Stoker Jones, "Fond Memories of My Dear Mother, Polly Adeline Hammon Stoker," *Levi Hammon and Polly Chapman Bybee: Early Utah Pioneers*, p. 211.

to move over. He was too sound asleep. He finally said in a loud voice, "If you don't move over, I will go downstairs and get a hot iron off the stove and burn you right in the middle of the back." Jess proceeded to get undressed and took off his shoes and socks, then placed his cold foot right in the middle of Earl's back. Earl screamed, "Ma, Uncle Jess is burning me with a hot iron." He finally awakened and realized what was going on. They all had a good laugh.²⁸

Lettie Matilda Hammon's early years

Quite often Polly's younger sister, Lettie, visited her sister's home in Roy. After all, the distance she had to travel was not too great. In April 1894, Lettie and Polly's father, Levi Byram Hammon, had moved his family from Hooper to Roy. Prior to that, his family had lived temporarily in the Hamblin home for a short time in the fall of 1893, the same place in which Lorenzo and Polly were living in 1897.²⁹

Lettie's early responsibilities were centered in helping with the chores outside while her older two

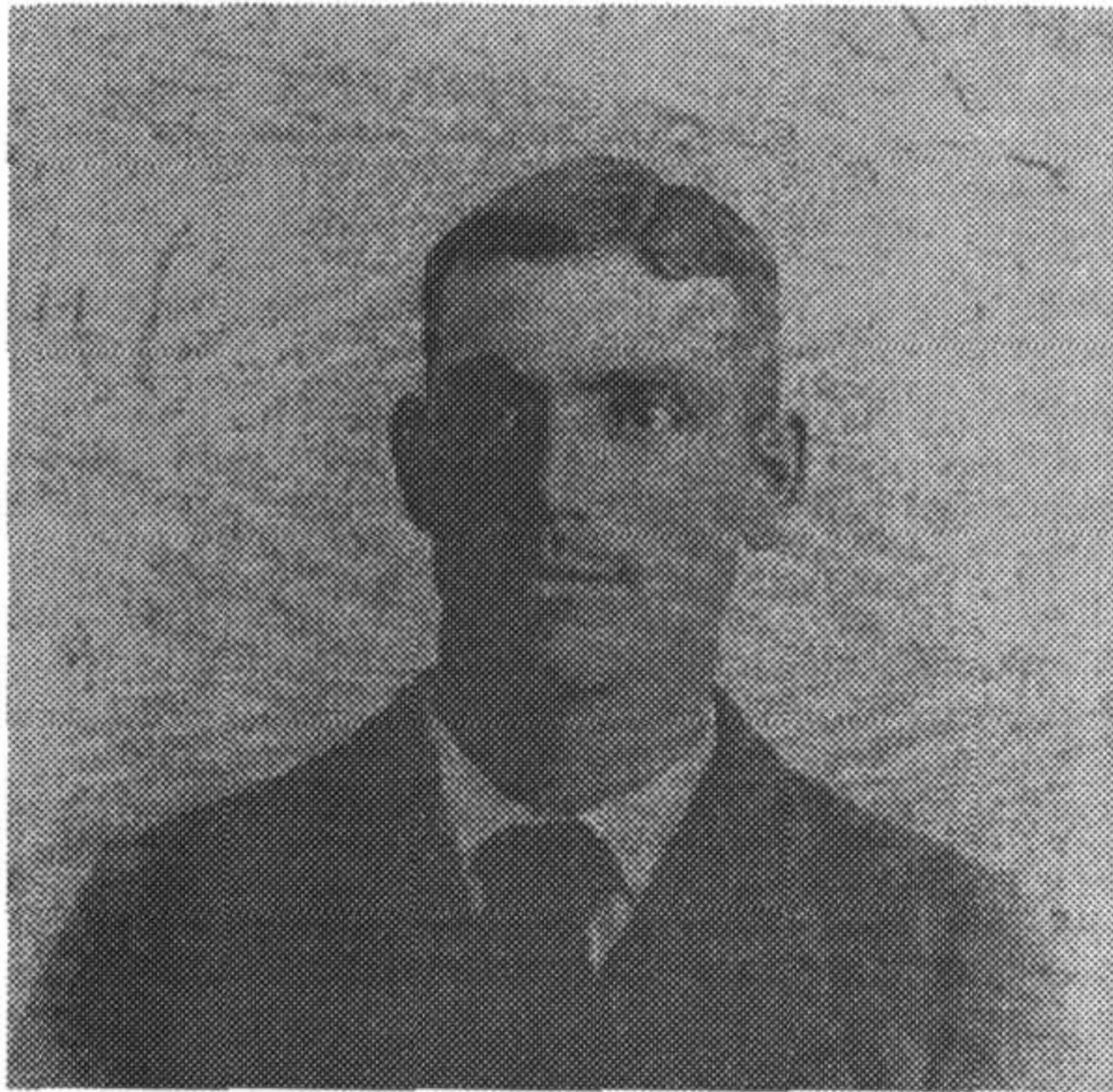
sisters, Polly before she married in 1888, and Janie before she married in December 1894, often did the housework. Lettie helped her older brother, Derlin, and younger brother, Amasa, with their chores, herding the sheep and cows. They fed and watered the pigs and chickens. She worked with horses, harnessing them and hitching them at an early age.

In 1894 before her family moved to Roy, 11-year-old, Lettie, and her 9 year old brother, Amasa, were sent from South Hooper with a team of horses to their father's farm in Roy, a distance of about 5 miles to plow. They drove a wagon hitched to the team with an extra horse tied behind. In the wagon was food for themselves, and hay for the horses. Her granddaughter described their work as follows:

They used a sulky plow—a plow that had two wheels with one

plow shear between the wheels and a seat above the shear for one person. It was drawn by three horses. The plowing was started on the outside of the field and the rows were made round and around until the center of the field was reached.³⁰

The dresses Lettie wore were made from home-spun wool under which she wore several cotton petticoats. This was the attire she wore to do chores



Jesse Stoker

28 Verda Stoker Nelson, "Uncle Jess Stoker's Night Out," *Stoker Stories*, The John Michael Stoker Family, July 26, 1979. In a 1995 conversation, Verda said that the author of the story should be Armenta Stoker Higley.

29 Betsy Robena Hammon Greenwell, "The Life Story of Betsy Robena Hammon Greenwell," *Levi Hammon and Polly Chapman Bybee: Early Utah Pioneers*, p. 251.

30 Ora Stoker Whittier, *Ibid.*

and work outside. During the winter she wore long stockings and long underwear. During the summer she often went barefoot and her feet, like those most of the children, were callused and toughened by the heat and rocks.

Lettie had started school in South Hooper where she finished four grades. In the fall of 1894, she started the fifth grade in the one roomed Roy Grade School.

Her sister, Robena, described the school experience:

It was a little blue school with three windows on each side and with the double doors on the south end. It was heated with a "pot-bellied stove" in the center with long stove pipes leading to the north. The older school boys carried water in a bucket from Edward Bell's surface well for us to drink. It was set on a table in the corner of our school room with a dipper in it. We all drank out of the same dipper. There was also a wash basin with soap and a towel nearby if anyone wished to wash. We had no fear of germs in those days and we didn't seem to have too much sickness.

All eight grades were taught in the same room; everyone recited their lessons when it was their turn. Perhaps it is hard to believe but there was little confusion. The kindergarten class sat at a long table up close to the teacher's desk with little chairs. We learned to count by counting little beads strung on a wire frame. We used colored toothpicks to learn to add and subtract; they were of different colors. There was a large chart which had pages, and the teacher would turn the pages and we learned words by the pictures on the page. The face of the clock was on one sheet with movable hands and we soon learned to tell the time.³¹

If fine coal was burned, the stove would occasion-

ally explode, frightening both teacher and students. The students sat at desks placed in a square around the stove.³² Lettie graduated from the 8th grade in 1898.

After her graduation, Lettie went to Ogden where she stayed with her Aunt Louann Hammon Manning. Lettie and Louann's daughter, Polly, worked at the Troy Laundry. Lettie ironed white shirts. These shirts were hard to iron. First the irons themselves were made from heavy cast iron. These were heated on a stove and had to be changed when they cooled off. Second, the shirts often had many frills and the collars and fronts were heavily starched. The work was hot and tiring, but Lettie became proficient at the work, although she didn't enjoy it.

Jesse's courtship of Lettie

With his presence in Lorenzo's home, Lettie regarded Jesse as just another of the family. One day a niece of the Stoker brothers and a granddaughter of Harriet Susan Willis, Leual Wood, the daughter of Katherine Stoker Wood, was also visiting. As teen-agers, Lettie and Leual put their heads together and decided to play a practical joke on Jesse. After work Jesse had gone to bed to rest for the next days work. The girls sneaked into his room and stole his trousers. They sewed the pant legs so that he could not get his feet through them.³³

Practical jokes must have gotten Lettie the attention from Jesse, 9 years her senior. Lettie describes their courtship as follows:

then in 1899 Jesse was home [from tending sheep and shepherders] during harvest time. Father had a header. We had the headers, also the thrashers, quite a lot of men. This was the summer that Glen was born, with Mother not feeling very well. We had a hired girl named Annie Fowler helping cook for the men.

One night while there, Jesse came in where we were doing the dishes. Of course I thought he had stayed to see her. So when

31 Betsy Robena Hammon Greenwell, "The Life Story of Betsy Robena Hammon Greenwell," *Levi Hammon and Polly Chapman Bybee: Early Utah Pioneers*, p. 252.

32 Rose and Ida Dalton, *Roy, Utah: Our Home Town, 1873-1918*. Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1968. p. 123.

33 Conversation with Lee Hammon Stoker at his home in Othello, Washington on February 6, 1992.

the dishes were through I went to bed and left them alone. I didn't think whom he had in mind. He went back to the sheep. He wrote to her all summer. She told me they were going to get married. She put up her fruit.

When he came home in the fall and asked me to go to the show with him, I just thought it was a joke. So I went over to town to my aunts. I don't know if he came after me or found I wasn't home. But the next day my cousin and I were going down town. Who should we meet but Jake Russell and him coming up the street.

I could not go back. I was ashamed to meet him so I just walked straight ahead. What did he do, but just step in front of me.. I just turned around him and never spoke.

He said that he made up his mind that he would marry me for sure—which he did. This was the last time I saw him for about six months.

Polly got sick. I went over to stay with her. I never mentioned this to anyone as I knew Mother and Father would have gave me the dickens for such a trick. I was out in the kitchen working. Polly was in bed. When I turned around there stood Jesse. He just gave me a sneer. I was around there for three or four days when he grabbed me, whirled me around and asked, "Why so high and mighty?"

I felt about as little as I could. I didn't have any excuse for acting the way I did. I

had never in my life felt like he had any interest in me. He had always been like a big brother to me. In fact, I didn't think I was in love with him. But I soon found that I was. I was never sorry.

I never did find out if he had asked the other girl to marry him. He would never say. If he did, it was a dirty way to do. I never had the chance to ask her, but she got married before we did.³⁴

The wedding

On July 10, 1901 Jesse Stoker married Lettie Matilda Hammon at the home of her parents in Roy Utah. Bishop George Kendell of South Weber performed the ceremony. Lettie's youngest sister, Ethel, remembered the wedding that took place when she was five years old as follows: One of the happy events which took place in my younger life was the marriage of Lettie and Jesse Stoker at the home of my parents. How sweet Let looked

in her white ruffled dress and it was my biggest thrill. It had ruffles from sleeves to hem of the skirt.

Everyone seemed to have a wonderful time. I recall how much fun my brother Derlin and George Kendall had. I can still see Derlin take mother's old coffee mill and wind George up and then turn him loose to sing, dance and play the violin. George and his wife, Dell, sang and danced the cakewalk together.

That must have been about it, as I can only remember this and that everybody kissed Aunt Let.³⁵

At the time of their marriage, Jesse and his bride,



Lettie and Jesse at their wedding

34 Lettie Matilda Hammon Stoker, "History Written by Lettie Stoker in her own hand writing, January 10, 1949."

35 Ethel Hammon McEntire, "Ethel Hammon McEntire," *Levi Hammon and Polly Chapman Bybee*:

Lettie, fit the following physical description. Jesse had dark black hair, which was beginning to grey at the temples. Under heavy eyebrows, he had soft brown eyes. He weighed 160 lbs. and stood five foot eleven inches tall. He wore a size eleven shoe. His hands were short and thick; his fingers were short and seemed almost square. Lettie was of average build. She was 5 feet 7 inches tall and weighted 135 lbs. Her hair was a sandy blond and her eyes were blue.

The first decade in the Jesse Stoker family

The Stoker Brothers Sheep Company

Shortly after his wedding, Jesse returned to his business with the sheep. His young wife, Lettie, moved in with Lorenzo and Polly's family of four children, the oldest being ten years old. The brothers, Lorenzo and Jesse, having built up a large flock of sheep decided it was time to start their own Stoker brothers sheep operation. Lettie elaborated about this venture:

...James Hamblin died. Then Adam Patterson, Mrs. Hamblin's brother, took over the sheep. Jesse took our share [and] they, [Jess and Ren], started the Stoker Bro. Sheep [Company.] This was in 1901 the year Herman was born.³⁶

A newspaper article found in Jane Stoker Venable's possession states:

Roy— Lorenzo and his brother Jesse Stoker, sheep owners have leased the James Hamblin sheep ranch in Roy. Ren intends to spend most of his time at the ranch taking care of the sheep while Jesse herds the sheep on the range.

...Ren is married to Polly Adeline Hammon, a daughter of Levi Hammon, and Jesse is married to Lettie Matilda Hammon, sister to Ren's wife. The Stoker

brothers and their wives and families are welcomed by the residents of Roy. They will be an asset to the community.

While living at the Hamblin place in Roy, Lettie gave birth to her and Jesse's first son, Herman Deloss, on November 18, 1901. Polly gave birth to a daughter, Golda Marie, on June 9, 1902. There was plenty of work that the sisters shared. But for Lettie and Jesse, there was the hope of being together without the intrusions of others. As Lettie expressed it:

We had the sheep untill after Jane was born I decided if we had to live apart all the time it wasent worth it.³⁷

Jesse was delighted to have a family of his own. He was not content to be separated for long stretches of time from his loved ones. Plans were being made for Lorenzo and Jesse to become independent of their landlords. They were anxious of getting their own land.

Fortunately, the brothers got out of the sheep business at the right time. There were forces at work making obstacles to operating sheep. During the early years of the twentieth century, poor markets and the Forest Service grazing restrictions led to a reduction to the number of sheep raised in Utah. The Stoker brothers were able to get out of the business in a timely manner. About 1902 they bought 80 acres of sagebrush land located between 2300 and 2500 west on 5600 South and ran North to 5200 South.

A cemetery established

One of the first acts that the men performed was to turn a small plot in the northeast corner of Jesse's farm into a burial area. Later the men provided more than 5 acres of this area for a cemetery which in 1993 was named the Roy Stoker Memorial cemetery. This generosity stemmed from a desire for a fitting resting place for Lorenzo's deceased daughter, Clarissa Jane, who was interred in Preston. Fuchsia tells the story:

About the year 1901, Uncle Jesse Stoker and Dad purchased several acres of land east of the Roy County infirmary. Some

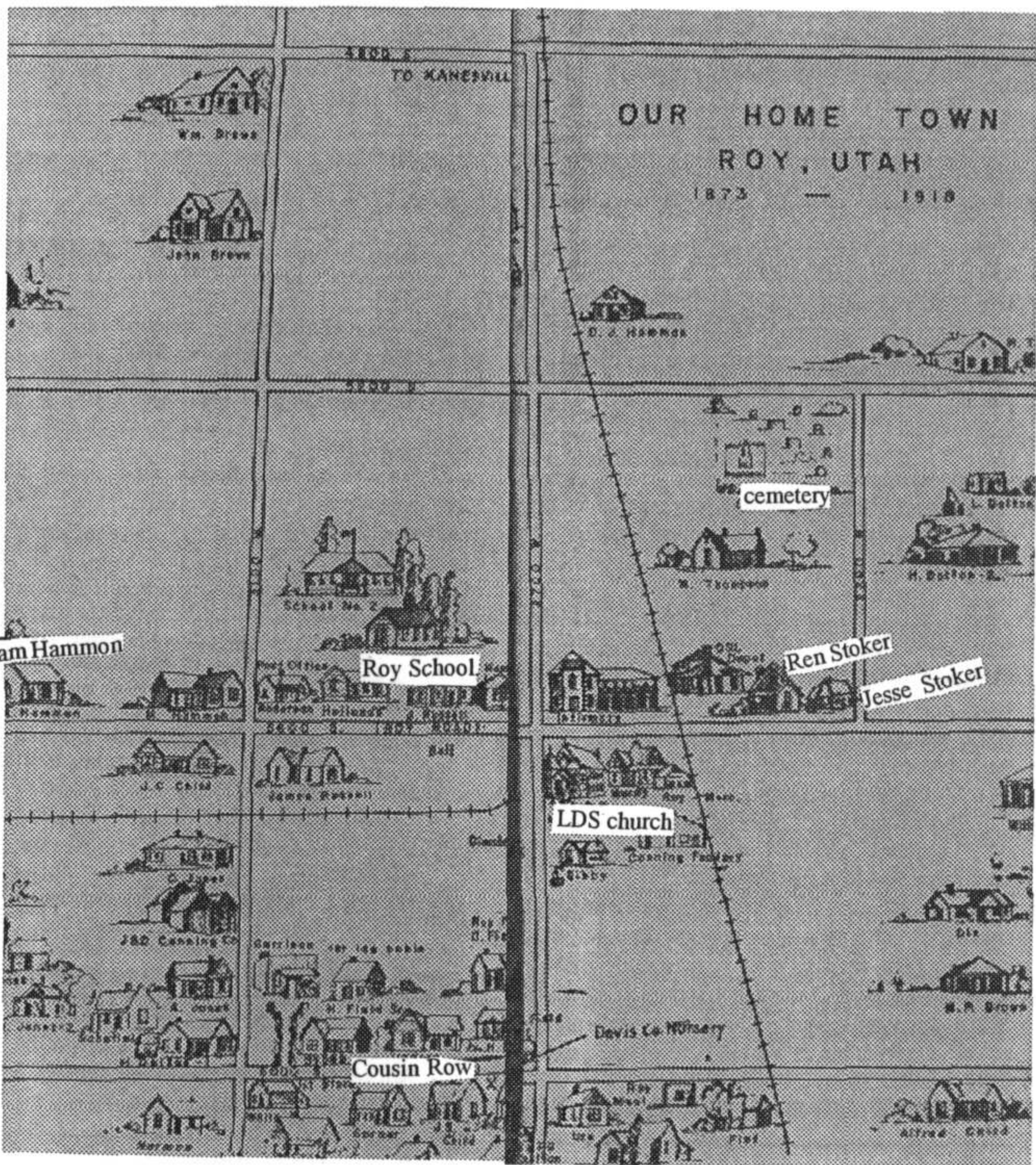
Early Utah Pioneers, p. 267.

36 Lettie Matilda Hammon Stoker, "History Written by Lettie Stoker in her own hand writing, January 10, 1949."

37 *Ibid.*

time later they sold some of the northeast corner to the town of Roy for a cemetery. By this time mother had decided to go to Preston and have little Clarissa Jane (her first born) removed to the Roy Cemetery.

...Mother took me with her and we left for Preston, Idaho, on the train. ... When we left to take her little remains back to Roy, I particularly remember how the rain poured down on the windows of the train. When



Map inside cover of Roy, Utah, Our Home Town

Aunt Robena and the children met us at the depot, it was also raining in Roy.

The little casket was put in the waiting room of the depot for a while and then Father, Mother, Dick Greenwell (Father's friend), and several others took the little casket up to the Roy cemetery and buried it. As near as I can remember, this was about the spring of 1902. My Little sister, Clarissa Jane, was the first person buried in the Roy cemetery. Father built a little white picket fence around her grave.³⁸

Farms with houses planted to orchards

Another newspaper clipping in the possession of Jane Stoker Venable covered the brothers' plans:

1903—Ren and Jesse Stoker have liquidated their sheep ranch and have purchased property near Weber County Infirmary. The property has been divided between the two brothers using the railroad track as the dividing line.

Jesse is building the first home east of the tracks and Ren is constructing the first home west of the tracks. The two properties will be planted almostly in orchards

Jesse and Lorenzo spent much of 1903 clearing the land they had acquired of sagebrush and putting in irrigation ditches. They made trips to the canyons to bring back boxelder tree which they planted for shade and as a windbreak. Lee Hammon Stoker reported that poplar trees were planted:

When Dad and Uncle Ren took their land out of sagebrush, they planted a row of Lombardy poplar trees along the west fence line of their property³⁹

They also planted many fruit trees which included several varieties of apples, peaches, apricots, and cherries. Jesse and Lettie, most anxious for a home of their own, began building a two-roomed house with a closet and a pantry. It was completed enough so the couple could live there before their second child, Matilda Jane, was born on January 1, 1904.

Ora Stoker Whittier described how Lettie made the

house a home:

Lettie made a rag rug for the bedroom but the kitchen had a bare wood floor. The bare floor was hard to keep clean so Lettie was glad to get a piece of linoleum some years later. She mopped it with milk to give it a shine.

Their furniture consisted of a bed, table and chairs, a cupboard, washstand, looking glass, a folding bed and a cook stove. For light they had kerosene lamps which hung from the ceiling.

For bathing they used a wooden tub which when not in use had to be set outside and filled with water to keep the wood from drying out and allowing the tub to leak.

The bathroom facility was the old family "back house" with the rumble seat for the baby.⁴⁰

Digging a well

When Jesse and Lettie moved into their new home they had no well on the property. Their culinary water was carried from the Roy "Section House" located a quarter of a mile from their home. In her late years, Lettie, describing how her husband started digging for water in the sandy Roy soil, said, "He wasn't afraid of God, the devil, or no man. He took a shovel and began digging."

Lee Hammon Stoker added:

Eb Wood helped my father at one point in the digging of the well. They built a scaffold over the hole to suspend a pulley to raise the bucket full of dirt that Dad filled from the bottom of the hole. He dug until the hole was 48 feet deep. There was no cribbing on the well. Water in the well was cold and later rose to about six feet from the surface.

Daughters of Jesse, Jane and Eunice, write:

Jesse dug a well and curbed it up with lumber. At first the water was drawn by two buckets tied to a rope run through a pulley hung at the top of the well.

38 Fuchsia Erma Stoker Jones, *Ibid.*, p. 212.

39 Lee Hammon Stoker, *Lee Hammon Stoker History*.

40 Ora Stoker Whittier, *Ibid.*

The bucket was later replaced by a pitcher pump. The neighbors for miles around came and hauled water from this well. The water was always clear and cold.

At their home there was a path instead of a bath, and a pail of water with a dipper in the place of a kitchen sink and faucet. Just inside the back door stood the old wash bench, with a large wash basin, above which hung a large looking glass. It was here that we were all washed and combed.

Behind the looking glass was hung a large apple wood willow. We didn't see the willow in use but it was there as a constant reminder that it could be used and if it should disappear there were plenty more in the he orchard where it came from. This willow proved to be quite a peacemaker.⁴¹

The well provided for Jesse Stoker's family and often for other neighbors.

A serious wind storm

Ora Stoker Whittier tells of how Lettie was nearly blown away by the wind:

Much of the land south of their farm was not under cultivation. It was dry in the he summer and dust often billowed up from it when the wind blew. One time a severe windstorm came down out of the canyon. Lettie was home alone with her small children. The wind was so strong, it shook the little home to such an extent everyone became alarmed.

Lettie decided to go to the neighbors but as she stepped out the door, the wind caught her skirts and sent her flying. She managed to hang on to a small tree and slowly made her way back into the house. Needless to say she did not attempt to leave again as long as the wind continued.⁴²

Jesse divides some land with Lettie's uncle

In the fall of 1904 Jesse divided off a few acres of his land for Lettie's uncle, 45-year-old Daniel Jeddiah Hammon. With land taken for the cemetery and this plot for his relative, Jesse's original 40-acre farm had been reduced to 31 acres. Jesse would help a former sheepman, who after accepting a mission call, was milked by the men he left with his sheep. When he returned from the mission, these men had lost thousands of dollars through gambling and mis-managing the sheep. One of Jeddiah's children wrote:

...Father decided to move his family to Roy, Utah, where he purchased a farm from his nieces' husbands, Jess and Ren Stoker. He build a small house for his family to live in, a small barn, and chicken coop. There was no water on the place. They had to carry all the water from a well on the Jess Stoker farm about a block away.⁴³

Lettie welcomed her neighbors. As she wrote:

I staid alone on the hill for over two years. That was all I could take He [Jess] never farmed. We had bought our farm from Bob Moyes. He also had 160 acres over where Ben Anderson place was so Jesse rented it. We did very well⁴⁴

Lee Hammon works on canal project

While the Stoker brothers were busy getting their farms into production, their father-in-law, Levi Byram Hammon, was in Idaho working on a irrigation project. One account gave the following description:

In about 1902 Levi and a number of men, some of them being: Lewis W. Shirliff, Lyman Skeens, David Tracy organized the American Falls Canal Co., in Blackfoot, Idaho. They worked on that canal for two years. It was to bring water from the Snake

41 Eunice Stoker Southwick and Jane Stoker Venable, "Jesse Stoker and Lettie Matilda Hammon," *Levi Hammon and Polly Chapman Bybee: Early Utah Pioneers*, p. 231-232.

42 Ora Stoker Whittier, *Ibid.*

43 "Daniel Jeddiah Hammon," *Levi Hammon and Polly Chapman Bybee: Early Utah Pioneers*, p. 362.

44 Lettie Matilda Hammon Stoker, "History Written by Lettie Stoker in her own hand writing, January 10, 1949."

River out on thousands of acres of land in Moreland, Rich, Thomas and other towns in that vicinity. He was there until the company failed and he returned to Roy, Utah on June 10, 1904.⁴⁵

Lorenzo moves next door

Lorenzo had to travel a mile or more from his home on Cousin Row to work his 40-acre farm, located next to Jesse's. In 1905 he built his home according to his daughter, Fuchsia:

Soon after my sister, Betsy, was born, 5 April 1905, my folks decided to build a home near Uncle Jesse, on the west end of the property. This home was a two-room house with a slanting roof. Later on they added a shanty at the rear of the house. Mother worked hard to help build this home and sometimes she worked just like a man and did a man's work.⁴⁶

Stokers' timely move from sheep

Fencing their land, the Stoker brothers found a security that was not present to the sheepmen on the open ranges. They felt fortunate to be out of the business. A writer in the *American Sheep Breeder* pointed out the problems of sheepmen in 1905:

Conditions have about reached a crisis. It is no longer sheep against cattle, but flock is fighting flock for a chance to get at the available grass. ...Nomadic sheep and shepherds have had their day.⁴⁷

Jesse was thankful that his roving days following sheep was over. His struggles were now with raising crops on his sandy farm.

Another son born to Jesse and Lettie

Before the year 1905 ended, Leslie Willis Stoker, was born to Jesse and Lettie on December 28. In memory of his stepmother, Jesse bestowed his son

with the middle name, Willis, the surname of woman who replaced Jesse's mother in rearing him. A little later in life this son was to known by the nickname, Dick. According to one story the origin of that name came as follows:

Jesse and Lettie Stoker were building two rooms on their house [about 1910], and their little son, Leslie, kept getting in the tools and the nails. Whenever he got near, his parents would say, "Here comes rattling Dick, the nail driver." Even to this day, Leslie Stoker is "Dick," and he did later become a builder.⁴⁸

Jesse takes to farming

Jesse's daughter Jane described her father's early work habits:

Father was a very hard working man during the early years of his life. He planted fruit trees of all varieties on his farm. We children learned to tell which bore the choice fruit and which was the earliest to ripen. We were taught to avoid fruit until it had fully ripened and then there was no restriction. We worked hard in the orchards during the morning hours and always took a one hour rest at noon. The field day usually ended at five for there were chores and everyone needed relaxation.⁴⁹

Not all of Jesse's land was planted to orchard. He grew alfalfa for his horses and cattle. He planted berries, watermelon, and cantaloupe. He also grew tomatoes for the Roy Canning Co. Ora Stoker Whittier describes the marketing of the fruit:

About 1907 Lettie started a fruit selling and delivery business in Ogden. A trip was made everyday in the summer to that growing city—except on Sundays. She would load the wagon with crates and baskets of fruit each evening.

45 "Levi Byram Hammon," *1956 Supplement to Centennial Issue of 1950 in Honor of Gilbert Belnap, Utah Pioneer*, p. 23.

46 Fuchsia Erma Stoker Jones, *Ibid*, p. 213.

47 Alexander Campbell McGregor, *Counting Sheep: From Open Range to Agribusiness on the Columbia Plateau*, p. 93.

48 Emma Russell, "Nicknames," *Footprints of Roy, 1873-1979*. n.p.: n.p., 1979, p. 145.

49 Jane Stoker Venable, *Ibid*.

Early each morning she would hitch the team of horses to the loaded wagon, take Herman and whoever happened to be the baby and make the six mile trip to Ogden. Deliveries were made to grocery stores, private homes and to the railroad depot. Much of the fruit was shipped to other towns and to Idaho. They would return home in time for Lettie to prepare dinner for the family and the fruit pickers. This practice was continued for about 15 years.⁵⁰

Lettie excels at horse-driving skills

Lettie's father was an breeder of horses and always had animals around while Lettie was growing up. She mastered the art of handling them. One story of her skill is pointed out below by Ora Stoker Whittier:

Lettie wasn't a large woman but she could handle a team of horses as well as any man.

On one occasion she and Herman were making the usual fruit deliveries in Ogden when the team of horses was frightened by a "watering wagon." (In those days the streets were not paved. In order to keep the dust down, the streets were sprinkled with water from a wagon equipped with a large tank and a spraying device.) As this water wagon came down the street, spraying its contents around the feet of Lettie's team, the horses bolted. Lettie very quickly took the reins and held the team steady. One of the grocers, standing nearby, started to help but another fellow grocer stopped him saying, "Leave her be. She can handle them." and she did!⁵¹

Lettie was an athletic woman

Handling horses was easy and natural for Lettie, who also excelled at running. Her daughters, Eunice and Jane, write:

Lettie could run like a deer and in her home hung a beautiful picture that she won in a

foot race in Roy, also a fancy tea pot and many other prizes. She was looking out her door at her son Herman coming from the blacksmith shop leading a colt. It suddenly whirled, threw up its hind feet and kicked Herman in the head.

She ran out the door, across the lawn and jumped over a four-foot board fence that had grapevines growing on it and was at his side in a minute, when asked about the fence she said she couldn't even remember seeing it.⁵²

Herman remembered another event which his daughter recorded:

Her running ability was put to good use when any one of her children thought they could get away with some misbehavior. Herman recalls such an incident.

He can't remember what misdeed provoked his mother but he did something which caused his mother to get the willow switch. Herman took off running, with his mother after him. She held the switch in one hand and her long skirts in the other. Herman could see that he wasn't going to outrun her so he quickly scampered up a nearby tree. Needless to say, Lettie climbed the tree also and Herman got his "just deserts."⁵³

Additions to family, and struggles on the farm

Another girl joined the Jesse Stoker family on October 8, 1907 when Thelma Adaline was born. The year of 1907 was marked by an economic downturn. During 1908 many U.S. banks closed. The Westinghouse Electric Co. went bankrupt. What was disastrous for some was opportunities for others. In 1908 J.C. Penny bought out T.M. Callahan's interest in a couple of stores. With this beginning, the retailer began a chain of 22 retail stores with headquarters in Salt Lake City by 1911.⁵⁴

In 1908 the Stoker brothers, like half of all Ameri-

50 Ora Stoker Whittier, *Ibid.*

51 *Ibid.*

52 Eunice Stoker Southwick and Jane Stoker Venable, *Ibid.*, p. 231.

53 Ora Stoker Whittier, *Ibid.*

cans, lived on farms or in towns with a population of less than 2,500. The Stokers worked horses on two of the more than 6 million farms in the nation. In the following year of 1909, Joseph W. Bailey rose in the senate to condemn the automobile which would change life in America:

If I had my way, I would make it a crime to use automobiles on the public highways, because no man has a right to use a vehicle on the public highway that is dangerous to the safety of other people.⁵⁵

The Stoker brothers gave the idea of owning a car little thought although their neighbor, Orson Field, had acquired the first car in Roy in 1907.⁵⁶ They, like most of their neighbors, were content with horses and buggies for another decade. Like the horses they used, Jess and Let were not idle. Ora Stoker Whittier writes:

Jesse rented an additional 160 acres not far from their home place. The added income gained from this venture made it possible for Jesse and Lettie to completely pay for their 40 acres in 1910. The rented land was used to raise more tomatoes, hay and grain and sugar beets.

By 1910 they had built an additional two rooms on their home. The old bedroom was made into two bedrooms. The old kitchen became the parlor. The new addition contained a kitchen, and dining room and two

porches. This added much needed space of the growing family.⁵⁷

Lee Hammon meets an ugly grandchild

During 1909 Lettie and Polly's father was back in

Idaho with his grading crew of the newly organized Hammon & Sons Construction Company⁵⁸. One account described the work:

The outfit wintered in 1909 at Burley, Idaho, and in 1910 he [Lee Hammon] built ten miles of grade from Burley to Oakley, including the depot and "Y" at Oakley, Idaho. From here, in July, he moved to Colorado, where he did railroad grading under the Utah Construction Company until February of 1911.⁵⁹

Before moving his company to Colorado, Lee Hammon traveled to New York. On his return to Roy, he visited his daughter, Lettie, who had given birth to a baby boy a few days earlier. The son, born on May 16, 1910, tells about his birth:

[My mother]...tells the story that when I was born, her father, Levi Byram Hammon, arrived home from New York with 7 stallions in a box car and it was left on a rail siding just an eighth of a mile from our house. Grandfather made sure the horses were tied secure so they would not fight each other.

Then he walked to our house and found Mother in bed with a new born son. He



Jesse and Lettie's children: Jane, Leslie, and Thelma

54 James Trager, *Peoples Chronology*, pp. 724-726.

55 William L. Shirer, *20th Century Journey: A Memoir of a Life and the Times*, Vol. 1, p. 54.

56 Rose and Ida Dalton, *Roy, Our Home Town, 1873-1918*, p. 227.

57 Ora Stoker Whittier, *Ibid.*

58 Rose and Ida Dalton, *Roy, Our Home Town, 1873-1918*, p. 231.

59 "Levi Byram Hammon," *1956 Supplement to Centennial Issue of 1950 in Honor of Gilbert Belnap, Utah Pioneer*, p. 23.

came into the room and when Mother showed me to him, he said, "Let, (That's what he called Mother for short instead of Lettie) that is sure an ugly baby! What are you going to name him?"

And Mother replied, "I'm going to name him Lee Hammon after you." That is how I got my name.⁶⁰

Jail for a brother who stands up for a brother who stands up for a wife

Jess and Ren were true brothers. One of the Stoker sons heard the following story from Bide Childs, a Roy neighbor, who related the following:

Jess and Ren had a hay crew of three men whom they took to Ogden after work. The men went to a saloon where they started drinking. Getting rather tipsy, the men began saying derogatory remarks about Ren Stoker's wife, Polly. When word of this got to Ren, he went into the place to settle the issue. As a result a fight was started. Soon all the men, including Jess Stoker who came with his brother, were in a brawl. The bar-keeper summoned the police.

Trying to bring order, one of the cops used a billy-club on Ren. When Jess saw that attack on his brother, he walloped the cop with his fists, giving him a real drubbing. As the police got the upper hand, they arrested Jess and he spent a night in the city jail.⁶¹

Electricity come to the Stokers

Ora Stoker Whittier writes:

In September of 1910 the county built an electric line to the County Infirmary (a home for disabled and retarded people) which was west of the Stoker farm. Since the line went past their places, four families were allowed to hook on. In order to do this the county paid \$1,000 and each family had

to pay \$250—making the cost of the project \$2,000. It was a long time before the line extended beyond this point.

The electricity provided lights for the Stoker home so the kerosene lamps were no longer needed. It also brought a new invention into the home—an electric washer. Jesse was so fascinated by it—he didn't go out into the field the first day it was put to use and Lettie had the distinction of being the first woman in the area to have an electric washer!⁶²

The Stoker children were fascinated by electricity too. When Jesse and Lettie were gone from home, the boys played with the wires as Lee recalled. Leslie took the plates off, exposing the charged wires. The children placed their pointer and middle fingers on the negative and the ground wires. They were thrilled with feeling the current pass through their fingers, completing the circuit. When Jesse and Let discovered their children's fool-hardy stunt, they put an end to it.⁶³

The Church in the Stokers' lives

The Roy LDS ward faces dilemma

During Jesse's years herding sheep on the Utah deserts, the church to which he belonged underwent much change. When Jesse left Bountiful, the president of his church, John Taylor, and many of the other general authorities who were polygamists, were on the underground, hiding from the federal authorities. Much of the pressure from the "feds" was mitigated when President Taylor's successor, Wilford Woodruff, issued the Manifesto in 1890.

Hampering the church during the 1890's was an enormous debt. The church was initially strapped with \$300,000 of debt as a result of the 1887 Edmunds-Tucker Anti-Bigamy Act, which provided

60 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*, 1990. p. 2.

61 Lee Hammon Stoker told this story to his brother, Herman Deloss Stoker, on May 9, 1990 while visiting Herman's home in Logan, Utah.

62 Ora Stoker Whittier, *Ibid.*

63 Lee Hammon Stoker in conversation with Jim Stoker on February 6, 1992.

for confiscation of church property. During this time the members of the church didn't want to make contributions to the church because of their fear that the funds would be seized by the government. Consequently, the annual tithing contributions which averaged \$500,000 during the 1880's fell to a bit more than \$300,000 in 1890.

President Woodruff, anxious to complete the Salt Lake Temple, allowed an additional million dollars to be spent on its construction from 1890 to 1893. The church spent much money on establishing academies to meet the educational needs of its members. The economic depression of 1893, further diminished the revenues that members would contribute in their offerings. The Church's business investments in various intermountain industries realized little profit. Without available funds, the church was forced to borrow money from non-Mormon creditors in the east to run its operations.

When 84-year-old Lorenzo Snow became president of the church in 1898, he found the church's debt to be in excess of \$1.25 million. This man, probably Jesse's brother's namesake,⁶⁴ sold bonds to meet the church's obligations. The following spring while delivering a sermon to drought-stricken saints in St. George, Utah, the prophet to nearly 250,000 members of his church paused during his remarks. Lorenzo's son, Leroi, described it:

When he commenced to speak again his voice strengthened and the inspiration of God seemed to come over him, as well as over the entire assembly. His eyes seemed to brighten and his countenance to shine. He was filled with unusual power. Then he revealed to the Latter-day Saints the vision that was before him.

God manifested to him there and then not only the purpose of the call to visit the Saints in the South, but also Lorenzo Snow's special mission. ...He told them that he could see, as he had never realized before, how the law of tithing had been

neglected by the people.⁶⁵

Tithing was the answer. In the next few months the message was taken to the people of the church. It's most likely that the Stokers heard the call to pay their tithing. By 1907 Joseph F. Smith, who had succeeded Lorenzo Snow as President of the Church, announced that through the increased tithes, the Church was out of debt.

Meeting schedules changed

Both Lorenzo and Jesse had grown up observing fast day on the first Thursday of the month. This day was set apart for fasting and prayer. It was the day which the members of the Church brought their contributions for the poor and gave them to the bishop of the ward.

By 1896 the conditions had changed. It became difficult for the people who were employed to leave their jobs for this meeting. Attendance dwindled. The First Presidency issued the following statement:

...it has been decided to change the day that has heretofore been devoted to this purpose [of fasting]. Instead of the customary assemblages in the various wards throughout Zion on the first Thursday in each month, we have concluded to set apart the first Sunday in every month as the day for the regular fast meetings.

Hereafter, therefore, we desire the Latter-day Saints, under the direction of the Presidents of Stakes and the Bishops, to meet in their several places of worship on the afternoon of the first Sunday in each month, whenever it can be done conveniently, and devote the meeting to the administration of the Sacrament to the bearing of testimony by the members of the Church, to the blessing of children and the confirming of members in the church, and to such other services as have usually been attended to at such meetings⁶⁶.

64 John Stoker had served as a captain of fifty under Lorenzo Snow in the Brigham Young company of pioneers that came across the plains in 1848. Furthermore, John lived at Mt. Pisgah in Iowa for two years under Lorenzo Snow's leadership. With this kind of association, speculation suggest that John Stoker named his son, Lorenzo, after his leader.

65 Richard O. Cowan, *The Church in the Twentieth Century*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1985. pp. 15-17.

In the nineteenth century the priesthood quorums met at varying intervals, usually on a week night rather than on Sundays. Often these meetings were held only once a month. In 1907 President Joseph F. Smith placed added emphasis on the quorums.

In 1908 a General Priesthood Committee was appointed under David O. McKay to write and provide lesson materials for both the Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood quorums. At this date the committee first recommended holding weekly Priesthood meetings in the wards. In addition, the committee recommended that deacons be ordained at twelve, teachers at fifteen, priests at eighteen, and elders at twenty-one. Prior to this time it was typical for a boy to be ordained a deacon at twelve, but there no ages fixed for the ordination to subsequent offices.

The Relief Society throughout the nineteenth century emphasized compassionate service. In 1902 it began an instruction class, the teaching of an eight-month nursing course in the care of the sick.

At the turn of the century the Sunday school was an organization for children only. The first adult class, the parents' class, was not started Churchwide until 1906. It's little wonder that Polly and Lettie never did attend Sunday school while their families were at home, but rather enjoyed the free time to themselves while their children and husbands were in class.

Questions of continuing polygamy

In January 1903 the Utah legislature elected Reed Smoot, a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, to the United States Senate. A former businessman from Provo, he became the target of editors and politicians who mounted a nationwide campaign against his being seated in the senate because he was a member of the Church hierarchy.

For two and a half years, hearings of the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections were carried on in which many witnesses were called, including LDS president, Joseph F. Smith. Polygamy was a point that was labored. Many believed the church still sanctioned the practice.

At the April 1904 conference, a few weeks after his appearance before the Smoot hearings, President Joseph F. Smith presented an official statement, sometimes called the Second Manifesto, which banned all LDS plural marriages world wide. Two members of the Council of the Twelve could not live in harmony of this manifesto. In October 1905 the First Presidency asked for their resignation. Elders John W. Taylor and Matthias F. Cowley were dropped from the Quorum of the Twelve.

Missionary called from Roy

Lettie and Polly's younger brother, Amasa Marion Hammon, was called on a mission to the Southern States shortly after his marriage to Edith Hobson on November 22, 1905. During 1906 while Amasa was on his mission, his wife Edith went to Nevada to help cook for men in her father-in-law, Levi Byram Hammon's, road crew. Lettie's sister, Robena, writes:

...Edith and I went to Hazen, Nevada (a very dreary place) where Father was doing a stretch of grading for Utah Construction Company. They were extending a rail line from Hazen to Goldfield. Here we saw lots of big ore wagons with 10 or 12 teams hitched to one wagon taking the ore to the main railroad line. ...While we were out there Father paid us \$1.00 a day.⁶⁷

Amasa returned from his mission in 1908.

The Roy ward builds a meeting house

While Amasa was on his mission, the school board notified members of the Roy ward that they should find another meeting place rather than the school house. Organized on April 16, 1899 with Thomas Hollands as the bishop, the ward had used the blue schoolhouse for its meetings.

At a special priesthood meeting held on August 19, 1907, Amasa's father made the motion to appoint a committee comprised of the bishopric, Thomas Hollands and his counselors, Chancy James Garner and William F. Robinson, and Martin P. Brown to see what could be done about finding a site and building

66 Richard O. Cowan, pp. 69-70.

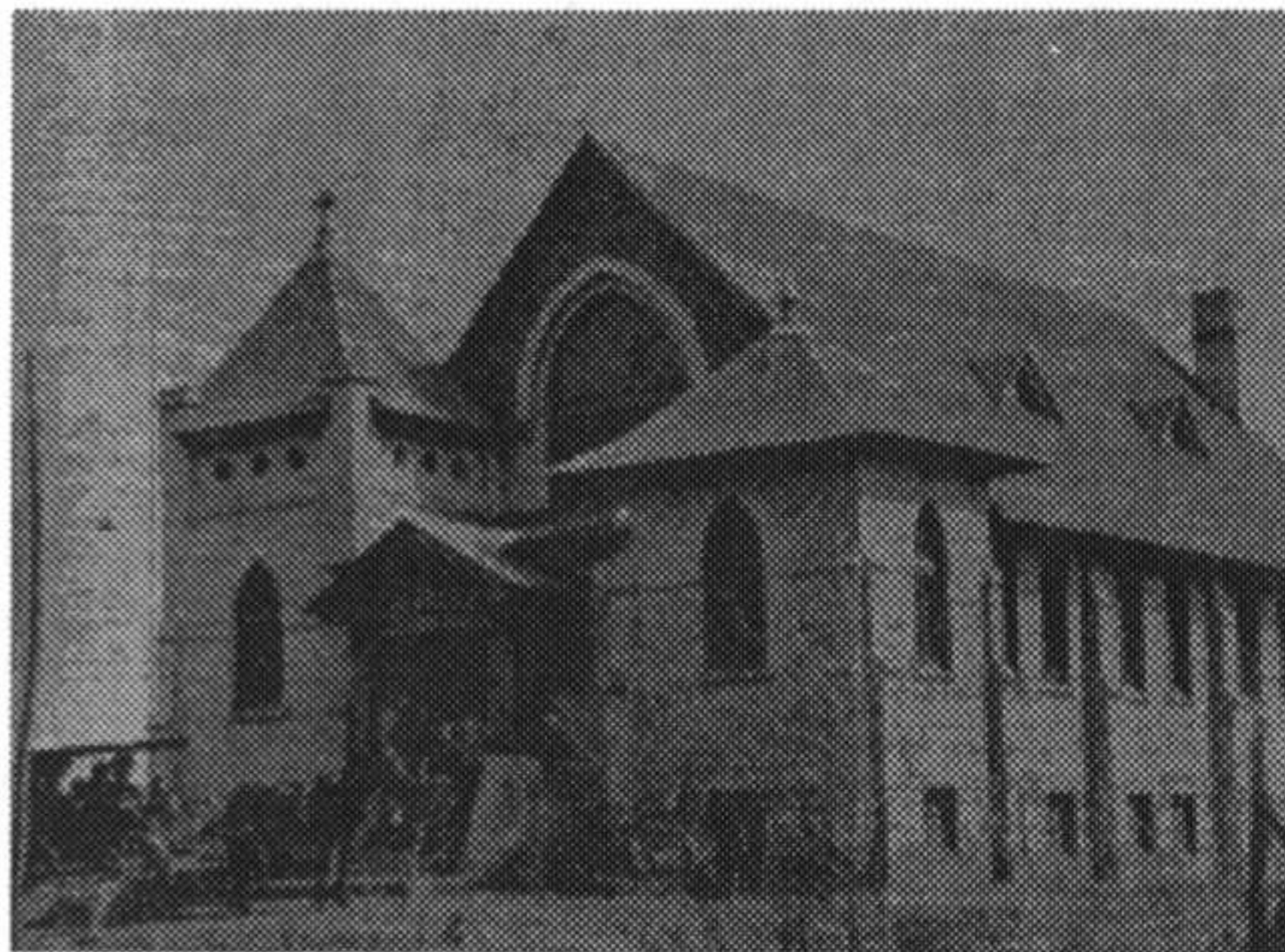
67 Betsy Robena Hammon, "The Life Story of Betsy Robena Hammon Greenwell," *Levi Hammon and Polly Chapman Bybee: Early Utah Pioneers*, p. 253.

a chapel.

In September the committee was enlarged to include Levi Byram Hammon, Daniel Jeddiah Hammon, Nephi Hardy, Lorenzo Stoker, John Russell, Oscar t. Jones, and Joseph Weston. Nephi Hardy, the owner of a local cannery, offered some of his land

for the building, located within a block of the Stoker brothers' farms.

A year later on October 29, 1908, the ground was broken and the construction of the meeting house was begun. It was completed in the spring of 1909.⁶⁸



Roy LDS Church

68 Leslie Willis Stoker, 'Historical Events,' "Minutes of the Dedication of the Roy Ward Chapel and Amusement Hall, March 10, 1940," *Footprints of Roy, 1873-1979*, p. 198.

The second decade in the Jess Stoker family

Lorenzo Stoker moves his family to Riverdale

Fuchsia Erma Stoker Jones, Ren's daughter, writes:

When my brother Wells was small, [Marion Wells Stoker was born March 5, 1909 in Roy] Dad

hired out to work for A. P. Bigelow, an Ogden banker. This job was on Mr. Bigelow's farm, setting out trees. Dad's salary was \$75 per month, and my brother Earl was to receive \$50. This was to be the family income, and it meant that we would have to move to Riverdale, Utah. I do not know exactly what year we moved there, but mother gave birth to my brother, Maurice Lloyd, on 26 May, 1911, and I graduated from the eighth grade at Riverside School 3 June, 1911. We must have

moved back to our old home in Roy, Utah, in the late fall of 1911 or early spring of 1912, because in the late fall of 1912, Maurice Lloyd was taken ill with whooping cough and pneumonia and passed away 22 Sept. 1912. At this time we were back in our old home in Roy again. This death

was another heartbreak for mother. Maurice was such a lovable little fellow.⁶⁹

The Jesse Stoker family sealed in the temple

On December 20, 1911 Jesse and Lettie, who were expecting another child, took their family of five children on the train to Salt Lake City where they entered the temple. Jesse and Lettie were endowed and sealed for time and eternity. Ora Stoker Whittier writes: Herman was 10 years old and remembers

being kept in one part of the Temple with his brothers and sisters while his parents went through the endowment session. He remembers pushing his baby brother, Lee, up and down the hall in a baby buggy. He also remembers that the woman in charge of them got a little out of patience with their rowdiness. After what seemed like a long, long time they were all given white clothes to put on and ushered into the sealing room. Herman remembers putting his hand on the altar and seeing baby Lee lying on the altar. It was well after dark when they returned to Roy.⁷⁰

Nearly three months later, on March 2, 1912, Eunice Stoker was the first child born under the covenant in Jesse and Lettie's family.



Thelma, Eunice, and Lee Stoker, 1912

A costly investment

Jesse Stoker along with others in Roy invested money in an alfalfa seed farm near Fillmore. At least that is what they thought they were getting. But it turned sour. Jesse's daughter Eunice writes:

69 Fuchsia Erma Stoker Jones, "Fond Memories of My Dear Mother Polly Adeline Hammon Stoker," *Levi Hammon and Polly Chapman Bybee: Early Utah Pioneers*, pp. 213-214.

70 Ora Stoker Whittier, *Ibid.*

...my mother told me that when I was about 6 weeks old, Dad and Ren invested in some property in Fillmore, Utah. She took me with them and they went down there to see the land. It was beautiful land and they were impressed to invest in it. I understood her to say they borrowed \$3,000 on our farm to purchase it. It turned out to be a

or contract. We had 1500 acers of land plowed an put into alfalfa. Hired men to do the job about the time we were looking for the crop to pay, we found we had only had an opition on the land It had gone back to the promoters. We were holding the sack. With a note at the bank for \$13,000.00 with only 8 of us suckers attacked. We took it to



First row: Martha Jane Belnap Hammon, Levi Byram Hammon, Polly Adeline Stoker **2nd row:** Daniel Glen Hammon, Jane Baker, Lettie Matilda Stoker, Frank Leslie Hammon **3rd row:** Amasa Marion Hammon **Back row:** Rhoda Luann Taylor, Betsy Robena Greenwell, Ethel Hammon— **Levi Byram's family, 1912.**

fraudulent deal and the seller did not really own the property. They lost the investment.⁷¹

Lettie tells more about the scam:

After Eunice was born in 1912 a bunch of land sharks came along with a get rich company. ...We bit with Father, Amasa, and Jesse We went and borrowed \$1500.00 on our place. Put it in as our share of the land. We never looked at the deeds

the Spremed cort. We lost and payed dear for the rest of our lives

So if ever you sign anything, look it over.⁷²

As would be expected Jesse was very bitter about losing his money. Over ten years later he held a grudge against one of the promoters of the deal, who was a church official. Jess's son Lee tells about going to a stake priesthood meeting with his father in Ogden, as the meeting began, Jess turned to his

71 Letter from Eunice Stoker Southwick to Jim Stoker, April 20, 1992.

72 Lettie Matilda Hammon Stoker, "History Written by Lettie Stoker in her own hand writing, January 10, 1949."

son and said, "I've got to leave. You stay and I'll pick you up later."

On the way home Lee asked his father why he left the meeting. Jess merely said, "One of the visiting authorities was responsible for me being swindled out of a lot of money. I just could not bear to stay

little experience in traveling, but the Lord was indeed mindful of me and so my responsibility as leader seemed to be quite easy."⁷⁴

Lee Hammon Stoker, a child at the time, writes: I remember Uncle Frank Hammon being in



Six-room Roy School, 1913. Attended by Stokers

there and take instruction from him."⁷³ Jess never told his son which man on the stand was responsible.

Lettie's brother goes to Australia

Lettie's brother, Frank Leslie Hammon, accepted a mission call to Australia. As he reports:

I left my home in Roy for the mission field 12 April 1912 in charge of 17 Elders and two lady missionaries. ...I had had very

Australia on a mission. I don't remember when he went but it must have been when I was about 3 or 4 years old. [Lee was 2 years old.] He sent Jane, Leslie and Thelma each one a letter in a little pink envelope and I never got one and I was very disappointed."⁷⁵

⁷³ Story told by Lee Hammon Stoker to his son, Jimmie "B" Stoker.

⁷⁴ Frank Leslie Hammon, "Frank Leslie Hammon," *Levi Hammon and Polly Chapman Bybee: Early Utah Pioneers*, p. 259.

⁷⁵ Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

Memories of the Hammon grandparents

Thelma recalled:

My mother's father and mother were always very good to us and we always loved to go to their house. Grandfather Hammon was a great lover of horses. He had lot of thorobred stock. We used to like to go to the fair and see them all fixed up with ribbons on top of their heads and their tails all shiny and fluffy after seeing it braided to make it wavy.

He had one room in their home where he had a lot of ribbons his stock had won.. It was always fun to have him show us the pictures and tell us about them.

He had two little horses I think he called them Kit and Net that he always used on his buggy. He used to pass our house every day and sometimes he would stop and take me and my younger brother, Lee, with him to the pasture to see if the other stock were all there. We would ride all around the fence to see that everything was alright.

Some times he would drive out to the cherry orchard and let the top down on the buggy and drive up under the tree so we could pick cherries from the buggy.⁷⁶

At this time in his life, Thelma's brother, Lee, was playing with his cousin, Wells Stoker, who was nicknamed "Whooter" because of his tendency to stutter, "Who-who-who." The two had a special language connection: As Lee described it:

...I have been told that I never talked very plain at first and also my cousin Wells Stoker who was 15 mo. older than I never talked plain until he was 10 or eleven years old. They said we could talk to each other and nobody else could understand us.

My grandfather [Levi Byram Hammon] was a great breeder of horses and had many stallions and mares and true to his name I became the owner of many horses. When Dad and Uncle Ren took their land out of sagebrush they planted a row of Lombardy

poplar trees along the west fence line of their property....

Me and my cousin Wells played under those trees and we broke the young sapling limbs that were straight and made stick horses of them. We must of had about 100 horses each and we had them named after our dads' horses, Granddad's horses, and all other horses whose names we could recall. We had pulling matches, races, and buggy races with our horses, just like our peers did in real life.⁷⁷

Lettie serves as a Relief Society visiting teacher

Lettie was faithful in serving her church. Several of her children remembered accompanying her to visit others. Her son, Lee, writes:

As a small child my mother would take me and my younger sister, Eunice, with her to do her Relief Society teaching. Mother would put the harness on our horse named Minnie and hitch her to the buggy which was pulled by one horse. The buggy had four wheels that were painted red. Also the shafts where the horse was placed were painted red.

..There was a space in the front of the seat and reaching forward to the dash board of about 3 ft. so people would have room for their feet....When I went with Mother teaching, her and her companion would ride in the buggy seat and I would kneel at the front and hold to the top of the dash board.⁷⁸

The high cost of living

During the year, 1914, the newspapers throughout America featured the initials "HC of L" in many cartoons suggesting that the high cost of living was grimly oppressing the public mind. On January 5, 1914 Henry Ford paid his workers a minimum basic wage of \$5.00 a day, nearly double the going rates. The Model T's were coming off the moving assem-

76 Thelma Stoker Garner, "Untitled Paper" found in her papers now in the possession of LeOra McCrary.

77 Ibid.

78 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

bly lines in record numbers which was revolutionizing American standards of living.⁷⁹

Another boy added to Jesse's family

On February 17, 1914 Ivan John Stoker, was born to Jesse and Lettie. Lettie's youngest sister, eighteen-year-old Ethel, helped with the family. She recalled that experience sixty-five years later:

When Ivan was born I helped to care for my sister. ...I think Lee could eat more bread and jam than any other child his age. He came in at all hours of the day for his snack. He was a professional climber. [Lettie]...had a cupboard. The top had shelves...glassed in to show off your nicest and best dishes. The lower half was drawers and shelves. In these closed doors we kept butter, jam, etc.

Lee knew this very well. I think he was about 4 1/2 years old if my memory still serves me. In order to keep him from preparing his own bread and jam (when no one was in sight) I put the jam up where the dishes were.

I was busy taking care of the baby in the bedroom and thought I heard some one in the dining room. When I got to the door, Lee was up on the shelf which separated the glass cupboard from the lower part and the cupboard was just starting to tip over when I arrived to save him and it from the crash.

I was very disturbed so Lee received the spanking he deserved and really got.⁸⁰

Nearly six-months later, Frank Hammon came home to Roy from his mission in Australia.

Jess Stoker took the family to the canyons

One of the pleasant pastimes that Jesse Stoker enjoyed was taking his family to the hills for a picnic, to stay overnight or to camp for several days. His daughter, Jane, described how he cooked for them:

Our family went on many vacations to the hills. Sometimes alone, but more often we had other families with us. We were often accompanied by Grandma and Grandpa Hammon, Mother's sister, Rhoda and Uncle Ursel, Aunt Janie and Uncle Nate, Aunt Robena and Uncle Lance, Uncle Derlin's wife, Aunt Emma, along with the many cousins we had. Uncle Jeddiah, Grandpa Hammon's brother, and wife, Aunt Annie, often went with us.

After camp was set up Father would take a saddle pony and ride into the hills where he would find a sheep camp and purchase a lamb. He would kill it and tie it to the back of the saddle and bring it back to camp and hang it in a tree so he could finish dressing it. We would use up the meat during our stay in camp.

Father did much of the cooking while we were camping. If you have never tasted lamb cooked over a campfire and placed, while hot, between two slices of fresh bread, you cannot begin to guess what you have missed. Beans with strips of bacon, vegetables in a stew and a shepherd mulligan of onions and potatoes are just a few of the foods we enjoyed.

We played run-sheep-run and pussy-wants-a-corner until we were tired and then we sat around the campfire until we had to retire for the night.⁸¹

World War I begins

On June 28, 1914 a Serbian youth assassinated the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Francis Ferdinand, who with his wife was visiting Sarajevo in Bosnia. The Stokers, like most Americans, followed the newspaper accounts. On July 28, 1914 Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. Germany sworn by treaty to side with Austria-Hungary, declared war on Russia on August 1 and on France on August 3. Great Britain was obliged to uphold

79 J. C. Furnas, *Great Times: An Informal Social History of the United States, 1914-1929*, pp. 29, 161.

80 Letter written by Ethel Hammon McEntire to Lee and Ethel Stoker in recognition of their Golden Wedding anniversary, June 12, 1979.

81 Jane Stoker Venable, *Ibid.*

Belgium neutrality. When Germany invaded Belgium on August 3, Great Britain declared war on Germany the following day. All the major powers in Europe were at war.

Going back to thresh'in by hand

About 1914, Jesse Stoker planted an acre of beans. He cared for them throughout the summer and that fall, not having much volume, he decided to do his harvesting by hand. That fall he cut them and brought them into the barnyard where he placed the vines on a canvas. He and Lettie walked over the beans, smashing them against the canvas. When they had trod over the vines to the point that they felt most of the pods had cracked, they shook off the vines with a fork and tossed them on to the chaff pile.

With the remaining beans and broken pods on the canvas and holding the canvas by the corners, they heaved together, sending the contents into the air. The wind helped to separate the beans from the chaff as it carried the lighter material away from the canvas. The heavier beans fell each time into the drooping canvas until the separation was complete. With Lettie holding a gunny sack, Jess poured in the beans.⁸²

The last months and death of Levi Byram Hammon

The last grading contract that Lee Hammon took was for building a roadbed for South Washington Avenue in Ogden, Utah. One day Lee, driving his beautiful dapple grey team of horses, stopped by Lettie's home on his way to see the work. His health was waning. In 1910 he developed a severe case of sore throat which resulted in erysipelas. He was ill for three months which left him weak. His heart was affected.

On this day, Lee took Lee Hammon Stoker, a 4-year-old grandson with him. As Lee Stoker recalled:

....Mother let me go with him. ...As we went through Riverdale, we came to the Weber River, Granddad said, "We will for the river so the tires on my buggy will be

soaked from the water." [This is how they would keep the wood in the wheels from drying out and getting loose.]

...The river was high and the horses sank in till the water came almost to their backs. I guess they were swimming and the buggy went down to where the water came up in the bottom. Granddad climbed upon the seat with his feet and held me on the seat with one hand and held the lines in his other one.

On we went and soon we came to his equipment working. He was building a road which is the south end of Washington Blvd as it is today and he had a steam shovel loading dirt into dump wagons and hauling the dirt to a fill on the road bed. There were also horse drawn Fresno scrapers pulled by four horses or mules.⁸³

In the fall of 1914 Levi Byram Hammon took to his bed with heart trouble. Jane Stoker Venable described his suffering:

This sickness lasted for five months. He was very fond of his children and wanted them to be near him at all times. He decided he wanted Father, Uncle Ren, and Uncle Nate Baker to sit up with him every night. So every third night, Father went to do this.

He had to have lots of air and they could not keep the room warm, so the men wore their overcoats to keep warm. There were many others in the family that could have taken a turn to sit, but he would not be content unless the chosen three were there. Through it all I never heard Father complain once. He rendered the service with love for his loved one.⁸⁴

Levi Byram Hammon died on March 2, 1915. The children in the Jess Stoker home were quarantined at this time. Lee Hammon Stoker, 5 years old at the time, later described the scene:

At the time our family had whooping cough and we had a little sign tacked on the

82 Lee Hammon Stoker described the process to Jim Stoker on May 9, 1990.

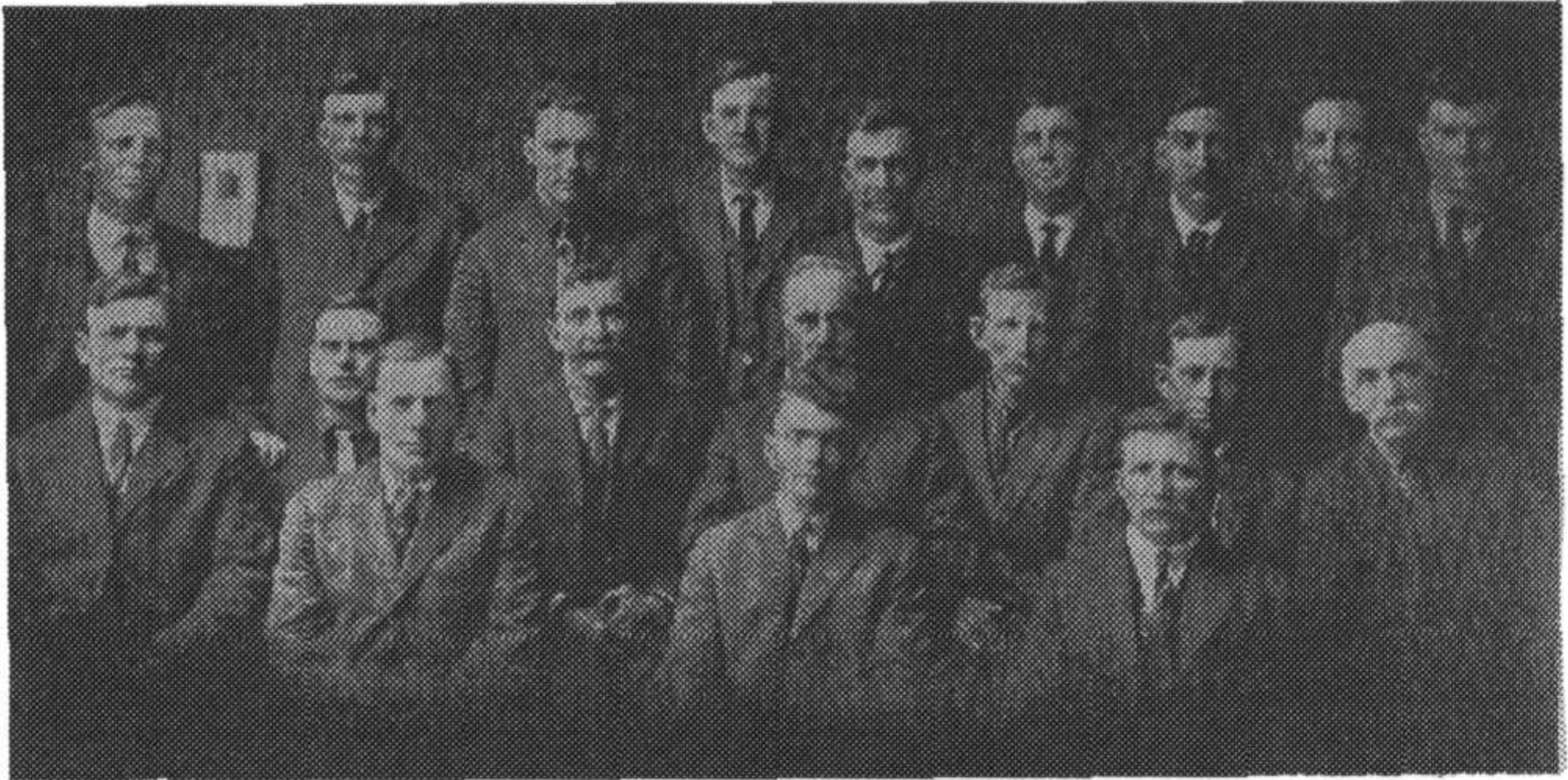
83 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

84 Jane Stoker Venable, "The Story of the Life of Jesse Stoker as Remembered by Jane Stoker Venable."

front of our house that said, "Whooping Cough." That was on there for 3 weeks and the family could not go out in public or to school till the sign was taken down. Those who already had the disease could go out but none who had it or those that had not had it must stay home. We stood at our

mother. Ethel recalled:

Frank, Glen and I were still at home with mother, whose health was such that she had to be cared for. Frank soon married, and he and Amasa bought the west half of father's farm. A house was bought and moved on the southeast 20 acres where mother, Glen



Relatives attending Levi Byram Hammon's funeral

Front row: William Davis, Jr., Jeddiah Hammon, Jr., Nathan Baker. **2nd row:** Ursel Taylor, Samuel Davis, Jeddiah Hammon, Sr., William Davis, Jonathon Hammon, John Davis, William Holmes. **3rd row:** Byram Prescott, Heber Hammon, Jr., Frank Hammon, Lee Meservy, Dan Hammon, Jesse Stoker, Charley Mason, Samuel Davis, Amasa Hammon.

front window and watched as Granddads funeral [procession] went by. The black hearse with two men sitting in the driver's seat on top and Granddads white team pulling it. Granddad had requested that his team should haul him to his grave. It seemed the buggies would never end that followed in the funeral procession.⁸⁵

Martha Jane Belnap Hammon, the widow
Levi Byram Hammon's family rallied around their

and I spent much of the next three years.⁸⁶
Jane Stoker Venable described her grandmother's troubles:

Grandmother Hammon hurt her hand with a gate while taking some feed to some of Grandfather's animals. As a result she had blood poisoning in her finger and finally had to have her pointer finger on her right hand removed. It was then found she had sugar in her blood and the sore would not heal. Grandfather's death and the diabetes

85 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

86 Ethel Hammon McEntire, "Ethel Hammon McEntire," *Levi Hammon and Polly Chapman Bybee: Early Utah Pioneers*, p. 268.

was too much for Grandmother and she suffered the loss of her memory. For the last seven years she stayed in the homes of her children.⁸⁷

Economy shifts gears

During the spring of 1915 the future seemed to be uncertain for sugar beet farmers. Almost instantaneously, sugar prices surged. This rise in sugar prices was the result of the need to supply the armies at war in Europe as well as the decline of sugar production in the world. The annual European beet crop dropped from 8 million tons to 2.5 million, producing a chronic shortage of sugar in all countries.⁸⁸ Many of the Roy farmers profited from the price increases for their sugar beets in the fall of 1915.

The need for American wheat surged in 1915. For the first time in history American farmers, responding to the high war time wheat prices, plowed and planted millions of acres never before planted. The result was a crop totaling 1 billion bushels for the first time in history.⁸⁹

A wave of prosperity was felt by Americans, the Stokers included.

The routine at the Stokers

The oldest daughter, Jane, remembered how her parents managed their family's home life:

In the winter months when chores and supper were over, we would study our lessons and at times had friends in to study with us. When lessons were finished, we would enjoy apples from the pit, popcorn or home-made candy. Father used to read the paper and then retire at an early

hour as he always arose at four or five in the morning. Mother usually stayed up with us and often joined us in our games. The neighbor children were limited on how late they could stay. Most usually we were in bed by ten o'clock. We prayed together often and called upon the elders of the priesthood to bless us when we were sick or in need. My father and Uncle Lorenzo always participated in the blessings.⁹⁰

Making a sport at home

Jesse and Ren were believers that "all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy." The two men often attended some local sporting events and brought home some of the lesson they'd learned. As Jesse's son, Lee, remembered:

...my Dad used to attend the wrestling matches in Ogden, he and Uncle Ren would go to the matches and then come home and match me and Wells to wrestle.

I was as big, but 15 months younger than Wells and we had many wrestles. Dad taught me how to get holds on the other kids and I became quite skilled in the art of wrestling.⁹¹

Jane described a work-play setting at home:

We had a very large backyard. We had a ball diamond on it and other sports we wanted to play. We also had a large packing shed where fruit was crated. We also used it to play house on stormy days and to put away our wagons, bicycles, motorcycles and doll buggies.⁹²



Lee and Wells Stoker

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- 87 Jane Stoker Venable, "The Story of the Life of Jesse Stoker as Remembered by Jane Stoker Venable."
 88 Leonard J. Arrington, *Beet Sugar in the West*, pp. 82-83.
 89 James Trager, *Peoples Chronology*, p. 769.
 90 Jane Stoker Venable, "The Story of the Life of Jesse Stoker as Remembered by Jane Stoker Venable."
 91 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.
 92 Jane Stoker Venable, "The Story of the Life of Jesse Stoker as Remembered by Jane Stoker Venable."

Holidays with Uncle Ren

According to some accounts, Uncle Ren loved holidays, particularly Independence Day. He had his own way of celebrating:

The 4th of July celebration was usually begun with a bang! About 4 a.m. Uncle Wren Stoker would set a charge of gun powder under a large, iron anvil, set a match to the powder and blow it up into the air. The resulting explosion would arouse the whole community. Also in connection with the celebration, there was a baseball game and a family picnic with a freezer full of homemade ice-cream.⁹³

During the early months of United State's neutrality in the World War, most Americans were having a hard time to decide which side to favor. Building over this time was patriotism in their own country.

Christmas time

At Christmas time, Uncle Ren would visit his brother's house, calling out, "Christmas gift!" which meant that he got to pick from all the children the candy that he wanted. He would laugh and have great fun. The children always thought that they could avoid him the next Christmas, but he was sly enough to repeat each year.

Aunt Polly was a different temperament than her sister, Lettie. The older sister was an immaculate housekeeper. When Jesse's children visited, they could go into any place in their aunt's house except the parlor. This room was off limits. An expensive rug was installed in that room. In December, the Christmas tree was placed there. Aunt Polly pulled open a divider and allowed the children to look into the room to see, but they could not enter.⁹⁴

Transportation in 1916

The Panama canal opened formally in July 1915 although ships had been sailing through it for months. A year later, on July 11, 1916, the Federal Highway act passed by congress authorized a 5 year

program of federal aid to the states for the construction of roads on a 50-50 basis. As late as 1914 there were only 750 miles of concrete highway in the United States. The first street to be paved in Roy was highway 91 (1900 West) in 1917. It was constructed under the supervision of the State highway Commission, by members of the community and also by convicts from the Utah Sate prison.⁹⁵ Jesse Stoker may have given a hand on this road. He was a road supervisor for many years.

In 1916 the petroleum companies raised gasoline prices 7 cents per gallon above 1914 levels. Some engineers predicted that the world petroleum reserves would be exhausted in 30 years.

U.S. railroads reached their peak for miles in track, 254,000 miles, up from 164,000 in 1890.⁹⁶

Typhoid fever strikes

Typhoid fever was a dreadful disease. On June 28, 1904, Polly and Lettie's brother, Derlin, died from it, leaving his pregnant wife, Emma, and three children to be reared by Levi Byram Hammon. Ren Stoker suffered from it one summer. His daughter, Fuchsia writes:

I remember the trials and hardships mother went through one summer when Father had typhoid fever. We were still living in the two-room slope house. They had to cut a window in the north of Father's bedroom to get air in to him.⁹⁷

About the summer of 1916 the typhoid fever struck Jesse's family. Several of Jess and Let's relatives, including Ren and Polly, Lance and Robena Greenwell, Nate and Janie Baker, Ursel and Rhoda Taylor hitched up their wagon and headed up Weber canyon for a family camp out. Of course the couples brought their children. On the way up through the canyon, as the wagons crossed the river, a wheel came off the wagon of Ursel Taylor's. The nut on the end of the axel had come off, allowing the wheel to collapse as his wagon entered the water. The men replaced the wheel, but could not attach it because the nut was

93 Ora Stoker Whittier, *Ibid.*

94 Lee Hammon Stoker to Jim Stoker, February 6, 1992 at Othello, Washington.

95 Rose and Ida Dalton, Roy, Utah: Our Home Town, 1873-1918, p. 242.

96 James Trager, *Peoples Chronology*, . 774.

97 Fuchsia Erma Stoker Jones, *Ibid.*, p. 213.

lost. Everyone was anxious.

Fortunately a man on horseback brought the lost nut saying he'd found it a quarter of mile back on the road. Soon the wheel was fixed and the group went up Lost Creek near Henefer, Utah where they

diately returned home and called Dr. Dickson from Ogden to call and see the children. He was the old family doctor for many years. He told her [Lettie] how dangerous the disease was and how to combat



Lorenzo Stoker family, about 1917

1st row: Leona Pearl, Polly Adeline, Ellis Allen, Lorenzo, and Betsy Motlena. **2nd row:** Lorenzo Earl, Marion Wells, Golda Marie, Fuchsia Erma, and Jesse Lee.

camped. The men went fishing, the children played, and the women enjoyed themselves. After a day or two, Jane and Leslie Stoker developed a fever to such a degree that Jess and Lettie brought their family back home leaving the others in the mountains.

One family history tells of this period of illnesses:

Jane and Leslie came down with this dread disease while they were on a camping trip up the canyon at Lost Creek. They imme-

it. The siege began early in August and wasn't over until December.

Leslie was 10 years old and when he had recovered his legs had set in a cramped position and he could not walk. Mother was determined he should not be a cripple and she and Father spent many hours, one on each side, making him learn to exercise and use his legs in spite of the many tears he shed.⁹⁸

98 Eunice Stoker Southwick and Jane Stoker Venable, "Jesse Stoker and Lettie Matilda Hammon," *Levi Hammon and Polly Chapman Bybee: Early Utah Pioneers*, pp. 232-233.

Lee Stoker said that his mother was so worried about the contagious disease that she forbade the healthy children from touching anything that the sick ones had touched. She personally carried their slop jar and emptied the contents in a hole she had

fever and had a long sick spell. ...One of the treatments of this dreadful disease was that they to take away all solid foods and nearly starve you to death to make you better.

My mother had lost her older brother,



Jesse Stoker family after work, summer 1917

Left to right: Jesse holding Ivan, Lee in front, Leslie behind him, Eunice, Thelma behind her, Herman behind Thelma, Lettie, and Jane.

dug, not even wanting to mix it with the outdoor privy. That year Lee and Herman slept outdoors and in the barn to avoid the sick.

Leslie was unable to do any of his accustomed chores. As a result Lee milked the two milk cows, carried water for the reservoir in the stove. Herman fed the livestock.⁹⁹

Years later, Jane recalled her ordeal with the illness:

When [Ivan] was two and a half years old myself and brother Leslie had typhoid

Derlin, with this disease the summer after I was born and she was very afraid Leslie and I would die so she starved us aplenty.

I remember one day in early October mother had been making chili sauce and the smell of it cooking sure made me very hungry. During this time our sick room was our big front room with two large beds. I was in one. Leslie was in the other. Ivan came into the sick room with a large slice of bread and butter and chili sauce (home-

⁹⁹ Lee Hammon Stoker told the Jim Stoker family of this event at his home in Othello Washington on June 18, 1995.

made bread too).

He had just started to enjoy it when I told him I was starving to death and he gave it to me. I was so happy and had taken only a couple of bites when I heard Mother coming. I didn't know what else to do with it so I put it under my pillow and sad day, I got caught. I lost the bread and chili sauce but from then on Mother would not let Ivan come to see us unless he was with some one else.¹⁰⁰

Thelma remembered this sickness as follows:

We had a lot of illness in our home. One year we were quarintened with Scarlet Fever. My oldest brother, Herman, and I had it first. He was very sick. He had quinsy with it. Mother put us in a room by ourselves so the rest of the family would not get it. I was not very sick so as soon as she left us, I would get up and play until I could hear her coming. Then I would jump back in my little bed, the one that the side pulled up, and cover up and lay so still she knew I had been up to something.

...The next spring the rest of the family got it. We were quarintened again. We lived on a fruit farm and the cherries and berries came on so Grandma Hammon came and stayed with us and Mother and Dad were fumigated out and lived in a tent out in the orchard.

It was hard for us kids to stay in the yard, but Dad told us he would take us up the canyon as soon as he could get time and we were all over scarlet fever So finally the time arrived. We got all of our things we were going to take with us and put them in the tent and fumigated them. Then we were each taken in turn into the tent and given a bath, and our fresh clothes. The others were sent back into the house to be fumigated.

We all slept outside that night. Everything was packed in the wagon ready to

start for the canyon next morning.

We went up Weber Canyon to Lost Creek. It took us most of two days to get there and make camp. Two of Mother's sisters and their families went with us.

The next afternoon my brother, just older than I, became ill. He had a high temperature and Mother decided we would go home. So much to the sorrow of the rest of us, we again packed up and started home.

When we got to the first railroad station, the folks inquired to see if Mother could catch a train home as it seemed to hurt Leslie to bump along in the wagon.

There was not another train until the next morning so they decided to keep on going. We drove on home that night.

Next morning Dr. Dickson was called and he said he was afraid Les had typhoid fever. ...A few days later my oldest sister, Jane, also came down with typhoid. They were both very sick for a long time. The Dr. came each morning and afternoon for several weeks. They both recovered and a year later my youngest brother [Ivan] had it.¹⁰¹

Daughters of Utah Pioneers, Roy Camp organized

The "Martha Jane Belnap Hammon," camp of the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers was organized in Roy on December 16, 1916. Mrs. David Eccles of Ogden officiated. The camp was named after Lettie and Polly's mother who was living in Roy, but had lived as a pioneer in early Hooper and Roy. Listed as charter members were Martha Jane Belnap Hammon and her daughters, Jane Hammon Baker, Lettie Hammon Stoker, Rhoda Hammon Taylor, and Ethel Hammon.

Jane was selected as the first captain of the camp of eighteen chartered members.¹⁰² Lettie was a stalwart in the organization. She later organized a camp in Burley, Idaho. Throughout her life, she collected and assisted in preserving family history.

100 Letter from Jane Stoker Venable to Vanae Stoker Knight, written in recognition of Lee Hammon Stoker and Ethel Elizabeth Blanch's Golden Wedding anniversary, June 12, 1979.

101 Thelma Stoker Garner, "Life of Thelma Stoker Garner."

102 Rose and Ida Dalton, *Roy, Utah: Our Home Town, 1873-1918*, p. 232.

United States enters the World War

It had been difficult for the people in United States to remain neutral during the early months of the war. In May 1915 the British passenger ship *Lusitania* was sunk with the loss of hundreds of passenger, including many Americans. Americans were increasingly siding with the allied forces against Germany. Diplomatic pressure from the United States, caused Germany agree to curb its submarine warfare. In early 1917 the martial spirit in America rose to a feverish pitch against Germany in due part to the United States being susceptible to the Allied interpretation of the war.

At the time the Russian revolution was taking Germany's northern enemy out of the war, the U.S. congress, responding to Anti-German feeling, voted on April 6, 1917 for the United States to enter the war on the side of the Allies. A few days after the declaration, Joseph F. Smith, speaking at the LDS conference urged the Latter-day Saints to be tolerant since there were no nationalities in the church.¹⁰³

The need for recruits was great. The Stoker family saw some of their relatives and friends join:

Many of the boys from our town joined the army, navy, & marines. There was a great need for men and horses and many of the boys like Frank Norman, and Newel Nielson were shipped to Europe and were put on the front lines with no training. Jeddy Hammon and Wallace Hammon shipped out with the navy soon after joining up.¹⁰⁴

Posted in the Roy Post Office was a government bulletin about the use of food and fuel during war time. The Stokers read the following:

1. Eat less bread, cake and pastry.
2. Eat not more than one serving of meat a day. Eat small portions.
3. Save milk for the children. Use buttermilk for cooking. Use less cream. Do not use butter for cooking.
4. Sugar is scarce; eat less candy and sweet drinks.
5. Use perishable foods that cannot be

stored.

6. Can or dry fruits and vegetables.
7. Store potatoes and other root vegetables properly.
8. Make your own washing soap from saved fats.
9. Burn fewer fires to save coal. Burn wood when possible.
10. Buy local supplies and buy less.¹⁰⁵

Stokers face the music

Some of the popular songs during 1917 focused on the war. George M. Cohen's "Over There" and "You're in the Army Now" were two. The Stokers joined together in singing, "Hail, Hail the Gang's All Here" which adapted a melody from Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance*. Another familiar song was "Oh Johnny, Oh Johnny, Oh." The popular dance tunes were "The Darktown Strutters' Ball and the "Tiger Rag."

Often the members of Jesse's family could hear their cousin, Fuchsia, practicing the piano next door. Music had a firm place in helping bring solace and peace. Fuchsia acknowledged that power:

Sometimes I wonder just how Mother made it through. She must have had the faith and courage of the pioneers. One particular thing that remains in my memory pertaining to Mother is that she always hummed the Latter-day Saint hymns while nursing and rocking her babies to sleep. Very few babies get rocked to sleep nowadays. Many a time have I played the song, "Have I Done Any Good in the World Today" on the piano for her to sing.¹⁰⁶

Some time about 1917 the Jesse Stokers acquired a piano. Probably due to the concerns of an impending war, a Roy customer who had ordered a piano from a Salt Lake music company declined to accept it. The company, not wanting to haul the instrument back to Salt Lake City, offered to sell it to Jess Stoker for a reduced price. Jane played it, but Thelma wasn't interested. Jane recalled, "I took piano les-

103 Thomas G. Alexander, *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890-1930*, p. 47.

104 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

105 Rose and Ida Dalton, *Ibid.*, p. 249.

106 Fuchsia Erma Stoker Jones, *Ibid.*

sons and very often Lee came and sat on the piano bench beside me."¹⁰⁷

Eunice as a child played at the keyboard, figuring out tunes. By the time she was six, she could play "America" and some of the church hymns by ear. A piano teacher was sought. After he had given her a half dozen lessons, he decided it was self-defeating for him to demonstrate how to play a piece because Eunice would get the tune in her head, and not play the notes that were written. He wanted her to read music.

Eunice remembered:

My father purchased a piano before I can remember. I loved it and when I was in kindergarten in Sunday School, I would come home and play hymns with one finger.¹⁰⁸

Ora Stoker Whittier noted how Lettie enjoyed music:

Lettie did not play a musical instrument or sing, but she enjoyed music and saw that the children took piano lessons. The piano came into their home when Herman was a boy. She did not sing at her work, but could whistle a lively tune. She enjoyed dancing. Jesse never danced but he did not object to her dancing at the ward socials.¹⁰⁹

Jesse Stoker played the harmonica. He learned to play the instrument for amusement while he herded sheep. Later in his life as his asthma, or perhaps emphysema because of his smoking habit, he didn't have the breath needed to play effectively.¹¹⁰

Jesse Stoker's smoking habit

Jesse used tobacco when he was herding sheep as a young man. The shepherders were given tobacco as part of their provisions. Jesse used it to while away some of the time while out with the sheep. During his married life, Jesse did not smoke within the house. There was a long time when he did not

use tobacco at all. Later in his life as he gained weight, his doctor suggested that if he smoked the habit would help him lose weight. Often Jesse would smoke a cigar, which after he had smoked a few puffs would place in the crotch of a tree. Later he would light it up for a few more puffs. The tobacco caused lung problems in Jesse's later life.¹¹¹

Stoker children learn from their parents

Jane, the oldest daughter in the family, described the qualities found in her parents which enabled them to work together and to work with their children:

Father was a soft-spoken man. We learned at a very tender age that he was a firm parent. There was no use to talk him out of a decision. Mother, on the other hand, could be coaxed into letting us do some of the things we wanted to do as long as we did what was right.

Mother always respected Father's decisions and did not allow us to go against them. Father was a most generous person by nature. I have wondered many times as years have passed where he used to find all the dollars he reached into his pockets and gave to his children. We did not have money to spare and were taught that money did not come easy.

But, we always had the things we needed.¹¹²

There were times that Jess Stoker became a disciplinarian. Thelma tells of one incident:

...I wanted very much to go with my father to take a load of boxes to the fruit pickers, but he was afraid the limbs would knock me off the wagon, so he told me to take his gloves into the house to mother and I told him to go to ---- and threw them down and started to run but he could run faster than I

107 Letter from Jane Stoker Venable to Vanae Stoker Knight in recognition of Lee Hammon Stoker and Ethel Elizabeth Blanch's Golden Wedding anniversary, June 12, 1979.

108 Eunice Stoker Southwick, "Autobiography of Eunice Southwick." 1979.

109 Ora Stoker Whittier, *Ibid.*

110 Lee Hammon Stoker to Jim Stoker, February 6, 1992 at Othello, Washington.

111 Lee Hammon Stoker to Vanae Stoker Knight and Jim Stoker on March 31, 1991.

112 Jane Stoker Venable, "The Story of the Life of Jesse Stoker as Remembered by Jane Stoker Venable."

could and the results were that I got paddled. This is the only time I can remember of my father spanking me. He was always a man of few words and when he said no he ment it and there was no use to try to coax him, but he didn't do this very often.¹¹³

Farm work was a war effort

Herbert C. Hoover, named as the US. Food Administrator, encouraged American farmers to back the war with the slogan, "Food can win the war."¹¹⁴ The Stoker family made a united effort to do their part. Lee Hammon Stoker described this work effort:

I helped work on the farm when I was born. ...the family picked most of the fruit as it came on. Starting in June with cherries, apricots in July, peaches in August and September, pears and apples in September and October. We also had watermelons, cantaloupes and dewberries, raspberries, currants and asparagus. Most of our fruit was shipped on the railroad to Idaho to the towns of Pocatello, Blackfoot, and Idaho Falls.

Father would receive a telegram in the morning giving him an order of how many boxes of fruit to ship the next morning and the whole family would pick and pack as many boxes and put them on the train at eight o'clock....

For our part of the process, it meant making boxes, picking the fruit, packing the fruit in the boxes and nailing lids on the boxes and writing the shipping address on each box. I was the fifth child in the family and the older ones usually picked the fruit

and I nailed the boxes together.

The boxes were already cut and bought in bundles but had to be nailed together to make a box. Sixteen nails had to be driven in each box to nail it together. When the lid was placed on the top, it took 8 nails to put it on solid. I learned very young to nail the boxes together.¹¹⁵



Jane Stoker at eighth grade graduation, 1918

Lettie's' youngest sister marries

Ethel Hammon married Horace A. McEntire on December 19, 1917 in the Salt Lake Temple. On December 20, her brothers and sisters hosted a reception at the Roy LDS church. They served a hot dinner to over one hundred friends and relatives. As Lee Hammon Stoker remembered: It was held in the Roy ward church and she had a beautiful white dress and he had a dark suit. Of course we had to do and act just right so we would not give the guests a bad impression of our family.¹¹⁶

Birth and death of son

On May 28, 1918 a boy was born to Jesse and Lettie whom they named Claude. His older sister, 14-year-old Jane was present the following day, when the baby turned for the worse. Later, Jane recounted what happened:

Dad had gone to work away from home when Mother was in bed at the birth of my brother, Claude. Mother was feeding him when he began to act very strange. I was told to run for Uncle Lorenzo.

This I did as fast as I could. He came running from the field into the room where he took the baby in his arms and through

113 Thelma Stoker Garner, "Untitled Paper."

114 James Trager, *Peoples Chronology*, p. 783.

115 Lee Hammon Stoker, "The Lee Hammon Stoker Story."

116 *Ibid.*

the priesthood which he held gave the baby a name and a blessing. However, within a few hours, the baby was called back to our Heavenly Father. I loved Uncle Ren dearly

The influenza epidemic

As the World War I came to a close on November 11, 1818 costing the United States 53,513 casualties, a far greater killer than enemy guns was the flu



Jesse Stoker home about 1918—Left to right: Leslie Stoker, Thelma Stoker, Martha Jane Belnap Hammon, Lee Stoker, Lettie Stoker, Ivan Stoker, Eunice Stoker, Jane Stoker, Mildred Hammon, and Betsy Stoker

for his kind acts.¹¹⁷

Lettie helps care for her mother

With their sister, Ethel, married, Lettie and her brothers and sisters increasingly were faced with caring for their mother. During the early part of this care period which began in 1918, the 65-year-old Martha Jane Belnap Hammon was co-operative and often a help. As the years passed she became senile and rather difficult for the children to care for.

epidemic that decimated nearly 20 million of the world's population, including an estimated 548,000 in the United States. The Stoker's home in Roy was not immuned. One history reported:

When the flu epidemic came the winter of 1917-1918 [1918-1919], Lettie spent almost the entire winter helping in the homes of the sick. Her own family came down with it early in October while she was in Idaho at a reunion.¹¹⁸ When she returned

¹¹⁷ Jane Stoker Venable, *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ In 1918 Lettie's sister, Rhoda, and husband, Ursel Taylor, moved their family to Rupert, Idaho. Lettie's brother, Frank, and his wife, Dorthea Elizabeth Jardine, moved their family from Roy, to

home her whole family was stricken. Some were out of their heads, others burning with fever and nose bleeding.

The reports were coming in the many were dying all over the country with this disease. Losing no time, Lettie set to work and soon had her family on the road to recovery. She then started to go to the neighbors and relatives trying to help out where ever she could.

Many lost their lives and many were very sick, but Lettie never took the flu or had a sick day during this hard winter.¹¹⁹

Lee Hammon Stoker remembered his father, Jesse, so stricken with the flu that in delirium he was cursing the German Kaiser whom he was blaming for the catastrophe. Lee further described the trauma:

It swept across America and people died like flies.

It seemed there was no way to prevent or treat it. Sometimes 2 or 3 people died in one family and they were short of boxes to bury the dead.

My mother was one who never got sick and she traveled all around the town caring

for families that were all sick and no one to care for them. Three people died in one day in the Olmstead family.

I went with Mother and Dad to the mortuary in Ogden run by the Larkin Funeral home to see my cousin, Alice Jewell and her daughter, Jenny. They died the same day and were buried at the same time.

Uncle Jed Hammon was the [sex-ton] over the cemetery and almost every day he would come and want help digging graves. We lived close by the cemetery and we got the call. Even tho I was a small [8 years old] boy, I was able to help before the hole got too deep.

We had to dig a hole three feet wide, seven feet long and six feet deep. After a body was lowered in its box to the bottom of the hole, the men would take off their coats and cover the hole full of dirt.

...There didn't seem to be any sure medicine to control it[, the flu]. One of the things they gave us was hot lemon aide with whiskey. We also had lemon jello with whiskey. I got so tired of the taste of whiskey that I never had a desire to become an alco-



Eunice, Martha Jane Hammon, Lettie, and Ivan

Rupert in the fall of 1918. It's quite probable Lettie had visited them.

119 Eunice Stoker Southwick and Jane Stoker Venable, "Jesse Stoker and Lettie Matilda Hammon," *Levi Hammon and Polly Chapman Bybee: Early Utah Pioneers*, p. 233.

holic.¹²⁰

Jesse Stoker rents Amasa Hammon's farm

In the spring of 1919 Jesse rented the 40 acre farm of his brother-in-law, Amasa Hammon. Amasa had planted 20 acres of sugar beets before Jesse took over the farm: Lee Hammon Stoker writes:

We took over the farm at beet thinning time. The beets were not thinned. There was 20 acres and the school was just out so we had those beets to thin. Mother spaced the beets with a long handled hoe and Thelma and I crawled behind her on our hands and knees and thinned out the double beets. Boy, did our knees get sore.¹²¹

Stoker brothers buy automobiles

The year, 1918, was prosperous for most American farmers. The prices on U.S. corn belt acreage sold of two to three times the 1915 prices. More horses and mules were raised on American farms than ever before. A lot of oats had to be planted to maintain them. The numbers of draft animals peaked and would decline as Americans turned to automobiles and tractors to provide transportation and power.¹²²

In 1919 the Stoker brothers joined the trend to buy autos. Jess's brother, Ren, bought his first car before Jess bought one. Lee Stoker said that when he was about 9 years old, his Uncle Ren drove up in an automobile he'd recently purchased. He and Aunt Polly invited him and his brother, Leslie, to go with them and their boys, Wells and Ellis, up Ogden canyon for an Easter picnic.¹²³ Lee said that shortly after he'd bought his car, Uncle Ren, pulling on the steering wheel to stop it, drove it into the end of the garage. Fortunately the car was going so slow that no damage was done.

Shortly after Ren's purchase, Jesse bought his first

automobile, a 1917 Overland touring car. While trying out this car or one he didn't buy, Jess's daughter, Verda, said the story was told in the family how the salesman, who had given Jess the steering wheel, told him to turn the car around. Jess, without taking his foot off the accelerator, obeyed. The car nearly flipped the occupants out of their seats. Jess was learning to drive.¹²⁴

The Overland was dark in color, but the wheels were yellow. Jesse joined his brother-in-law, Nathan Baker, in owning a car. Herman Stoker, Jesse's oldest son, told of his Uncle Nate's concern about keeping oil in his car.¹²⁵

Someone had told Uncle Nate to never let his car run out of oil. On the maiden trip with his car, Uncle Nate headed for Burley, Idaho. Periodically, Uncle Nate faithfully poured oil into his car. In the middle of the Idaho desert his car chugged to a halt. Perplexed about his car and unable to get it started, Uncle Nate was relieved when a horseman approached him.

The horseman asked if the car was out of gas. No, there was plenty of gasoline. In fact, Uncle Nate added, "I know it's not out of oil because I've made sure to top it off every time I've stopped."

The horseman checked the two petcocks. Oil ran out of the upper one, indicating that it had been over filled. He let the oil drain completely out of the upper petcock. "Try it now!" he instructed Uncle Nate.

Turning the crank, Uncle Nate was delighted when the engine fired. Soon it was running. The horseman advised him to forget adding oil so often.

Jesse would have heard this story and would not make the same mistake with his first car.

A trip to Yellowstone

With newly purchased autos, Jesse and his brother-in-law, Amasa Hammon, couldn't resist the temptation for an extended trip. Lee Hammon Stoker

120 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

121 *Ibid.*

122 James Trager, *Peoples Chronology*, p. 789.

123 Lee Hammon Stoker in conversation with Jim Stoker on February 6, 1992 in Othello, Washington.

124 Verda Stoker Nelson in conversation with Jim Stoker on April 29, 1995 at her home in Salt Lake City, Utah.

125 Herman Deloss Stoker's narration to Lee Hammon Stoker and Jim Stoker on May 9, 1990 in Logan, Utah.

described it:

...Uncle Amasa bought a new Model T Ford car and Dad and Mother took Ivan and me and Amasa took Aunt Edith and Durlin and Marion and we went to Yellowstone National Park.

...We traveled through Malad and I remember one place along the way a sign reading water 50 cents a gallon. It was dry farm country and no water anywhere.

...There were no paved roads after we left Ogden so it was a slow road to travel and the roads were winding roads much different than they are today.

...We left at daylight from home and it was dusk when we got to Idaho Falls. ... We then drove the next day and arrived in Yellowstone at Old Faithful late in the afternoon.

There were bears all over the campground and just before dark a ranger came into camp on a motorcycle and revved up the motor and turned down the gas and the motor made a popping sound. The bears all ran for the shelter of the trees.¹²⁶

The visiting families drove their cars up the steep, winding dirt road on Mt. Washburn. Lettie became so anxious about the brakes giving out that she climbed out of the Stoker car and walked part of the way down.

Jesse gets sick, beets to harvest

Lee Hammon Stoker writes:

...Father got sick¹²⁷ late in the summer and we...had 20 acres of sugar beets to harvest by hand. Dad was too sick to help and it was a wet fall. Herman was just 18 years old and he had the responsibility to get the crop out.

We hired two brothers of Aunt Emma Hammon to top the beets and Les was 14.

He was very little help and too weak to do very much.¹²⁸ So after school as a ten yr. old, I went to the beet field and helped load beets.¹²⁹

A second baby dies

Lettie was pregnant with her ninth child. She did little field work during the fall of 1919, but spent her time caring for her family and nursing her husband. On December 16, she went into labor. Her son, Alf, lived for three days. Disappointment filled the Stoker home. Christmas in 1919 was not the joyful occasion that was usual in Jess Stoker's home.

Jesse loses a brother

In March 1920 Lorenzo Stoker helped the family of Nephi Hardy cope with Nephi's death by taking one of the Hardy sons, Arnold, and Nephi's wife to the mortuary to select a casket.¹³⁰ Little did Lorenzo know that within four months, his own casket would be selected following his death on June 9, 1920 from a ruptured appendix. Lorenzo's niece, Jane Stoker Venable, recalled the few days before that fateful day:

We children were standing on the lawn when the ambulance came to take him away. After being placed in the ambulance, he raised up so he could take one more look at his home and said, "I feel like I will not be coming home again."

As the ambulance left there was a sadness that came over my father that I cannot describe. He went home in great grief.¹³¹

Lee Hammon Stoker, commenting on his father's grief, added:

The day Uncle Ren died, Father asked Doctor Rich if everything was going well with Uncle Ren and the doctor said everything was going well. So Dad left the hospital where he had stayed several hours.... When

126 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

127 Verda Stoker Nelson in conversation with Jim Stoker on April 29, 1995 stated that her father, Jesse Stoker, suffered a heart attack.

128 Leslie was still suffering from the ill effects of typhoid fever.

129 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

130 Emma Russell, "Nephi Hardy Family," *Footprints of Roy, 1873-1979*.

131 Jane Stoker Venable, "The Story of the Life of Jesse Stoker As Remembered by Jane Stoker Venable."

where he had stayed several hours.... When he came back..., Uncle Ren had died.

I don't think Dad ever felt good toward Dr. Rich after that time.¹³²

Lettie Stoker suffers a mental breakdown

Lettie had carried a physical and mental burden for months. In the closing months of 1919, she nursed her husband who had suffered a heart attack. During this period, she was pregnant with her 9th child whose death in December, shortly after being born, was a terrible loss to her.

In the weeks before Lorenzo's death, Lettie nursed her daughter, Thelma, who had a bad case of pneumonia. Lettie, in the early stages of her tenth pregnancy, cared for her child night and day.

The stress mounted. Her behavior caught the family off guard. Lee Hammon Stoker wrote:

I first noticed her acting strange one Saturday when I took my weekly bath. When I got ready to get dressed, Mother came in with some of Thelma's... clothes and said, "Put these on."

Well you know how a ten-year-old boy would react to putting on dresses, right. I just said I wouldn't put them on and Mother was determined that I would. Well about that time Dad came in. I suppose some of the family had went for him and [he] rescued me and got my own clothes for me to put on.

Then Mother was taken to West Weber to stay with Aunt Robena Greenwell until she was well enough to come home. We also had Grandmother Hammon living with us and she had become despondent and could not remember who she was and every few days she would try to run away and head for Ogden where her brother had been sheriff many years before¹³³

Lettie's daughter, Jane, wrote:

Mother was in a weakened condition as she was expecting another baby at that time. Because of the strain on her health, she had a complete nervous breakdown. For several weeks she didn't know who she was or where she was. This was terrible strain for my father.

Mother did not sleep during this time. It was necessary for someone to sit with her night and day. Most of the sitting up at night was done by Father. On the 24th of July, Father and I were alone with her and we decided to step into the other room and see if she could relax.

We closed the door and took turns watching her through the key hole so she wouldn't get out of bed and harm herself. While I was watching her, she stopped moving and relaxed into a soft sleep. I called Father and looked at her and shed tears of joy and thanked our Father in Heaven that she was finally quiet. Mother was not strong enough to do very many things until after the baby, Allen, was born on 2nd of December 1920.¹³⁴

Thelma adds:

...another baby boy came along and we sure did enjoy him. We called him Allen which was the Grandma Stoker's maiden name.¹³⁵

Furthermore, Thelma noted that she missed a lot of school in order to care of the small children when her mother was incapacitated. Only with the help of a devoted teacher was she able to make up the school work and graduate from the 8th grade with her class.

132 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

133 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

134 Jane Stoker Venable, "The Story of the Life of Jesse Stoker as Remembered by Jane Stoker Venable."

135 Thelma Stoker Garner, "Life of Thelma Stoker Garner."

The Jesse Stoker Family from 1921 to 1942

1921 and 1922

Lettie stricken with smallpox

In February 1921 Lettie contracted smallpox. Eunice Stoker Southwick wrote:

My mother had the smallpox and was quite ill when my brother, Allen, was just a baby. Old Dr. Dickson came out and vaccinated all of us. We had never heard of such a thing, but we all lined up, including the little two month old, Allen, and had our vaccinations. Most of us were pretty sick from it, but it only lasted about a week.¹

Jane and Thelma take over the household chores

As the older girls in Jesse's family reached their teens, Lettie turned much of the housework over to them. Jane, the oldest, often told of baking a dozen loaves of bread every other day to meet the needs of the family. Lettie loved to visit. If anyone asked her to go, she would leave everything including dishes on the table or washing half done, to get her coat to be gone for any hours or days, leaving her family to care for themselves.

The Stoker kids play ball

Lee Stoker writes:

I started playing as catcher in about the 4th grade...when I was a 6th grader I played 2nd team. ...After school let out in the spring we continued to play ball in the summer and we had a big area between the house and the barn which we used for a ball diamond.

My cousin Wells Stoker organized a ball team made up of Wells, his younger brother Ellis Stoker, Raymond Clark, Louis Parker and Verle Parker. I had a team and my players were Ivan, my younger brother, Delbert Hamblin, William Hardy, Ralph Garrison and Joe Thompson.

I was the pitcher and Ralph Garrison was the catcher until he moved to California then Delbert Hamblin was catcher. William Hardy only had one arm. He played first and Ivan and Joe were 2nd and 3rd base. They played deep as we had no outfielders.

We had some good games. One day one team would win and the next day another would win.²

The last child is born

At a church dance in 1922, Herman and his friend, Dode Neilson, double dated two girls from Riverdale. Herman's date was Florence Dalton. His friend's date was Minnie Ora Child. At the end of the dance, they traded dates and Herman took Minnie home. This was the beginning of their romance.

During Lettie's last pregnancy, members of her family were concerned that she not experience the emotional trials that plagued her when she carried Allen. Herman was worried about his mother's condition when he and Minnie left for a dance on October 16, 1922. His worry was great enough that before the dance had hardly begun, he returned home. During his absence, Lettie gave birth to her last child, Verda.³

1 Eunice Stoker Southwick, "Autobiography of Eunice Southwick." 1979.

2 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

3 Verda Stoker Nelson, *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book # 1, December 29, 1978, p. 5.

1923 and 1924

The space in the Stoker home was crowded by today's standards. Eunice described how they lived:

Our home was heated by the kitchen range, a heating stove in the dining room and another one in the living room. The living room had one or two beds in it. There was a folding bed that stood up against the wall during the day and was lowered to make a bed at night. Verda and I slept in this bed until Thelma and Jane were married.⁴

Verda recorded:

My sister, Eunice, who was 10 [years old], sort of became my second mother, and she and I have always had a special relationship.⁵

Lettie makes hot lunches

According to Lee Hammon Stoker and Vern Thompson, Lettie Stoker cooked hot lunches served in the Roy School in 1923. She cooked soups at home and then filled a ten gallon milk can with it and drove it to the school house where it was served. The next year Ivy Schoffield took over the program.

Grandmother Hammon and a cousin dies

Lettie's mother, Martha Jane, spent much of her later years in the Stoker home. She was a source of concern as her mind became confused. She was not always content to live in her children's homes. Lee

remembered the older woman leaving the Stoker home to find refuge with her brother who had at one time been sheriff of Weber County. Often the children would help find her and bring her back to the house.

Martha Jane Belnap Hammon died on March 21, 1923. Lee Hammon Stoker remembered digging her grave: When Grandmother died, Uncle Jed [Hammon] came and asked if Dad's boys could dig the grave and Herman, Les, and I went to the cemetery to dig the grave. Herman measured the size of the grave which was 7 feet long and 4 feet wide. He started digging. After a little while, Leslie took his turn and then it came my turn.

...It was not long after this that our cousin Nettie Baker was killed in an auto accident. She was 17 and was quite a horsewoman. At the rodeo in Ogden, they had girls' horse races and Nettie had rode in the races and they gave her the title of Miss Ogden.⁶



Thelma Stoker and cousin, Nettie Baker about 1923

Stoker weddings and a

funeral

Herman married Minnie Ora Child on April 18, 1923. Their daughter, Ora Stoker Whittier, wrote:

...at Christmas time Herman gave Minnie a diamond. They were married April 18, 1923 in the Salt Lake Temple.⁷

Herman and Minnie started housekeeping in a railroad section house not far from Herman's parents.⁸

Lorenzo Stoker's widow, Lettie's sister, Polly,

4 Eunice Stoker Southwick, "Autobiography of Eunice Southwick." 1979.

5 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, p. 5.

6 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

7 Ora Stoker Whittier, "Life Sketch of Herman Deloss Stoker," written and presented at his funeral, April 1, 1993 in Burley, Idaho.

remarried in June 1923. She married William Clark, who had lost his wife shortly after Lorenzo died. Polly and William lived across the street from each other. Her son, Earl, lived in the family home and had rented her farm. Married only a short time, Polly took ill and died on July 17, 1923. That day was Jesse Stoker's birthday, and it's doubtful if he felt like celebrating.

Polly's children who were still at home, 14-year-old Wells and 10-year-old Ellis, went to live with their married sisters, Goldie and Pearl.⁹

Baseball is practiced and played

Lee Stoker described the summer of 1923:

Pitching thro the summer I was able to control the ball and I learned to make it curve a bit. We lived just a little ways from the town ball ground and I went there when the town team practiced and I learned quite a bit from the boys who were pitching for the town team.

When I went back to school the year I was in the eighth grade [1923], I was pretty sure I had 3rd base cinched on the school team.

Not all play

Lee tells of his first job away from home, a job as section hand on the railroad:

When I was 13 yrs old I was as big as some that were 16 to 17. ...Fred Weston who was 16 said, "Why don't you get on." He was working then.

I asked Dad if it was alright to get a job and he said I could as he never needed me. I applied for a job and was hired.

..The foreman's name was Rasmussen and were assigned to a partner to work with. Each man had to take out 10 old ties from under the rails and put in a new tie in the place of each.

...It was hard work but before the summer was over we could do the job in about 6 hrs.¹⁰

Jesse was a road supervisor

Jesse was a road supervisor for many years. Lee Stoker remembered working for nearly two weeks on a road north of Roy. Using a team of his father's horses hooked to a scraper, the young teenager Lee got them too close to the edge of the grade and the scraper turned over, tangling its tongue into the harnesses of the horses. Getting the team free was quite an ordeal.¹¹

Jesse and Lettie's first grandchild

With the birth of Ora in January 1924 to their son, Herman and his wife, Minnie, Jesse and Lettie became grandparents. At that time, Herman and Minnie were living in their third residence, the Dalton house, since becoming married ten months earlier.

Two daughters marry

On January 23, 1924 Jane married Marvin C. Venable and a few months later, Thelma Adeline Stoker married Dewey Legrande Garner. When these girls moved out of the house, the others in the family divided up the living space. Eunice wrote:

Jane and Thelma were married 6 months apart when Verda was about 1 1/2 years old. We moved into the "south" bedroom which was very small, but provided us with a room for a bed and dresser and a shelf with a curtain around it for a clothes closet. This was about the time the sugar factory down in Hooper sold some small cottages and my father bought one of them and attached it onto the back of the house for the bedrooms for the boys.¹²

8 Minnie Ora Child, "Family History," compiled by Carol Stoker Satchwell.

9 Fuchsia Erma Stoker Jones, "Fond Memories of My Dear Mother, Polly Adeline Hammon Stoker," *Levi Hammon and Polly Chapman Bybee: Early Utah Pioneers*, p. 214.

10 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

11 Lee Hammon Stoker in conversation with Jimmie Stoker on March 16, 1992 while traveling north of Roy on Highway 89.

12 Eunice Stoker Southwick, "Autobiography of Eunice Southwick, 1979."

baseball team:

...after we began practice in the spring one day we were having batting practice and I went to the mound and began throwing to the batters and the next thing I knew I lost my job at 3 base and I began pitching for the school team.¹³

Lee's ninth grade Roy baseball team won the first place in the southern part of Weber county. Playing the northern winner, Plain City, for the county championship, Lee, after straining his arm the day before, let his team down. He described it:

When we got in the game with Plain City, the first 6 batters in the game I struck them out and then I had trouble. My arm got tired and at the end of the game, we came out as I remember on the short end of a 14 to 3 score.

In the fall of 1924 Lee joined the other Roy students to go to Riverdale to attend the 10th grade.

Jess Stoker provides transportation

Lee Stoker writes:

The boys and girls from Roy had to be transported to school and as there were no school buses, the school board hired Dad who had a Dodge 3/4 ton truck with a cover on the top and screen panels on the side with heavy curtains that could be let down on each side and make it quite comfortable. There was also a back curtain to cover the back.

Dad had two benches or seats made to fit one on each side in the back and it was used for a school bus. I was 14 yrs old but being a large youth for my age Dad let me drive the truck to school and haul the other kids. Everyone in town must have thought I was capable because there was nobody complained.¹⁴

A new bishop installed

The bishop of the Roy ward, Martin P. Brown,

directed the religious affairs in much of the Stokers' lives for nearly ten years. On November 30, 1924, he was released and Lettie's brother, Amasa M. Hammon, was sustained as bishop with Oscar T. Jones as first counselor and Reuben P. Greenwood as second counselor. Arthur P. Brown remained as ward clerk.¹⁵

1925

Lettie works with the young women

Early in his term as bishop, Amasa called his sister, Lettie, to work in the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association. Lee recalled, "She was young Ladies MIA president in Roy in 1926 which I think she enjoyed very much."¹⁶ Verda wrote:

Mother worked in the MIA when I was young, and always went to summer camp with the young girls.

Dad always went along to represent the Priesthood and help. They put up large army tents and lined each side with single cots. All the girls slept in one tent with their heads to the aisle. Each one took a "bed roll"....

The leaders prepared all the food on a large coal range. My father got up early and seen to it that there was hot water, a warm kitchen, and a good fire to prepare breakfast.

He spent many times taking us on hikes and telling us of the flowers, trees, shrubs, birds and etc. He had spent most of his young life in the mountains herding [sic] sheep and cattle and was very knowledgeable on these outdoors skills.

He could fry potatoes, onions, add bacon—served with hot sour dough biscuits that would make your mouth water.

...I must have gone to M.I.A. camp from about age 2 yrs until just the last couple of

13 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

14 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

15 Leslie W. Stoker, 'Historical Events of the Roy LDS Ward,' as found in Emma Russell, *Footprints of Roy, 1873-1979*, p. 199.

16 Letter from Lee Hammon Stoker to Eunice Stoker Southwick, February 12, 1958.

years¹⁷

Amusement Hall constructed

On April 30, 1925 Bishop Amasa Hammon called a meeting in which the members of the ward discussed the addition of an amusement hall to the church house. The addition would provide a place where dances, socials, and basketball games could be played. The members backed the proposal and shortly after the new addition was started.

Lee continues in sports

As Lee tells it:



Riverdale Relay team— *left to right: Ed Howes, Jim Russell, Lee Stoker, and Paul Bingham*

When I was at Riverdale, I competed in the high jump and at the end of the school in the track meet I was first in the county in high jump. I also pitched baseball ...but we just had an average team....

...After my tenth grade, the town of Roy had two baseball teams, an A league and a B league. I pitched for the B team. We were about a 50-50 team. I was 15 and had a pretty good arm and a good breaking ball.¹⁸

Herman rents a farm

Herman's wife, Minnie, wrote:

From the Dalton home, we moved to our fourth home, the Bell Place, in the spring

of 1925. This house had only two rooms. We were trying to buy this place.... It was special too, because in it on 29 June 1925, Shirly was born!¹⁹

The outgoing Stokers

Verda described her parents gregarious nature: My parents always took us to church and were active. There were lots of ward outings and socials in which we participated. The 4th and 24th of July were always celebrated.

My parents associated very much with all

our relatives. Family visits, dinners, reunions, and outings were enjoyed. The aunts and uncles were as close as brothers and sisters. Our home was most often the scene of the get-to-gethers. Mother and Dad were great hosts and always had lots of company. There were well known & called Uncle Jess and Aunt "Lett" by people not even related to them. Many people stayed over night.

My mother could prepare a meal for a large crowd on very short notice and always had a generous food supply. She taught all of us to work hard, go to church, and always be prepared with ample food

17 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson, Book #1, p. 7.*

18 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story.*

19 Minnie Ora Child, "Family History," compiled by Carol Stoker Satchwell.

and clothes for ourselves and to help others.²⁰

The barnyard described

Verda remembered the yard behind her home. She wrote:

We had a large barn in the back yard with a loft in it. We climbed up there and played in the hay. The hay was piled high in the barn and a large hay fork lifted the hay up and it traveled along a cable to the spot where they would "trip" it. The fork was pulled up by a horse called "the derrick horse." Usually one of the young children rode this horse....

There was a fence between the barn and the house. The family well, with a pump on it was on one side and a trough leading through the through the fence to a large wooden rectangle shaped tub. The animals all came there to drink. Dad made sure that the animals couldn't lick the well spout where we drank from or drew buckets of water for the house.

We had chicken coups for our chickens and turkeys. The cows and horses had a large fenced in corral to walk around in. We also had a few pigs in a pen by the barn. All of the fowl and animals we raised were for our own use as food or [in the case of] horses to pull the machinery.

...We butchered animals as needed & bottled some, dried some, and in winter time hung meat wrapped in a clean white sheet on the north side of the house. In the winter it would freeze and Dad would cut off what we needed a little at a time. In summer, if an animal was butchered, it was shared by 2 or 3 families before it spoiled and turns were taken to kill them.²¹

Leslie Stoker married

Leslie Willis Stoker married Annie Weston

on October 7, 1925.

1926

Jesse takes out his orchard

The Stoker orchard had been producing for nearly twenty years. The production had fallen off. Eunice described the problem:

By the time I was in my teen years there was a lot of development east of our farm in Roy. The land was freely irrigated and it caused a sub-soil condition on my father's farm. The fruit trees began to blight and harvest was not successful. My father decided to pull out all of the trees and plant row crops on the farm.

The wood from the trees was salvaged and he created a great woodpile in the corner of the back yard. The willows were stacked and burned. We children celebrated every night with a big bonfire. All the neighbor kids joined in and we played "run, sheepie run" after dark with the flames of the fire lighting the area and keeping us warm.²²

Jesse's son rents adjacent farm

In the spring of 1925 Jesse's son, Herman, attempted to buy the farm of Mrs. Edward Bell. The soil was so sandy that his crops blew out. Herman gave up the farm and in the spring of 1926, he rented a farm [which earlier belonged to Lorenzo Stoker] next to his parents. An early frost killed his tomato crop. Yet, he continued to struggle on the place earning enough to buy a team of sorrel horses.²³

Herman's wife, Minnie, described the place:

...we were on the move again. This time to the "Stoker" house, our fifth home. There were three large rooms and a pantry on the ground floor and two tiny rooms upstairs. The water was still having to be carried into the house as at all the other places, but it

20 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, p. 13.

21 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, pp. 8, 9, and 11.

22 Eunice Stoker Southwick, "Autobiography of Eunice Southwick, 1979."

23 Ora Stoker Whittier, "Life Sketch of Herman Deloss Stoker."

The water was still having to be carried into the house as at all the other places, but it did seem very good to have more room.

This place was doubly special because both Deloss and Lloyd were born there. Deloss was born 25 September 1927 and Lloyd on 28 November 1929. Ora commenced her first year of school here in September 1929. This house had electricity and we bought an electric washer!²⁴

Verda wrote:

One of my very earliest recollections was of Herman and Minnie living in Uncle Wren's house next door. His daughters, Ora and Shirley, were born in Jan 1924 and June 1925. We grew up and played together much as sisters.

We played house—made mud pies and I remember on one occasion we even put raisins and bird eggs in our mud pies, baked them in the sun, and ate them. We also ate little green "cheesets" from a plant growing around. Their house had an upstairs in it and using old lace curtains for dresses many hours were spent there.²⁵

Lee trained as a scoutmaster in Logan

Bishop Amasa Hammon picked Jesse's son, Lee, to lead the scouts in the Roy ward. Lee described the training:

In 1926 I was called to be scoutmaster of the Roy troop at the age of 16 yrs. In the spring of 1926 the ward sent me to Logan, Utah to a training course that lasted a week. We stayed in the building on the campus of

Utah State Agricultural College and all slept on folding single cots. There were about fifty men there and our beds were side by side the length of the room.

We learned many things about scouting while there. When I returned home many of the things I learned were put in practice.²⁶



Beside her store, Jane Stoker Venable and Irene Venable pose

Lee tries working in Nevada

Just after school let out 16-year-old Lee went with Eugene Thompson to work on the railroad in Nevada. Before the first day was over, Eugene became disillusioned with the job and Lee joined him in heading home to Utah without any wages.

They caught a train, but were kicked off for ignoring a brakeman's warning not to hang their legs out of the boxcar. Six miles away from Hazen, Nevada, the boys walked in the heat of the afternoon sun, killing a half dozen rattlesnakes on their way. They decided that when they reached Hazen that they'd hitch a ride on the first train. If it were one heading west, they'd go to California where Eugene had an brother. If one were headed east, they'd return to Utah.

When they arrived in Hazen a train heading east was stopped. They hurriedly climbed into an empty coal car which had some railroad ties standing up in one end. As they climbed into the car, they were greeted by some twenty others who were hitch-hiking.

By the time the boys reached Ogden they had gone over 24 hours without eating. One of the men riding in the coal car asked, "Hey, you kids, when was the last time you ate?" on hearing their answer he gave them a dime which they used to buy 5 cents of soup

24 Minnie Ora Child, "Family History," compiled by Carol Stoker Satchwell.
 25 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1 p. 6.
 26 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

apiece.²⁷

Jane wrote:

When we had been married a couple of years, Marvin got a truck and took produce into Wyoming and we rented a small grocery store that I ran in the daytime while he was away.

back. When we answered the door, it was Lee. He was as dirty as any tramp could be. He said he was very hungry and he could see a case in the store that had some sugar donuts in. He began to eat and his hunger was satisfied. I don't believe he ever had another desire to leave home.²⁸



Ruth and Jane Venable with their truck by store

Mother had told me that Lee and Eugene Thompson had got a job and skipped out to Nevada to work. If I remember the story right they were there about a week. When they took inventory, they decided they were not making enough money to feed themselves so they decided the best thing they could do was to hop on a freight train and head back for home. They had no money to pay for their ride so hid on the train and came home.

At about four o'clock in the morning we were wakened by some pounding on the front of the store. We were living in the

Saturday baseball

Lee spent a lot of Saturdays on the baseball diamond. Often members of his family cheered as he played. Lee gave the game some color:

...after my eleventh grade, I began playing in the A league team. I pitched some and played in the center field. I was a good fielder and could run well and cover my field very well. I was just average at bat and batted near the bottom of the lineup.²⁹

Building muscles and a school

Before the summer was over, Lee went to work as a laborer on the building of the new Weber High

27 Conversation with Lee Hammon Stoker with Jim Stoker on June 29, 1995.

28 Letter from Jane Stoker Venable to Vanae Stoker Knight on the occasion of Lee Hammon Stoker and Ethel Elizabeth Blanch's golden wedding anniversary, June 12, 1979.

29 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

School which he attended in the fall as a member of its first graduating class. As Jane mentioned in her letter, "Marvin was working as a steel man on the ...Weber High School and Lee got a job ... and because he was large for his size he was wheeling cement and doing a man's work."

Lee added:

I went to live with my brother, Les, in Ogden, and rode to work with my brother-in-law, Marvin Venable.

...I worked with the steel crew. My job was to carry steel to those that were putting it in place to reinforce the cement.... We worked 9 hrs a day and some days I really was tired by quitting time.³⁰

Lee turned out for football

After a summer of lifting iron, Lee was in shape to play football. It was his first experience. He recalled:

We started football practice and ...had to walk from the school...about a mile to a pasture where we practiced for an hour and a half each night. Very few of the players had played much football.³¹

The Weber team received its only win against Davis High.

Lee played M-men basketball

Lee made a decision not to play high school basketball because doing so would have made him ineligible to play 8 years of M-men basketball. Lee told of the difficulty of playing the game:

At this time I was active in M-Men basket-

ball in the Roy ward. We played and practiced in the Clinton ward hall which had a low ceiling. There was about 4 ft from the basket to the ceiling and the baskets were hung right on the wall so there was no way to run under the basket after making a shot. Many times have I hit the wall very hard

after putting the ball in the basket.³²

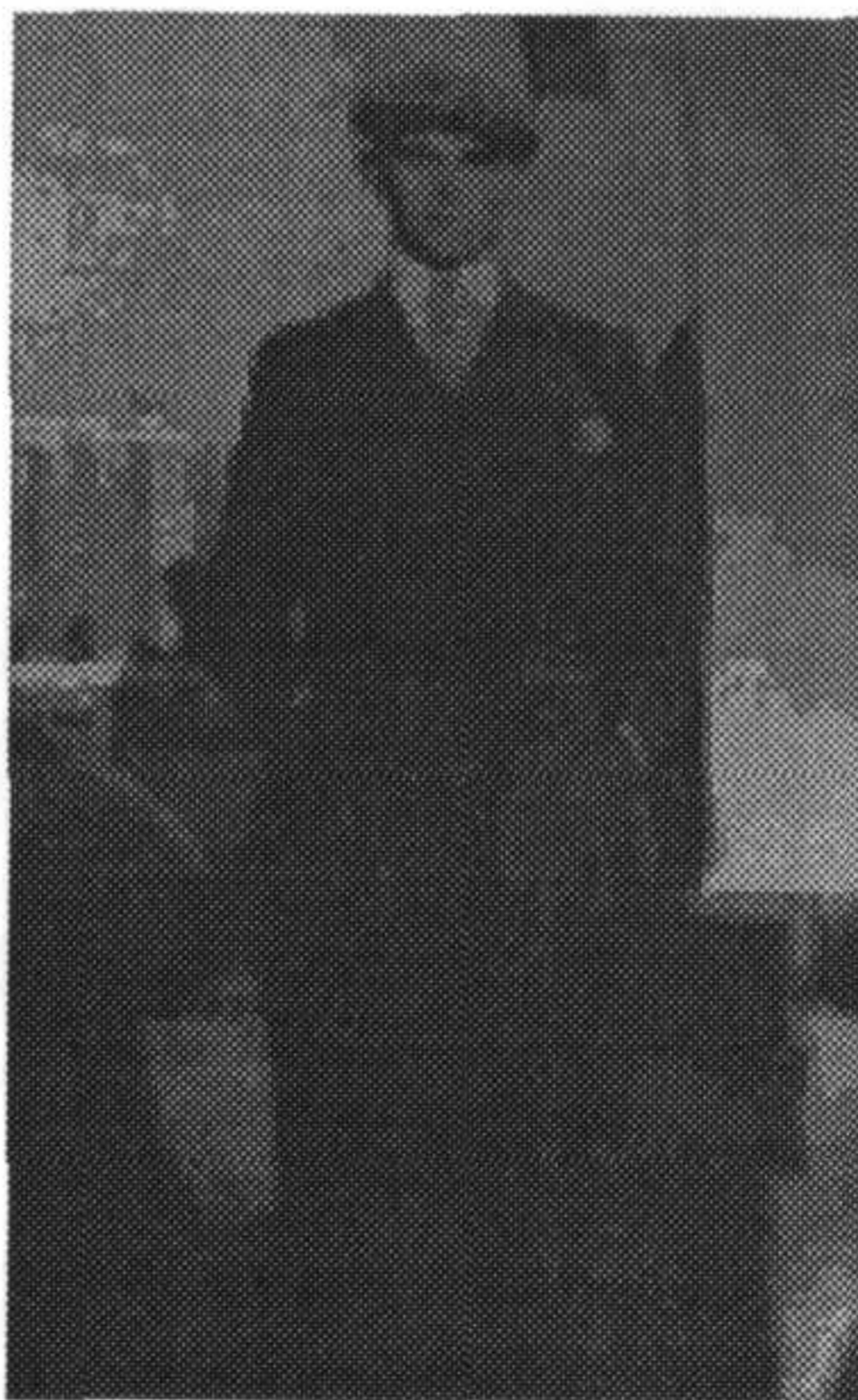
1927

A weekly shopping trip

Verda writes:

Most of my memories before my going to school were very sketchy....

Father always took us to Ogden with him every Saturday to get our weekly supply of staple groceries. We would take our Cream to Weber Central Dairy and trade it for our grocery money. Daddy always gave us fresh, cold buttermilk while we were at the dairy. We were given all we could drink—I think it was free.³³



Leslie Stoker

Lee graduates; plays ball

Lee graduated in the first graduating class from Weber High School in the spring of 1927. In the fall of 1926 he played football on Weber's first team under the coaching of Buck Dixon. His commercial law teacher was Keith Wahlquist who made an impression on Lee. It was in honor of this teacher that Lee named his first son, Keith. Lee did not play high school basketball because doing so would have made him ineligible to play Church M-men basketball which Lee did with the Roy ward team.

30 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

31 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

32 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

33 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, p. 16.



Lee, ready for high school graduation, at Stoker home, 1927



Lee played ball for Roy in the Farm Bureau league

Lee also played baseball for the Roy team in a Farm Bureau league. As Lee remembered:

In 1927 I made the first team for the town.... we played some of the best semi pro teams in the state. We played at Devils Slide where there was a large cement plant and they hired good baseball players with good salaries so they would have a good team. We also played at Morgan and Tremonton, ...towns much larger than Roy.³⁴

Often the whole Stoker family took time out to watch Lee on these Saturday games.

A terrible price for weeding

During the summer, Lee was helping his father weed in a field east of their house. Jess grabbed a large red-root weed that had gone to seed. As he pulled hard on the stubborn weed it suddenly came up. Unexpectedly, the stem bearing the seeds poked

into one of Jess' eyes. Unfortunately, that eye was his good eye. His other eye was a lazy eye that never provided much sight. Due to this accident, Jesse lost vision in his good eye. Although he got some vision from the poor eye, it was never enough to do much reading.

Lee played basketball

Lee did not play high school basketball in order to play Church M-Men ball. At that time a high school lettermen and men over 25 years of age were ineligible. During the winter of 1927-1928, Lee played for the Roy ward. He described his play:

I played center and at that time when a basket was made, the ball was brought back to the center circle and the two centers would jump and try to control the ball by tapping it to one of his own players. I was only 5'11" tall and most of the centers were

34 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

from 1-5 inches taller than I was so it was difficult for me to play that position. But I could jump well and could get the tip about half the time. Timing was the big secret. I was able to do that quite well.³⁵

1928

The youngest Stoker starts school; a look at the Stokers' home life

In September Verda started school with Ida Dalton as her teacher. Verda described her home at this time in her life:

We had only 2 bedrooms, a kitchen, and a living room.

Hanging on the walls of the living room were two photographs, one of Brigham Young in a deep frame and one of Jesse's father, John Stoker. A colorful landscape picture which Lettie won in a foot race at a Hooper fair in 1923 also graced the wall.³⁶

The girls occupied one bedroom & the boys the other. Our closets were lard wooden ward robe type. Usually people nailed a board on the wall by the kitchen door and drove nails in it to hang our coats and hats on. The wooden wash stand stood near the back door. A small box nailed above it held the common family brushes and combs. Also, a large rectangular mirror.

On the stand was a galvanized bucket full of water with a dipper having a long handle & a hook on the end to hang it from the side of the bucket. The entire family shared drinking from this dipper. I guess we were immuned to one another's germs.

We also had a wash basin & soap dish there. We would pour hot water in the basin, and add some cold with the dipper and wash our face and hands. The dirty water was poured into a large bucket sitting

on the floor beside the wash stand. It was emptied outside when full.

Our stove had a reservoir attached to one side and held about 5 or 6 gallons of water. The fire was kept going all the time [during the cool and cold days] to help heat the house thus the reservoir and tea kettle were always full of hot water.

On bath nights (usually Saturday night) extra pans of water were heated for us to have our weekly bath. Sometimes they bathed 2 or 3 of us in the same water and added a little more hot water each time to make it warmer.

Two chairs were placed together and the tub placed on the chairs to raise it high enough to comfortably bathe the little children. A large round or rectangle tub was used to bathe in. These same tubs were used to do the laundry in.

Our soap was home-made from animal fat saved from cooking. Lye was added & it was cooked on the stove, poured in pans & cut in bars.

The clothes were sorted into batches. Whites, light colored & dark colors. Each batch was washed in the same washer water beginning with the lightest and ending with the darkest batch. They were rinsed in 2 tubs of water. All the water was packed in and out of the house again and heated on the stove. Sometimes 2 batches of each color were washed, making even 6 batches washed in the same water. All the white clothes were boiled to keep them white. It's amazing how clean clothes would get—compared to automatic washers and dryers of today.

We had a cellar dug in the ground in the rear of the house. It was mostly in the ground and a round mound of dirt over the top. Here all the bottled fruit and vegetables were stored for winter use. It wouldn't

35 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

36 Verda Stoker Nelson, *Autobiography of Verda Stoker Nelson*. This autobiography was taped at the home of Verda's daughter, Tonya Nelson Myers, on March 10, 1977. The typed form is part of Verda Nelson Stoker's records. p. 3b.



**The Jesse Stoker family, 1928: Back Row left to right—Jane, Thelma, Lee, Leslie, Herman
Front Row—Eunice, Jesse, Verda, Allen, Lettie, and Ivan**

freeze, but kept things cold even cooler in the summertime. We had a pickle barrel and root cellar (dirt shelf) for apples, carrots, potatoes, etc. Milk also was kept there in pans.³⁷

Ivan gets stung

According to Verda, Ivan battled the bees one day:

We had many hives of honey bees out in the field. One day my brother, Ivan, went out to care for them or to gather the honey. He put on a large brimmed straw hat cov-

ered with cheese cloth which covered the hat and tucked in his shirt neck. Long topped gloves with his shirt sleeves tucked in and his pants legs tied tightly around his ankles.

He went out to the bee hives and somehow his bee-bonnet came loose and a swarm of bees attacked him. He came running to the house screaming, "Pump water, pump water!" I pumped and he litterly lay in the horse trough rubbing bees off his face and in his hair. He surely got stung.³⁸

37 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson, Book # 1, pp. 9-11.*

38 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson, Book # 1, p. 14.*

Lee takes scoring honors

During the winter of 1928-1929 Lee played a lot of basketball. The Roy ward completed its new



Genevieve Garner and her grandfather, Jesse Stoker

recreation Hall and the team had a first class place to play. Lee was coaching as well as playing. As Lee told it:

...I got quite a little publicity in the *Ogden Standard Paper* as the highest scoring player in the Ogden area of four stakes with 172 points in 9 games. ...I was also voted by the team to be captain and coach while I played at Roy.³⁹

Lee was especially elated that these honors came

while he was courting his sweetheart, Ethel.

1929

A wedding

Lee was Jesse and Lettie's fifth child to marry. He and Ethel Blanch were engaged at Christmas time 1928. In middle of February, Lee began working for Ira Ure, a Roy farmer, plowing, working ground, and seeding the crops, irrigating and cultivating them.. Lee noted:

We worked from 7 to 5 o'clock with an hour off at noon so the horses could eat their dinner. It was tiring to walk nine hours in the loose dirt a day but when one got used to it, it all came in a days work.

...I saved my money as much as I could and had about \$200 saved to get married with.⁴⁰

Ethel tells about the events surrounding her marriage on June 12:

I went to Roy and spent the night as we were going to the Logan Temple. Lee's dad and mother were going with us. We were then going to Burley, Idaho for our honeymoon to visit Grandma Stoker's sister and husband, Ursel and Rhoda Taylor. At the last minute, Lee's sister and her husband, Jane and Marvin Venable, decided to go.

Also Lee borrowed his brother's, Leslie's car. I remember we left before daylight 4 A.M. Dirt roads.

Temple is a blur. ...Joseph Shepherd talked to us for a while then he performed the ceremony that made plain Ethel Blanch, Mrs. Lee Stoker.

The only people there were Lee's dad and mom, some relatives of Lee's that just happened to be there, Addie Lowe and husband Jane and Marvin didn't decide to go till the last thing so they didn't have a recommend.

39 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

40 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

The honeymoon and family reunion

Ethel continues her narrative:

We then drove up Logan canyon headed toward Soda Springs. ...I thought Soda Springs would never show up. ...After a nights rest we drove to Rockland where we attended a Allen family reunion and spent the night. Then drove to Burley.⁴¹

Lee tells about the family reunion:

...after several hours driving, we arrived in Rockland, Idaho. We went to the house of my father's uncle and aunt. They were Uncle Joseph Allen and his wife, Cindy. They were happy to see Dad and Mother and the rest of us. The next day we attended the Allen family reunion in the Rockland ward church house and met many of our relatives on the Allen side of our family.



Jesse, Lettie, Ethel and Lee on honeymoon trip

had been a bad hail storm in our home town of Roy and the southwest part of Roy had been hit and the crops destroyed. Ira Ure that I worked for was expecting ripe tomatoes by July 4 and the hail beat the vines until only the stems were left. My brother, Herman, had a field of tomatoes destroyed.⁴²

Eunice Stoker Southwick wrote to Jim Stoker:

When your parents went on their honeymoon. I was left to take care of the little ones at home. The tomatoe plants on our farm were growing beautifully. It was the middle of June. Grandpa and Grandma went with them.

A tornado and hail storm swept across Roy and Clinton. The hail beat all of the tomatoes into the ground.

The wind was strong enough that it picked a horse up and hurled it across the road into a neighbor's field. I was so frightened being there with the kids.

It was Sunday. They came home that afternoon right after the storm settled. Dad had to replant his entire tomatoe crop.⁴³

The storm

After visiting Ursel and Rhoda Taylor in Burley, Jesse and Lettie with the honeymoon party, headed back to Utah. Lee Stoker described the trip:

We left Burley to go home on the morning of June 16 and traveled through Pocatello and through Logan, Utah. ...Just before we arrived in [Logan]..., it began to rain. The rain came so hard the windshield wiper could not keep the water off the windshield.

... When we arrived home we found there

Herman gave up a new pair of shoes

In the summer of 1929 Herman had an opportunity along with others in Roy to be hired by Amasa Hammon to work on some road work up Weber Canyon. Stopping in Ogden, Herman bought a brand new pair of work shoes.

After a few hours of work, Herman whose one foot was shorter than the other was in dreadful pain. To ease the pain, Herman's cousin, Lee Hammon, took off his old broken-in shoes and traded them to Herman. Herman had no pain while wearing the old shoes and Lee Hammon walked away in a new pair,

41 Ethel Elizabeth Blanch Stoker, *Strive Diligently: The Memoirs of Ethel Elizabeth Blanch Stoker*, edited by Jimmie "B" Stoker. Draft form 1990. pp. 43-45.

42 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

43 Letter from Eunice Stoker Southwick to Jim Stoker, April 20, 1992.

pleased with the outcome.⁴⁴

Take me out to the ball game

Lee took his bride out to watch him play baseball. Even his employer cooperated. Lee described that and how he hurt his pitching arm:

We always got Saturday afternoon off as that was baseball time in the county and Ira Ure was a great baseball player who played first base for Roy for close to 20 years.

I started pitching in 1928 and 1929. While batting in a game against West Point, I got hit by a pitched ball on the inside muscle of my right arm. The manager kept me pitching the rest of the game.

My arm was so stiff and sore I was not able to throw with the proper action of my arm. I hurt my muscle in my shoulder and could only throw a short time in a game after that.⁴⁵

Jesse and Lettie deliver bad news

Ethel Blanch Stoker tells how as a new bride she received the tragic news of her father's death:

On the 26th of June, Grandpa and Grandma Stoker got Lee from work. They all came home and told me Dad had been raking hay and the team—just breaking one horse—had ran away with him on the rake and they went thru a ditch. Dad fell off and broke his neck. He lived until the boys got him home, then he passed away. Lee and I went to West Weber.⁴⁶

Not much of a harvest

Eunice Southwick described the 1929 Stoker harvest:

Then that fall there was an early frost and took everything except the first picking of tomatoes.

It was the custom then that the canning company always furnished the tomatoe

plants and held out the cost from the payment to the farmers when the harvest was over. Dad's check for that crop that year was 37 cents. He gave me the check to buy my school lunch that day.

The fall we moved to Morgan there was an early frost and he lost most of his crop that year. They always ran a grocery bill with the little store owned by the canning company. He didn't get enough out of the crop that year to pay the grocery bill.

I remember his paying the bill out of the milk checks he got from a bunch of cows he had in Morgan. When they moved to Morgan, they hired movers to take them there and dad borrowed enough from me to pay the movers. They were really having a tough time.⁴⁷

Lee moved to West Weber

In the fall of 1929 before his parents departed for Morgan, Lee and Ethel moved from Roy to West Weber to help her family. As Lee explained:

When fall came, Glen Blanch came out where I was working and asked me if I would move to West Weber and help his brothers John, Don, and Grant.

Someone needed to help harvest the beets or George who was in college would have to come home.

...I agreed to go help. I quit my job at Ure's farm and we moved to West Weber to help Mother Blanch.

...When I arrived in West Weber I was ...asked to play and coach the Basketball team. ...So I coached the West Weber boys and did some playing with them. The boys in Roy came and wanted me to play with them also because I had been lucky enough to make the most points for them. I played with them also. I had lots of basketball that year.⁴⁸

44 Story told by Lee Hammon Stoker to Jimmie "B" Stoker.

45 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

46 Ethel Elizabeth Blanch Stoker, *Strive Diligently: The Memoirs of Ethel Elizabeth Blanch Stoker*, edited by Jimmie "B" Stoker. Draft form 1990. pp. 46-47.

47 Letter from Eunice Stoker Southwick to Jim Stoker, April 20, 1992.

48 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

1930

Lee and Ethel returned to Roy

Lee and Ethel decided against remaining in West Weber. They thought it best that Lee go back to working for wages. Lee wrote:

...I went back to work for Ira Ure thro the summer of 1930. I started in February doing the same work as the year before, doing the team work with horses and when the water came in I helped irrigate.

...He grew truck garden produce and sold it on the market in Salt Lake City. There was no market on Sundays so we never had to work Saturday afternoon, but we had to work Sunday afternoon to load his truck for the market on Monday morning.¹

In addition to working on the farm, Lee continued to play baseball on Saturday afternoons. About this season, he said, "In one game at North Ogden, I got 3 home runs in one game."²

Because the 4th of July fell on Friday, Lee played with the Roy baseball team on that day in Hooper while his pregnant wife, Ethel, sat watching. The next day, Marvin Venable, Norma Baker, and Lee went swimming in the Great Salt Lake while Ethel and Jane watched. Lee described the event:

It was a hot July day. When we stepped into the mud, it was red hot and burned our feet.

Marvin said, "There is only one way to do it and that is to run right thro the mud as fast as we can. When we get to the water, it will cool our feet. I'll show you how its done."

He ran at top speed into the mud. After about two steps,...he was in trouble. ...His legs looked like the skin of a tomato.³

The trio walked back to a tresle which they used to

avoid the hot mud. After arriving at the water, it was so shallow they had to walk a quarter of a mile before they found it deep enough to swim. Before they finished, Jane and Ethel waved them back. Ethel was going into labor.

Lee and Ethel's first child, Keith, was born 48-hours later, on Monday July 7 in the couple's Roy home with Ethel's mother attending while Dr. Ward delivered him in the middle of the afternoon.

When Fast meeting, the traditional meeting for the blessing and naming of babies in the LDS church arrived in August, Lee was irrigating and unable to attend. Ethel wrote:

...I took the baby to church and had Grandpa Stoker blessed him Leland Keith. He was bless 3 Aug 1930.

...That fall Lee & myself picked tomatoes for Lee's dad. ...That fall also we moved in Lee's Uncle Amasa Hammon's house. Amasa had been elected Weber County sheriff. He moved to Ogden. Durlin and Marion, his sons, stayed in part of the house. I fed them for the rent.⁴

Lee added:



Keith in window of Hammon Home

1 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

2 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

3 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*, p. 59.

4 Ethel Elizabeth Blanch Stoker, *Strive Diligently: The Memoirs of Ethel Elizabeth Blanch Stoker*, edited by Jimmie "B" Stoker. Draft form 1990.

Dad had a field of tomatoes and no one to pick for him. ...It would be more money coming in....I quit my job at Ure farm and Mother tended our baby.⁵

Jesse's tomatoes were hit by an early frost. Eunice wrote:

The fall we moved to Morgan there was an early frost and he [Jesse] lost most of his crop that year. They always ran a grocery bill with the little store owned by the canning company. He didn't get enough out of the crop that year to pay the grocery bill.

I remember his paying the bill out of the milk checks he got from a bunch of cows he had in Morgan.⁶

After picking his Dad's tomatoes, Lee, hearing that Bill Clark, the foreman of a railroad section crew, needed workers, persuaded him to give him the job. Lee had worked for him earlier, in 1923 and 1927. Lee worked on Bill's crew from November until May to keep food on the table.

Herman moves to Idaho

Ora Stoker Whittier wrote:

In the spring of 1930 he [Herman] once again planted his tomato crop. All went well until an early blight infested his fields. He earned enough from his hay and pea crops to pay the rent, but decided he would move his family to Idaho.

His old schoolmate, Dode Neilson, made arrangements for him to bring his family to Lava Hot Springs. On October 30, 1930 Dad loaded a wagon with machinery, hitched a pair of young colts to the wagon and headed toward Idaho. Thanks to the help of good Samaritans who came to his aid along the way, he was able to arrive in Lava Hot Springs six days later. With the help of his dad and Jess Stevens (brother-in-law), the family and furniture were moved into a house located on the banks of

a creek [Demsey Creek] about four miles south of Lava.⁷

Before he left for Idaho, Herman gave his brother, Lee, the third cutting of hay on a small patch of his Roy farm that wasn't harvested. Lee borrowed his Dad's mower to cut it and a rake to rake it. The hay was hauled to the Hammon farm where it was fed to his two milk cows.⁸

Jesse Stoker and his family in Morgan

Late in 1930 Jesse Stoker settled his family in Morgan. Eunice remembered that "When they moved to Morgan, they hired movers to take them there and Dad borrowed enough money from me to pay the movers. They were really having a tough time."⁹ Verda wrote:

I was too young to realize all that went on during the beginning of the depression of '29 and '30. But because my parents couldn't pay off the remaining mortgage on our farm, we traded it for a smaller one in South Morgan.

It was situated so our house was in the city and the barn was outside the city limits. The barn sat up near the road and the house back quite a way. A small creek ran through the yard and a bridge across to the house. It was across the street from the cemetery and hills where we went hiking in the summer and sledding in the winter. The home was bought from a Cazaier family.

...The house had a bathroom and 3 bedrooms. I had my own room for the first time. . . .I left Roy mid-year of my third grade.

1931

Eunice marries

Eunice Stoker married Lee Southwick, the son of

5 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

6 Letter from Eunice Stoker Southwick to Jim Stoker, April 20, 1992.

7 Ora Stoker Whittier, "Life Sketch of Herman Deloss Stoker."

8 Lee Hammon Stoker in telephone conversation to Jim Stoker, November 17, 1995.

9 Letter from Eunice Stoker Southwick to Jim Stoker, April 20, 1992.

William Isaac Southwick and Mary Louis Campbell, on January 14, 1931 in the Salt Lake Temple.

Jesse and his family adjusts to Morgan

Verda stated, "We had the first radio I remember while we were here in Morgan. ..." In another history, she recorded, "Dad liked to listen to operas over the radio. He loved music."¹⁰

Verda tells about the movies:

We could buy a family theater pass for \$10 per month per family. The show was on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nites. These are when we saw "Our Song," "Oliver and Hardy," "Shirley Temple" & such movies.

...Jane and Marvin lived with us in Morgan for a while during the depression until they could find work and a home.¹¹

Eunice added:

Jane and Marvin moved in with Grandpa and Grandma in Morgan and they invested in chickens to try to pick up a little extra. As I remember, the chickens contracted some kind of disease and they lost on that venture.¹²

Jesse's sons in Lava Hot Springs

In the summer of 1931 Lee worked on a pea viner for the Rocky Mountain Packing Corporation, harvesting peas in West Point and in Huntsville. When the harvest was over in the fall of 1931, Lee was without a job. The depression was underway. He said, "I went to answer an ad as a truck driver. When I got there, a line of over 100 men were waiting to apply for that one job." Consequently, Lee joined his brother Herman in Lava Hot Springs. Ethel Blanch Stoker writes:

Herman wanted Lee to go to Lava Hot Springs and help him harvest potatoes & hay as he needed the help. Herman was dry farming so no money coming in except milk check.

Lee went to Lava while I stayed and worked in the tomato factory in Roy. After

the tomato season ended,... we moved furniture and all to Lava in Stoker's Dodge panel truck. We moved in a two room log cabin up Dempsy Creek. No electricity, no phone, water had to be carried from the creek.

A Stoker Christmas present

Ethel Blanch Stoker continued her narrative:

...I was getting bigger and bigger [Ethel was pregnant with Jesse]. January was fast approaching.

We were in the hills where we could get snowed in but with no money to get out. All we had was two cows. We had plenty of potatoes & I had bottled lots of fruit so we had plenty to eat.

And for some reason I was not worrying. However its a good thing someone did our worrying for us. One day a car drove to the bottom of the hill. It was Grandpa Stoker.

He had gotten Marvin to bring him up and brought Lee's brother Ike [Ivan] to stay and milk our cows & feed the horses so he could take us back to Utah with him.

How grateful I am for their thoughtfulness and unselfishness. As Stokers had lost their farm or had to sell it and had moved to Morgan, Utah and all they had was their cows and a few chickens. This was just before Christmas.

We stayed with them in Morgan doing nothing until I could take it no longer. Allen and Verda were 10 & 12. They argued and played so loud I thot I was going off my rocker.

I persuaded Lee to take me to West Weber to Mothers which he did about the 15 of January. I definately feel sorry now and it has haunted me to think Stokers was kind enough to spend their meger earnings to see that we had the proper care and I was not appreciative of it.¹³

Part of Ethel's problem was the lack of privacy she

10 Verda Stoker Nelson, *Autobiography of Verda Stoker Nelson*, p. 6.

11 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, pp. 18-19.

12 Letter from Eunice Stoker Southwick to Jim Stoker, April 20, 1992.

craved. In addition to Allen and Verda, Jesse and Lettie had additional married children in their home during that time period.

Verda reported:

Eunice and Lee [Southwick] also lived with us for a while. Eunice gave birth to her first child, Barbara, at our home on December 29, 1931. She died 7 Jan. 1932. The morning of her death I looked at her and called to my brother, Allen, "Come, see Barbara—she isn't red any more."

Mother immediately knew something was wrong and she called Dr. Abbott, who came right over. Eunice held her wrapped snugly in a warm blanket as she sat near the Ben Franklin stove and her little spirit left and returned to our Heavenly Father as we all looked sadly on.¹⁴



Allen Stoker

The moves in 1932

Herman and Lee move to Burley

As Ethel Blanch Stoker tells it:

While we were still in Utah, Herman had made a trip to Burley, Idaho and with Uncle Ursel's [Taylor] help rented a 80 acre farm as well as a 40 acre one in hopes of both of us bettering ourselves. Herman took the larger farm while we farmed the smaller one in Springdale.

Ivan's cool birthday warmed up

Early in February, Lee Stoker, leaving his wife and family in West Weber, returned to Lava Hot Springs to help Herman move their families' belongings to Burley. Driving a borrowed one ton truck from Amasa Hammon which had a cattle rack loaded with six milk cows, Lee drove off leaving Herman to drive a team of horses pulling a wagon loaded with hay. Ivan walked behind driving 14 head of dry stock, mostly calves. As Lee tell it:

It was afternoon when I left the ranch and when I came to the wagon and outfit they had traveled almost to Pocatello, maybe about 5 or 6 miles out. ...the snow had got soft and when I stopped to talk to the brothers, Ivan had 16 inch high top shoes and the water had soaked through and his feet were wet. Also Herman had taken his turn walking while Ivan drove the horses and his feet also was soaking wet.

I left them and drove on towards Burley and when I turned at the point of the mountain and started north toward the city of Pocatello there was a strong wind coming out of the north and it was beginning to get cold. By the time I got to American Falls it was freezing cold.... The temperature had gone down to 15 degrees above zero.

By the time Lee had delivered the cows to Burley and picked up his cousin, Arlen Taylor, to ride back with him, the temperature had dropped to zero. A wind was blowing out of the east. Lee and Arlen met Herman and Ivan about four miles east of American Falls. The black team on the lead and the bay team next to the wagon were all covered with frost as the steam from their bodies had frozen.

At this point Lee joined his brother, Herman, driv-

13 Ethel Elizabeth Blanch Stoker, *Strive Diligently: The Memoirs of Ethel Elizabeth Blanch Stoker*, edited by Jimmie "B" Stoker. Draft form 1990. pp. 53-54.

14 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, p. 19

ing the animals. They loaded the truck with some of the young stock being driven and sent Ivan and Arlen with the truck back to Burley.

Lee continues his narrative:

It had warmed up to 15 degrees above and the snow on the road was froze hard as ice. The steel rims on the wheels when they rolled on the snow were so cold the snow froze to them and they had sharp pointed ice on them and when they rolled on the snow covered road they made a loud noise.

As darkness approached the men stopped at a ranch where a man said they could put up for the night. The man said he could hear them coming an hour before they arrived. The next morning Herman and Lee continued making their way west. As Lee noted:

Our horses had no shoes on and no cleats to grip the ice with so they slipt sometimes going to their knees pulling the wagon up the hill. After many stops to rest the weary horses we arrived at the top of the hill. The sun was shinning bright and the weather was clear and was it cold.

At the top of the hill we met Ivan and Arlen coming back with the truck. They got out and we grabbed Ivan and gave him a birthday licking there on the road. It was his 18th birthday so I can well remember that day [February 17].

A switch was made. Lee and Herman took over the truck while Arlen and Ivan drove the animals. After Lee and Herman arrived in Burley that night, the temperature dropped to 17 degrees below zero. Lee recorded:

The boys [Ivan and Arlen] drove from their camp on the desert to Rupert the next day and stayed at the home of Uncle Frank Hammon. He said they came in his house and went and layed on the floor in front of the stove until bedtime.¹⁵

After the move to Burley, Lee and Ivan drove Amasa Hammon's truck back to Utah. Lee abandoned his car in Lava Hot Springs because he didn't have money to buy gasoline. Ethel's family drove

Lee and his family back to Burley.

Minnie, Herman's wife, described her Burley home:

Our eighth home—In February 1932, we migrated to Burley Idaho, Unity Ward. Herman had rented a farm and the house had four good rooms, two of which were bedrooms filled with bedbugs! I fought bedbugs all summer, but finally got them exterminated with kerosene and boiling hot water. This was another special home because Vaughn was born here on 26 May 1932.¹⁶

Verda reads to her father

During the long winter evenings and at various other times in Morgan, Jesse had his youngest child, Verda, read to him. She writes:

During this time I would spend a lot of hours reading from the paper and Church books to my father. He had gotten a piece of red root weed in his eye, causing him to have infection and to lose eyesight in one eye.

His other eye was weak so he was unable to read for a period of time. Later his good eye gained strength and he could see all right. I still have his little black rimmed glasses that he wore in those days to read.¹⁷

Uncle Ursel and Aunt Rhode helps out

The Lee and Herman were faced with many challenges. The first was their lack of money. As Ethel describes it:

We borrowed from the [government], but before they would give us any money we had to buy what we needed for the farm and take the receipt to them and they would reimburse us.

We were in a pickle. No money to buy with and being new comers no one would extend credit to us. Thank goodness again for a great uncle. Uncle Ursel would charge what we needed and we would pay him.

15 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

16 Minnie Ora Childd, "Family History," as compiled by Carol Stoker Satchwell.

17 Verda Stoker Nelson, *Autobiography of Verda Stoker Nelson*, p. 11.

This money was just for farm use.

...At one time neither us nor Herman had flour in the house and Aunt Rhoda came to our rescue again. She was the president of Satr Ward Relief Society and she found that the government was giving flour to needy people so she and Uncle Ursel brought us each a sack. We were so grateful to them as it's hard to feed kids and hard working adults on just potatoes and milk.¹⁸

Jesse and Lettie help their children in Burley

Although Jesse and Lettie had their own problems in Morgan, they were able to dig deep to help their children in Burley. As Ethel Blanch Stoker tells it:

It was now nearing time to cut our grain. ...It was cut with a binder that cut the grain and tied the grain in bundles. Only we didn't have any money to buy the twine. Here Stokers came thru again.

I don't know how they knew we didn't know what to do but in the mail was a \$10 greenback. This bought twine enough for both us and Herman.

...After the threshing was over Stokers came to see us. The first thing Grandma Stoker said upon seeing Jesse was, "Your-starving him." He did have dark circles under his eyes but he was a good baby and I thot all was well. I gave him some milk in a bottle and after 2 or 3 days he refused to nurse at all. I guess with all my hard work there was no milk for him.

I didn't think I would ever get homesick as long as I had Lee and the boys but when Stokers left I really had a good cry.¹⁹

When Lettie returned to Utah she had much to tell her sister Ethel. Years later Ethel shared what Lettie had told her that year:

I remember...[Lettie] told me how they left ...when they moved to Burley. She said, "Lee and Herman took off with all their belongings on a flat bed hay wagon or truck or which ever with a cow tied behind and other horses along. I am afraid they would never make it there."

One other thing she told me was about her first trip to Burley to see them that same year. She said, "When I got there I heard 'here comes our barber. We all need a haircut.'²⁰

It was obvious that Jesse had another reason to make the trip. He was not content with his farm in Morgan. He was anxious to start over in a new country. Many of his old friends were in Burley. Before the year was out, Jesse found a 160 acre farm across the road and a little east of his son Lee's farm. Near Burley, Jesse could make a new beginning with the help of his sons.

Move to Idaho

Verda writes:

In 1932—the middle of my fifth year[probably, late Novemember or December of 1932] we moved to Springdale (near Burley) Idaho. We moved into a house with an upstairs in it. Lee and Eunice also moved to Idaho and lived with us for a while and then they moved back to Liberty, Utah.

We had a large house and farm just up the street from my brother, Lee, and his wife, Ethel. My closest friend was Hulda Johnson, across the street. I played a lot with Lee's boys, Keith and Jesse.

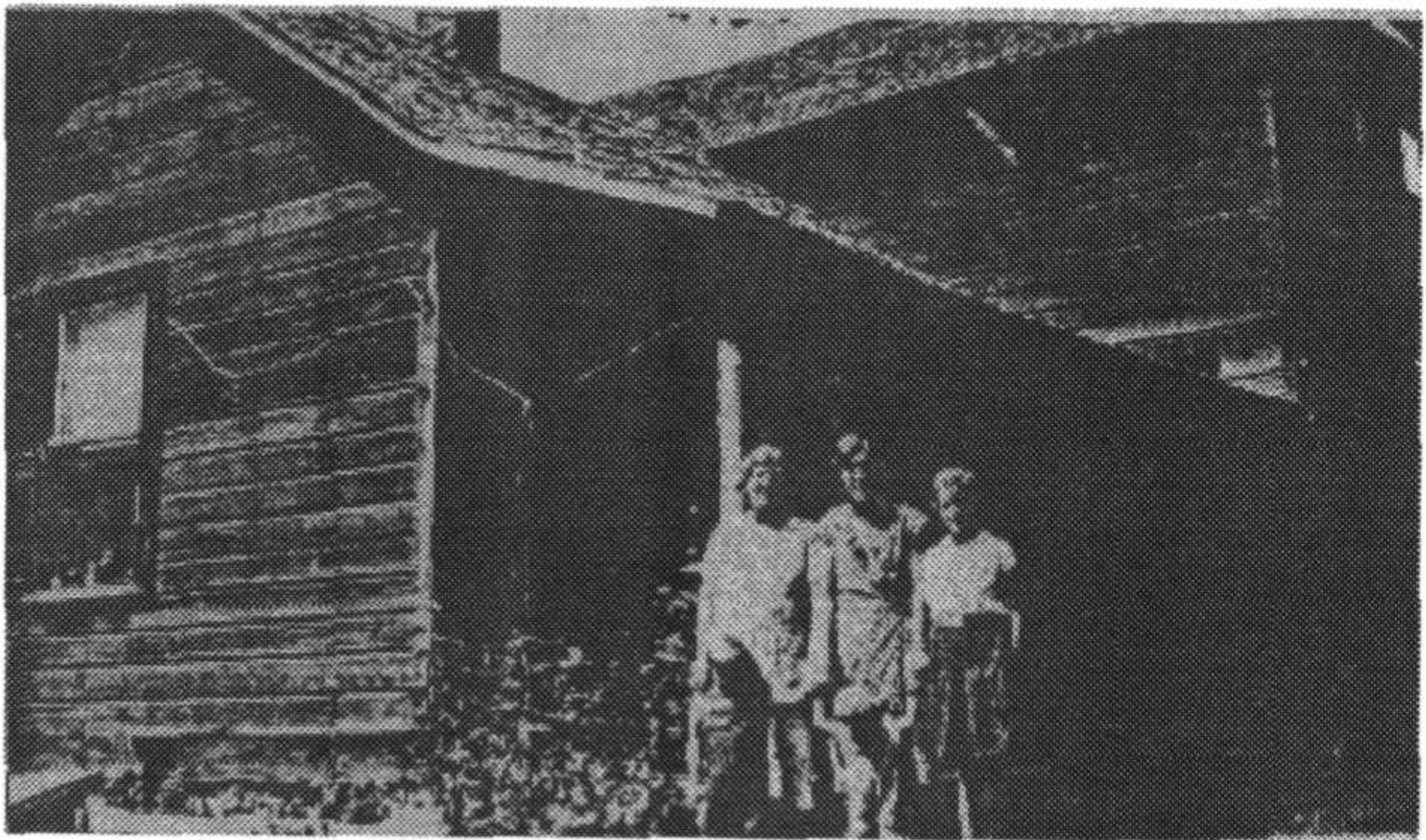
We lived about 3 miles from school. So Allen and I rode a horse. We lived in this house about 1 1/2 years ...²¹

18 Ethel Elizabeth Blanch Stoker, *Strive Diligently: The Memoirs of Ethel Elizabeth Blanch Stoker*, edited by Jimmie "B" Stoker. Draft form 1990. pp. 58-59.

19 Ethel Elizabeth Blanch Stoker, *Strive Diligently: The Memoirs of Ethel Elizabeth Blanch Stoker*, edited by Jimmie "B" Stoker. Draft form 1990. p. 59.

20 Letter from Ethel Hammon McIntire to Lee Hammon Stoker and Ethel Blanch Stoker on their golden wedding anniversary, June 12, 1979.

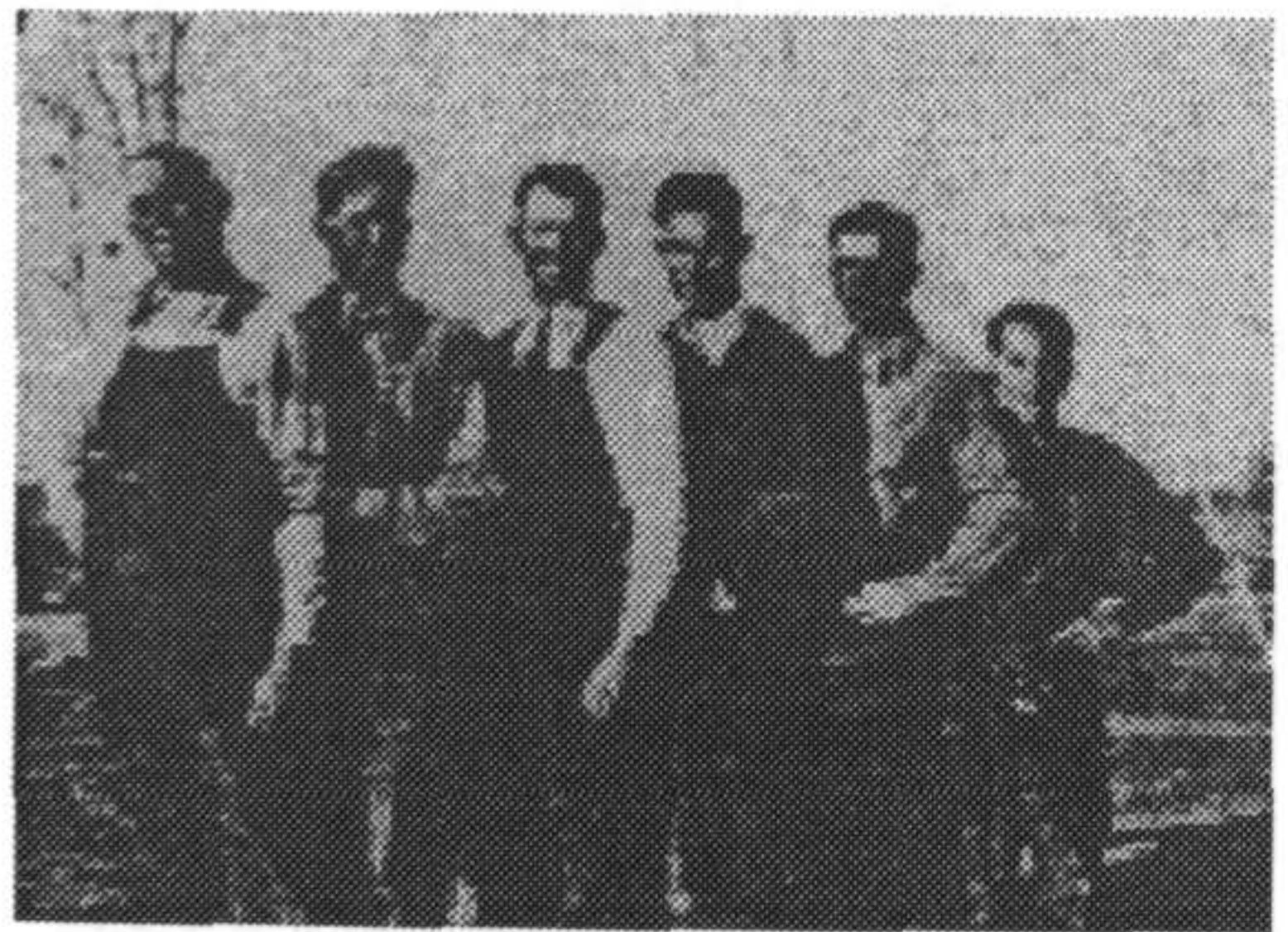
21 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, pp. 19-20.



The Jesse Stoker home, 1933—*Back Row: Lettie, Eunice, and Verda Front Row: Lettie's grandchildren: Keith and Jesse Stoker*



Lettie and daughters, 1933— Lettie, Thelma, Verda, Eunice, and Jane



Jesse and his sons, 1933— Jesse, Herman, Lelie, Lee, Ivan, and Allen

1933

Eunice Stoker Southwick recalled their move to Burley:

...my parents decided to move to Burley, Idaho to operate a farm. They invited us to

go with them and gave Lee a job working for them. We accepted and made our home in one large room of the farmhouse. We enjoyed our summer there, but both got very homesick for the ranch in Liberty. We moved back in the fall.

Ethel Blanch Stoker recorded some of the happen-

ings in 1933:

Grandma & Grandpa Stoker lost out in Morgan so they moved to a farm across from Axel Johnson in 1933; however, they were in the View ward while we were in



Jesse's children and grandchildren, 1933—Left to right: Eunice and Lee Southwick, Marvin Venable, Nell Stoker, Wayne and Ruth Venable, Annie and Leslie Stoker, and Jane Venable

the Springdale. It was very good now to have family close. Their daughter, Lee's sister, Eunice, and her husband, Lee Southwick, moved with them; however, they all



Stoker beet crew: Earl Stoker, Herman Stoker, Fred Sodencamp, Lee Stoker, and Lee Southwick

lived in the same big house. They only lived there one year & Lee & Eunice moved back to Roy.

Verda described the house that Jesse moved his family into:

We moved into a three bedroom home with an upstairs. Eunice and Lee Southwick and their son, Duane, moved in with us. This was one of the largest houses we lived in. We had electricity, but no inside plumbing. Here is where I began real pioneer living.



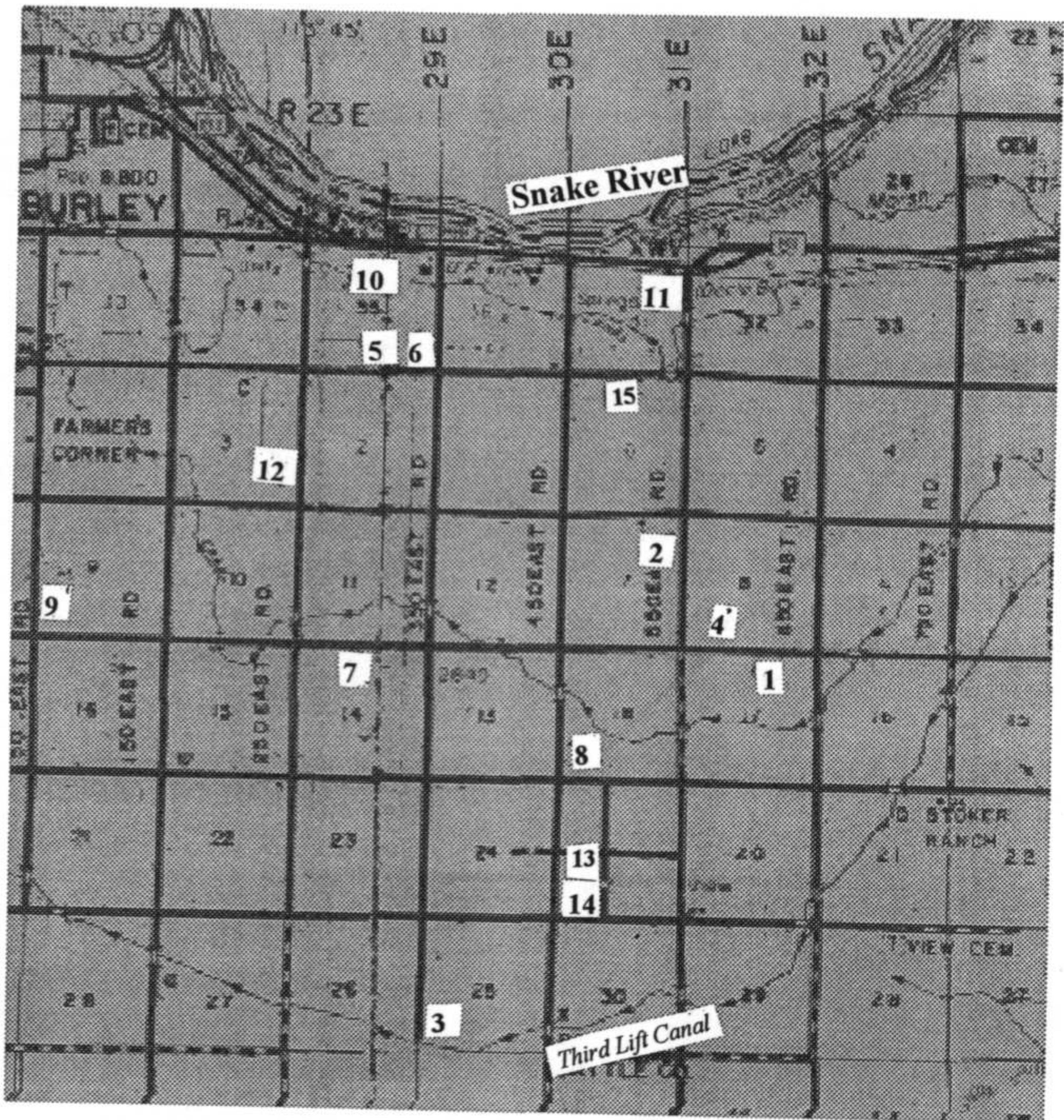
Team of horses help pull truck loaded with beets out of the wet field.

We shared everything—the house and the crops. Lee and Herman, my brothers, both had farms not far from us. We borrowed machinery back and forth because none of us could afford a complete set of equipment all our own.

The house was pretty run down when we moved into it. Mother, Eunice and I painted, decorated and fixed the house up inside as well as planted flowers to fix the yard up. It was a lovely place to live. In fact, it looked so nice, our landlord sold it after we had lived there only one year.²³

22 Eunice Stoker Southwick, "Autobiography of Eunice Southwick written in 1978."

23 Verda Stoker Nelson, *Autobiography of Verda Stoker Nelson*, p. 11.



The Stoker residences near Burley, Idaho

1. Jesse Stoker (1933); 2. Jesse Stoker (Listen place, 1934); 3. Jesse Stoker (Robinson place, 1935-1936)
 4. Lee Stoker (1932-1935); 5. Lee Stoker (1936); 6. Lee Stoker (1937-1946); 7. Herman Stoker (1932); 8.
 Herman Stoker (1933-1938); 9. Herman Stoker (1938-1943); 10. Herman Stoker (1944-198?) 11. Springdale
 LDS Church; 12. Unity LDS Church; 13. View School; 14. View LDS Church; 15. Springdale School

Scale: approximately each standard square is 1 square mile.

Jesse's oldest son, Herman, also moved to another farm. Minnie described it:

After one year we were on the move again—1933—this time the ward was View and the house was small, with three small rooms and a back porch. There was electricity and I could use my washer again! This also turned out to be a special house for Lynn was born here on 7 January 1935. This was home number nine, both Deloss and Lloyd started school here in View. We lived here four and a half years.²⁴

The harvest

The fall of 1933 the men all worked together in the harvest. Earl Stoker and Fred Sodencamp came from Roy to help in the beets. It was hard work topping beets by hand then throwing them in the truck. The fall was so wet horses had to help pull the truck out of the field.²⁵

1934

Jess Stoker moves to the Listen place in Springville

Verda remembered that her family lived on a place just north of their first Burley home for about a year. Again she and Allen rode horses to school.²⁶

A dry year and the white fly

The Stokers farmed together. Lee tells of his personal problems which were, no doubt, shared by his father:

In 1934 we had a very light winter and the word was put out that the Snake River watershed was the driest it had ever been since a record had been kept. We planted our crops in February and our beets were ready to thin the first of May. Some years

we never got them all planted by that time. We got the beets thinned and they really looked great.

We were told they would only be able to deliver one foot of water per acre so to take good care of our water and use it sparingly. We had great hopes of a banner year. ...It looked like we would have a good year despite the water shortage.

Having been raised in Utah where we were used to having to water day and night we were sure we could raise a crop with less water than was usually delivered to us in Idaho.

About the first week in June our beets had the rows full of leaves and we could start laying them aside from cultivation. One day I noticed the beets looked like they were dry and needed water but on close observation they had plenty of moisture.

Then I realized the beets had been stung by a small insect called white fly. In a few more days they had the leaves all shrivelled up and the crop was dead.

Well, we never had to waste water on the beets anymore so I used it on the beans, potatoes, and hay & grain.²⁷

The white fly damaged not only the beets, but also much of the bean crop. The hay produced a normal crop. The potatoes produced 200 sacks per acre which was good considering the year. Unfortunately, Lee had only 6 acres of this cash producing crop.

Sagebrush gathered for firewood

Struggling to make ends meet, the Stokers gathered sagebrush for fuel. Lee recorded:

Herman and I took our team and went out ...east of Rupert in the lava beds and got sage brush that had grown bigger than that on the desert. We also got a few cedar trees, After this we went to the mountains in

24 Minnie Ora Child, "Family History," as compiled by Carol Stoker Satchwell.

25 Ethel Elizabeth Blanch Stoker, *Strive Diligently: The Memoirs of Ethel Elizabeth Blanch Stoker*, edited by Jimmie "B" Stoker. Draft form 1990. pp. 66-67.

26 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, p. 20.

27 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

August each year and cut pine trees and brought them home for fuel and they were much better than sage.²⁸

1935

Jess Stoker moves his family to View

Verda recalled:

...then [we] moved a few miles further south to View Ward. We were again about 3 miles from school. I went to View School my 7th and 8th year....I graduated as the Salutarian of our class in 1936.

...Allen and I rode a horse to school & when he went on to Burley High School, he rode a bus. I continued riding a horse to school alone. They had a barn at school to keep the horses in & fed them hay. The church and a little country store was always next to the school.

Mother would pack us a lunch—usually peanut butter and jam sandwiches. These were wrapped in newspaper and packed with a cookie or apple & a jar of milk in a small 5 lb. honey bucket with a lid on. We hung it on the saddle horn to go to.

Sometimes she would wrap a raw egg & put in the top. This we would give to the store owner in exchange for a sucker or piece of candy. He sold the eggs to other people. Money was scarce and most things were exchanged to other people for things they had that you didn't.

While we were in View, I began attending Mutual. My brothers Ivan and Allen would take me because it was so far away and at night.

We lived beside the 3rd lift canal which was the largest and furthest south in the whole valley. We had no electricity here and burned sagebrush in our kitchen stove

for cooking and in the living room for warmth. We had sheds for the car and machinery—a granery, and a barn. We had livestock enough for our own needs.

Ivan had a beautiful voice and sang in church and in the road show.²⁹

Lee Stoker said that Ivan often sang in the Carl Moline orchestra which played for many dances.³⁰

Grain harvest and the threshers

In the heat of July and August, the grain ripened on the farms near Burley. Threshing was a community effort. The men with teams and wagons followed the threshing machine, usually pulled by a Rumley tractor, from farm to farm to help each other. Feeding this group of hungry men was another chore. Verda wrote:

My mother taught all of us girls to cook. She was an excellent cook. ...When I was about 14, I used to help cook for threshers. ...The farmers and hired help would group together. ...the home they were working on would prepare 3 big meals per day until their grain was done. This took about 3 days. The crew would consist of anywhere from 10 to 20 men.

We cooked all day long to feed them. The meals were like big Thanksgiving dinner.³¹

Allen and Ivan tease

Verda writes:

Allen was always a big tease and always called me, "birdbrain." I just hated the name and would run to the house crying.

He and Ivan when they knew I was walking alone down the lane from Eva Mae's or Anna's would always bark like a coyote. Our house was on the edge of the valley and often coyotes would be in the area. They would call to me, "Hurry up,. There's a coyote after you."³²

28 Lee Hammon Stoker, *The Lee Hammon Stoker Story*.

29 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, p. 21.

30 Lee Hammon Stoker conversation with Jim Stoker, June 29, 1995.

31 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, p. 28.

32 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, p. 30.

1936

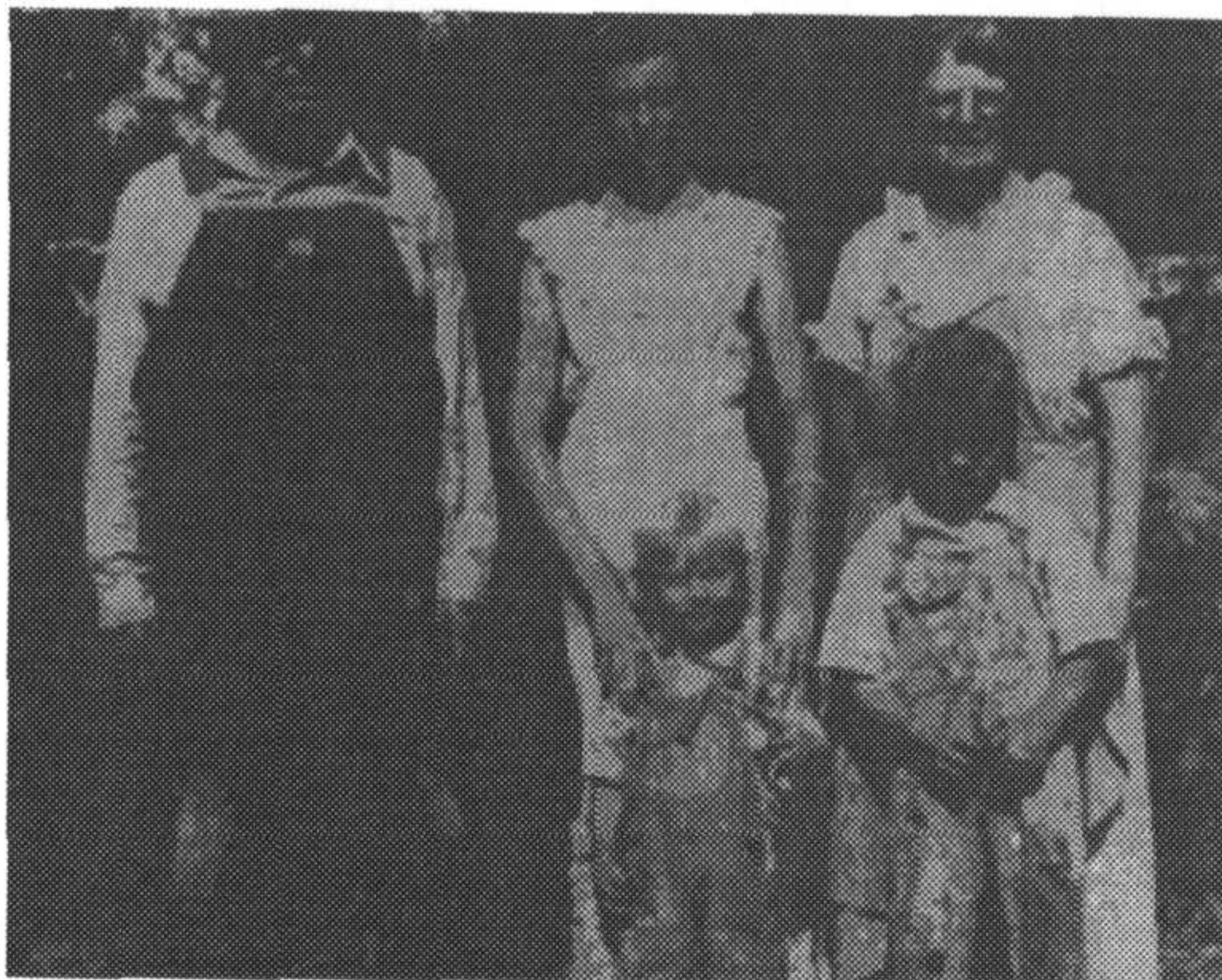
Snow and flood

Verda recounted:

We had lots of snow and wind in Idaho and

house. This caused the water to back up and flood our farm. We sat about 3 feet lower than the canal and ditches on 3 sides of us.

Mother pulled all the bedding on the sides of the bed and piled it on top of the beds & piled high all she could by the time a foot



Spring 1936—*Back Row:* Jesse Stoker, Verda who is wearing her 8th grade graduation dress, Lettie Stoker *Front Row:* Jesse Grant Stoker and Leland Keith Stoker

one morning I walked to school in a bad snow storm. By lunch time a wind came up causing huge snow drifts. We lived down a 3/4 mile lane and the banks on both sides of the road were very high. When this strong wind blew it virtually filled the road even with the high snow banks....

My brother Herman and his family lived in another direction from school. Mother sent Ivan on a horse with a suitcase of clothes for me and told me to go to my brothers and stay. The snow was too deep to go home.... I stayed there for 10 days.

It was in February and we had a chinook wind which melted the snow very quickly. The canals and ditches were all frozen over. Ice jammed by the headgates by our

of water came inside the house. The area around the house and barns were covered with with about 3 feet of water. Our car and all the implements were covered half way over. The chickens and turkeys roosted on the car top & fences. Dad opened the corral gate and let the stock out into the field to find higher ground.

I appeared on the bridge by the driveway about this time and met Mother carrying a baby lamb under each arm. It was lambing time and she and Dad carried all the little new born one out. She said, "Go on back. We're being flooded out."

We moved in with her sister, Rhoda Taylor & stayed four days.

The water had receded some, but was

frozen over when down to about one foot level. We went in breaking through the ice with each step. The chickens and turkeys had ice rings on their legs where they had stood in water when it froze. We caught them one by one and held them in pans of tepid water to thaw and break the ice rings off.

The hay molded in the hay stack. Grain in the granery was wet. the car was full of mud and wouldn't run.

Inside the house the water had receded leaving about 4 inches of mud everywhere. The pots and pans in the cupboard had mud and water in it. We spent about a week cleaning up the mess.³³

Typhoid fever strikes

Again Verda writes:

This small community of "View" had a typhoid fever epidemic this year. Every one had typhoid shots. These made us very ill and about half the kids missed school. One of my best friendds caught it. All her hair fell out and she wore a hat until her hair grew back in.

Mother left home as a practical nurse and helped doctors and families wherever she could. The drs even called her to help them deliver babies.

Everyone in the community was ill. We had 28 people in the ward of "View" die of typhoid. Schools and all were closed for sometime. The source was in our drinking water—which had to be corrected.

My father was a good cook and house keeper. He was very neat and when Mom was away helping with a new baby or an ill person, he would help me to keep the house in order.

...We always got up about seven. Dad usually was up at 5 or 6—had a fire going—to warm the house and did the early morning chores. Mother got up shortly after and we

always ate together as a family. We always had dinner at 12:00 noon and supper about 6:00 Dad always let us rest about 1 hr. after dinner before we went back tot he field. We always quit about 5:00.

We played penochle or checkers a lot in the winter time. We attended our church meetings, went to town always on Saturday.³⁴

Jess turns to lambs

As the crops of 1936 were harvested, Jess was distressed that he didn't show much profit. He turned to the idea of fattening lambs on the beet tops that were left in the fields. With his brother-in-law Ursel Taylor's help, Jess bought 800 lambs. With the flame kindled of his days of youth, Jess cared for those sheep. He pitched at tent alongside the animals and carefully tended to their needs. He made sure they had plenty of water and when the feed was exhausted, he led the flock into other fields.

From the sale of the lambs, Jess was to make a profit. He was able to reimburse his brother-in-law and was able to show a modest gain with which he would move his family back to Roy, Utah.³⁵

The return to Utah

Verda writes:

When the harvest was over in the fall of 1936, Dad's health had begun to fail considerably. He had asthma and a bad heart.

The decision was made to sell out the farm and return to Utah. Dad gave Ivan a share of the money with which he and a friend Bill Nordstrom set out on their own. Allen and I moved back to Roy, Utah with Mother and Dad.

We all moved into a small red frame house located near "Death Curve" in which Lee and Eunice, my sister, was living.

My brother, Leslie and brothers-in-law, Lee Southwick and Marvin Venable, were in the construction business at this time. Jane and Marvin Venable had built a small

33 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, pp. 23-25.

34 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, pp. 25, 27-29.

35 Conversation with Jim Stoker by Lee Hammon Stoker on September 18, 1995.

home at (5661 So. 2700 West- 1979) Roy and had some extra land next door.

They deeded the property to Mother and Dad. The boys took the money from the farm to use to buy the materials—donated their labors, and built a four room house with a modern bathroom. Mother, Dad, Allen and I moved in to the house as soon as it was finished.³⁶

Jane Stoker Venable recalled:

Back among old friends, Father went to church and took his place again in society. He worked for wages for a while. Then he became custodian for the Roy Ward. The wages were not high, \$30.00 per month, but the work required only part time. He was able to rest when he needed to. Mother worked in the Canning Factory and when the water line was put in for Roy, she boarded some of the men who were there on construction.

Father hauled in dirt and fertilizer in a wheel barrow and built up the lot around his house. He planted shrubs and flowers. He was again proud of his home and the things he did.³⁷

Jesse puts the tobacco behind him

It was probably during his stay in Idaho that Jesse finally put tobacco away for good. In the 1931-1932 season many church organizations gave emphasis to living the Word of Wisdom. In 1933 the Congress of the United States had voted to repeal the the 18th or Prohibition amendment. The states were required to vote to ensure its passage. LDS Church president, Heber J. Grant, speaking in October general conference, warned Utah voters:

I request each and every Latter-day Saint within the sound of my voice to read what I said about the Word of Wisdom just six months ago. Every word that I said I meant,

and among other things I said I hoped and prayed that we as a people would not vote for the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment.³⁸

Although the church president's warning was not heeded in Utah, resulting in the repeal of Prohibition, continued zeal was expressed throughout the church meetings for members to avoid not only strong drinks, but tobacco as well. Bishops were counseled to release anyone in positions of teaching or leadership who were not keeping the Word of Wisdom.

Jesse was one of those that was released. After listening for months in church meetings about the evils of breaking the Word of Wisdom, Jesse was ready to agree. Verda said her father, after listening to J. Golden Kimball admonish the saints to put away the liquor and tobacco, came home, gathered up his tobacco, and threw it out.³⁹

1937

Jesse's son selected for the Roy bishopric

In October 1937, Dart O. Bybee was released as second counselor to Bishop Reuben P. Greenwood. Undoubtedly, Jesse and Lettie raised their hands to sustain their son, Leslie Willis Stoker, as the new second counselor to Bishop Greenwood.⁴⁰

1938

A granddaughter sticks up for Jesse

Ruth Venable was keenly aware of her grandfather, Jesse, who lived next door and felt very protective toward him. A family history tells the story:

When Ruth was a teenageer and attending MIA, her grandpa Stoker was the janitor at

36 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, pp. 30-31.

37 Jane Stoker Venable, "The Story of the Life of Jesse Stoker as remembered by Jane Stoker Venable."

38 Richard O. Cowan, *The Church in the Twentieth Century*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1985. p. 131.

39 Verda Stoker Nelson in conversation with Jim Stoker.

40 Lesle W. Stoker, 'Historical Events of the Roy LDS Ward,' as found in Emma Russell, *Footprints of Roy, 1873-1979*, p. 200.



Hammon family reunion in September 1939 up Ogden Canyon—Left to right —*First Row, sitting:* Jane Hammon Baker, and husband, Nathan Baker, Jesse Stoker, and wife, Lettie Hammon Stoker, *Second Row :* Bessie Whittier Hammon and husband, Glenn Hammon; William Clark, and wife, Emma Hawkeswood Hammon Clark; Ursel Taylor, and wife, Rhoda Hammon Taylor, Amasa Hammon and wife, Edith Hobson Hammon; Lancelot Greenwell, and wife, Robena Hammon Greenwell; Frank Hammon, and wife, Elizabeth Jardine Hammon; Ethel Hammon McEntire, and husband, Horace McEntire. While at the reunion, the members of the family heard of Hitler's invasion of Poland over the radio.

the church. He was required to be there to keep the coal in the boiler to warm the building and to handle any other problems.

One night as Ruth was walking home from MIA with Grandpa Stoker, one of the boys (I think she said it was Willie Barton) threw a snowball and hit Grandpa. Ruth got mad and lost her temper. She gave Willie a Dutch blessing he was not likely to forget for many a day.⁴¹

School on 28th and Harrison Ave. My brother, Les, was supt. on the building of it. I think Earl S. Parel was the contractor.⁴²

Jesse and Lettie attend the Hammon family reunion

Jesse and Lettie joined other descendants of Levi Byram Hammon in a family reunion up Ogden Canyon. While they were at this outing, on Friday, September 1, 1939, the news of the Nazi invasion of Poland was heard on the radio .

1939

Leslie Stoker helps build Ogden High School

Verda writes:

They built a new \$1,000,000 Ogden High

41 "Memories of Ruth Venable Reeves," compiled by Edith W. Reeves in the possession of Marlene Venable Eastman, Roy, Utah.

42 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, p. 33.

1940

Allen marries

Jesse and Lettie's youngest son, 19-year-old, Allen, married Helen Betty West on February 24, 1940.

Dedication of the Roy Ward chapel and amusement hall

Jesse Stoker as the custodian of the Roy LDS church was busy during the days leading up to Sunday, March 10, 1940. Finally the Roy ward had paid completely for their chapel and the church authorities were

ready to dedicate it. Never since the building was started in 1908 had the ward members been able to pay off all the debts. This was an important day.

Jesse and Lettie paid attention as their son, Leslie W. Stoker, read the "Historical Events" of the ward during the dedicatory meeting.⁴³

The last child graduates from high school

In the spring of 1940, Verda graduated from Weber High School. She enrolled at the Ogden Beauty School. As she recalled:

My brother, Ivan, paid my tuition to go. I dropped beauty school about 2 months from graduation to accept a job as soda fountain manager of J. J. Newberry Co. which was a chain of 5 & 10 cent stores.⁴⁴

Jesse Stoker birthday party

Ethel Stoker chronicled this event:

On July 15, 1940 the family gathered together for Grandpa's birthday. His birth day is on 17 July. Ora, Herman's daughter and the oldest granddaughter made him a lovely birthday cake. Each family had their picture taken at this time.⁴⁵



Ora presents her grandfather with birthday cake

43 Lesle W. Stoker, 'Historical Events of the Roy LDS Ward,' as found in Emma Russell, *Footprints of Roy, 1873-1979*, pp. 197-200.

44 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, p. 37.

45 Ethel Elizabeth Blanch Stoker, *Strive Diligently*, pp. 87-88.



Jesse Stoker's birthday party celebrating his 66 years held at his home in Roy—*1st Row:* left to right, kneeling, Mary Stoker, Jimmie Stoker, Jesse Stoker with birthday cake; Duane Southwick; Lettie Hammon Stoker holding Robert Stoker, Marlene Venable; Lynn Stoker, *2nd Row:* Elva Garner, Nell Stoker, Jesse Stoker, back of Jesse, Keith Stoker, Lloyd Stoker, Deloss Stoker, Dee Garner, Wayne Venable; Elaine Garner in front of Dale Stoker, Joyce Stoker, Leora Garner holding Leslie Stoker, *3rd Row:* Marvin Venable; Thelma Stoker Garner back of Marvin; Jane Stoker Venable; Eunice Stoker Southwick; Gene Stoker, Genevive Garner, Ora Stoker, Shirley Stoker, *4th Row:* Dewey Garner, Sylvia Bonnie in arms of foster father, Lee Southwick; Vanae Stoker held by Ethel Blanch Stoker with Lee Stoker directly behind them; Verda Stoker, Herman Stoker, Carol Stoker being held by Minnie Child Stoker, Ivan Stoker, *Last Row:* Annie Weston Stoker directly behind Lee Stoker, Leslie Stoker, Betty West Stoker, Allen Stoker

Marriages leave empty beds at the Stokers

For the first time in nearly thirty-nine years, Jesse and Lettie walked around in a nearly empty house—

took Jess and Let to the Jackson Hole country of Wyoming. Verda wrote:

One of the last recollections I have of my



Lettie Matilda Hammon and Jesse Stoker, 1940

no more children underfoot. Verda married Willard E. Nelson on October 3, 1940 in Ogden. On October 25th, Lettie and Jess gave the couple a wedding reception in the Roy ward Hall. Verda recorded:

In those days we did send out wedding invitations to people out of town, but you'd get up at the church pulpit on Sunday morning and announce the dance and reception for thee person. Everyone in the ward would come for entertainment. Everyone got asked to weddding dances. You just didn't make up a wedding list then. Willard's family came for the wedding reception which was very lovely.⁴⁶

father was after Willard and I were married. We took him on a trip to see my Aunt Luiza and Uncle Issac who were his relatives and always treated us great. They had a dude ranch up in Jackson, Wyoming area. It was a nice trip.⁴⁷

Ivan marries

On November 21, 1940 the last of the unmarried children, Ivan Stoker, married Grace Thomas.

The Stoker house did not stay empty. On occasions it was filled not only with children, but with grandchildren as well. Jess and Let were not lonely. Their daughter, Jane, lived within whistling distance.

The newlyweds take Jess and Let to Wyoming

Shortly after Willard Nelson married Verrda, they

46 Verda Stoker Nelson, *Autobiography of Verda Stoker Nelson*, p. 24.

47 Verda Stoker Nelson, *Autobiography of Verda Stoker Nelson*, p. 21.

1941

Verda and Lettie try to find Jesse's camp

Jesse was beginning to slow down. Yet he tried to keep up with his old activities of going to the hills. He accepted the call to accompany a troop of Boy Scouts. Verda wrote:

Dad's health in later life prevented a lot of activity, but he still went to scout camp in South Fork of Ogden Canyon as late as 1941. I had only been married a few months when Mother and I decided to drive her car to see Dad at scout camp.

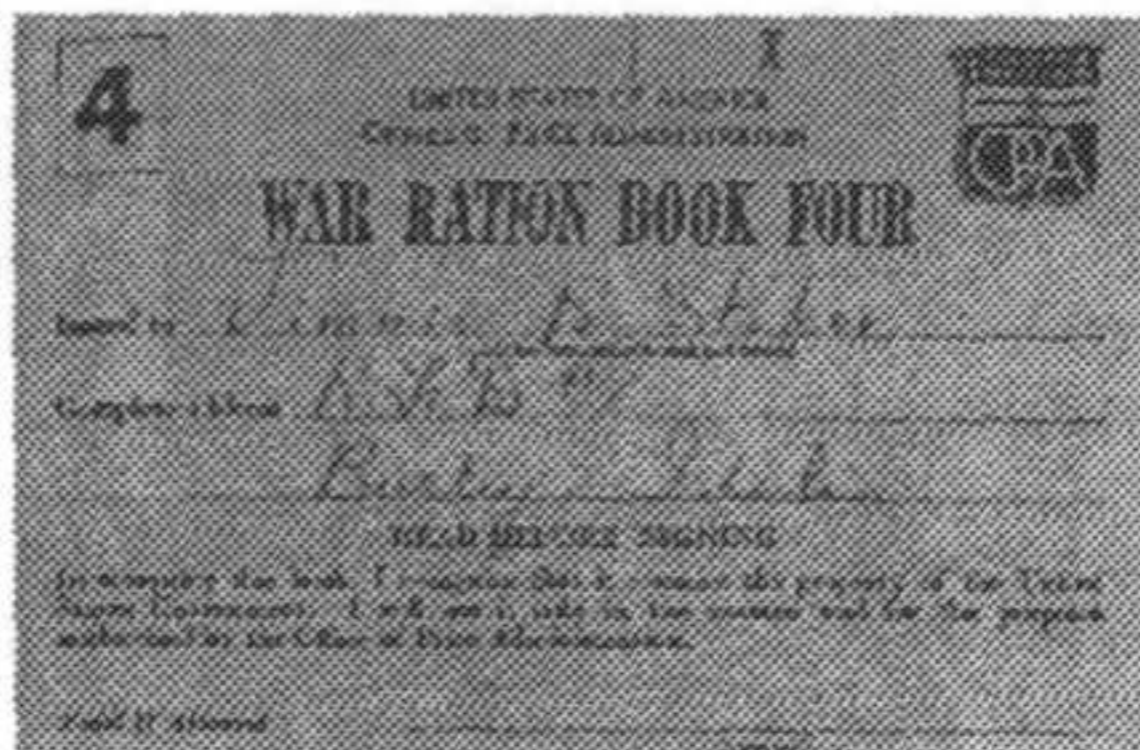
Mother owned an old 1927 Chevrolet car. We started out & somewhere we took a wrong turn, ending up on a narrow road, eventually a creek bed which led us to an absolute dead end with barely enough room to turn around. I cried and asked Mom to pray for us to get out which we did.

Mother didn't panic at all & encouraged me to get out. We gave up looking for the camp and went on home.

Jesse and Lettie go to Oregon

Jesse and Lettie remained in touch with their Idaho children, Herman and Lee. The two brothers had bought a small dairy and we trying to expand production. They started with delivering 75 quarts. Through their dedication, the demand for their rich all-Jersey milk increased. Each of the men milked a small herd of cows which they wanted increase. Ethel wrote:

In the fall of 1941 Grandpa and Grandma Stoker came up. ...Them, Herman & Minnie & us left Burley in Herman's car with trailer behind to go to Oregon to buy some cows.



...we wanted some high producing cows.

Herman bought 2 and so did we....

It was our first trip to Oregon. In fact our first trip anywhere except to Logan & Ogden. While in Portland, we attended the International Stock Show and Fair.

The first night we stayed in Boise, Idaho. It was dark when we arrived so we stopped to the first motel we came to. I had slept in a hotel when we were married and now a motel. We were on the ball. The motel had a kitchen so we ate breakfast before leaving the next morning.

Before we got home, Grandpa Stoker sure wasn't feeling too well. I really worried about him. He at this time, while we were alone, told me that he loved me and thot of me as one of his daughters. I guess he should as I am in the family. I always thot of Grandpa as one of the kindest, gentlest men I have ever known. He often would pull me down on his knee & talk a minute. I'll never forget Grandpa, or Grandma either.⁴⁸

The Pearl Harbor attack

Within weeks of returning from the Oregon trip, Jesse and Lettie heard the ominous news that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. From December 7, 1941 the sleepy town of Roy would never be the same. Verda remembered how things changed:

I, also heard of Pearl Harbor on the radio and wondered how it was to affect us.

...The rationing program was very interesting. We learned a very good lesson from it. We learned never to waste and to share or trade wherever possible.

...Metals became short, as tanks, guns, planes, vehicles and such had to be made for the army—buildings for housing per-

48 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson, Book #1, pp. 7-8.*

49 *Ethel Elizabeth Blanch Stoker, Strive Diligently, p. 83.*

sonel, leather for shoes (army), sugar, gas, canned goods, and cars.

...Every civilian, man, woman, and child, even a newborn baby, were issued "ration books." ...We used so many stamps for canned goods, sugar, shoes, gas, or liquor. People who didn't drink would trade stamps for other commodities. You were limited for gas about like 10 gallons per week.⁵⁰

1942

Jess sees his family growing

During the summer of 1942, Verda was expecting her first baby. She and Willard rented out their basement apartment to Verda's niece and her husband, Ruth Venable and Max Reeves. Ruth was expecting her first child as well.

One day, Verda stopped by her parent's home. Her father was interested in her sewing project. Verda wrote:

...I was out to my mothers sewing a maternity dress. I had no machine. My father laughed as he saw how big I made it and he remarked, "You'll have some baby if you grow to fill that up."⁵¹

The sudden death of Jesse Stoker

On October 30, 1942 Jesse's youngest daughter brought some crab to share with her parents. Her dad

wasn't interested. Verda wrote:

Father said he didn't particularly care for it. I spent the evening with them and we talked about the possibility of Willard's going into the service. Daddy said, "Don't worry, I don't think I'll ever see him go."

After visiting for a while, Verda returned to her home. Her father went ward teaching. Later in the evening, Verda took her car to leave at Willard's work place. He would need it when his shift ended at midnight.

A friend brought Verda home. Stopping for some errands, Verda arrived at her home surprised to see Willard's car in the driveway. She went into the house, but found nobody there. Shortly after, the front door bell rang.

As Verda wrote:

...there stood Willard and my sister, Thelma. Willard said, "We have some bad news for you."

I replied, "It's Daddy!"

"Yes, he's dead."

I was really shocked to realize less than 2 hours earlier I was visiting him and now his life had suddenly passed out of his worldly state.⁵²

Another of Jesse's daughters, Jane, gave the following account of her father's death:

On October 30, 1942 we had talked several times

during the day. We were going to a Halloween party over at the carpenter's union hall. Allen and Betty, and Ivan and Grace were going also. When I was ready to go, I went over and talked with him. He was going to do his ward teaching. At 7:30 we went to



Lettie and Jess in the summer, 1942

50 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, pp. 59-60.

51 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, pp. 62-63.

52 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, pp. 63-64.

the party and at 9:00 P.M. we were called home as Father had passed away.

He had completed his teaching, returned home, eaten a piece of watermelon. He returned his plate to the kitchen and was seated telling Mother how he was going to cut the wood the next day. In the middle of the sentence he stopped talking.⁵³

As Verda described it:

He sat in his favorite brown leather rocking chair, crossed his arms to indicate how he intended to bolt an object. He said, "I think I will bo....t," and at that point his sentence was never finished.

Mother had been watching his arms and as he didn't speak anymore. She looked up at his face. His head hung down and she realized his life had passed away.

Mother was calm and collected. She eased his body from the chair to the floor and immediately picked up the phone. ...It so happened that my sister, Jane, and sister, Thelma, were both on Mother's [telephone party] line. One of Thelma's children and one of Jane's were talking. Mother interrupted them, "Please get some help. Something is wrong with Grandpa."

Les, Jane & Thelma lived very close and within minutes were at Mother's side. By the time I arrived, things were under complete control. ...The mortician had already picked up his body.

We had a very large family and the Roy Ward chapel was filled to capacity for his funeral. His sons were pallbearers, Granddaughters carried the flowers. The flowers were fall masculine arrangements and colors. The halls were filled. He had many friends and neighbors. He had been known as "Uncle Jess" to many others who weren't even his family.⁵⁴

The Obituary

One of the local newspapers carried the following obituary:

Jesse Stoker, 68, prominent Roy farmer, died Friday at nine-thirty p.m. at the family residence of a heart attack.

He was born in Bountiful, July 17, 1874, a son of Bishop John Stoker, who was the first L.D.S. bishop [actually, John Stoker was the third bishop] of Bountiful, and Jane Allen Stoker.

Mr. Stoker spent his early life in Bountiful, moving to Roy in 1894. Later he resided in Morgan for two years, then in Burley Ida., for four years. He returned to Roy in 1936. He married Lettie Matilda Hammon, July 1, 1900, in Ogden. [Actually the marriage took place at Lettie's parents' home in Roy in the year, 1901.]

An active member of the L.D.S. Roy ward, he was past president of the seventies quorum, and a high priest in the Lakeview stake. He served as road supervisor for many years, and was a charter member of the Weber Farm Loan association.

Surviving are his widow, nine sons and daughters: Herman D. Stoker and Lee H. Stoker of Burley, Ida.; Mrs. Verda Nelson of Ogden, Bishop Leslie W. Stoker, Ivan J. Stoker, Allen V. Stoker, Mrs. Jane Venable, Mrs. Thelma Garner, Mrs. Eunice Southwick, all of Roy, and 30 grandchildren.

Services will be held Tuesday at two p.m. in the Roy L.D.S. chapel, under the directions of Counselor Raymond Terry. Friends may call at Lindquist & Sons' funeral chapel, 3408 Washington, Sunday from six to nine p.m., and at the family home Monday afternoon and evening, and Tuesday until time for the services. Burial will be in the Roy cemetery.

53 Jane Stoker Venable, "The Story of the Life of Jesse Stoker as Remembered by Jane Stoker Venable."

54 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, pp. 63-65.

The Jesse Stoker Family from 1942 to 1975 Focus on Lettie Matilda Hammon Stoker—

The 1940's Decade

Coping without Jesse

On October 30, 1942, Jesse Stoker, Lettie's husband of forty-one years, died leaving her alone. Lettie was of the kind to take this loss in stride. She missed him, but she knew she was surrounded by friends and family. But she was, like most Americans, distracted from personal problem by the events of World War II.

Eleven months before Jesse's death, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, on December 7, 1941. World War II began. East of Lettie's home in Roy, the Ogden Arsenal "became activated as an ammunition plant and later on was added to and re-named Hill Air Force Base. Mother [Lettie] worked for a number of years here to help out with income,"¹ her youngest daughter remembered. Furthermore, Verda wrote:

The Ogden Arsenal was enlarged and a 37 millimeter shell plant was built there. My mother, me, and my sister, Thelma, all worked there. It became further enlarged and expanded to Hill Air Force Base.²

Next door to Lettie's home her oldest daughter's husband, Marvin Venable, bustled with building projects. He wrote:

Franklin D. Roosevelt was president of the United States in 1940. His objective was to get people back to work. He started the WPA, the CCC, and the PWA—all work

projects. One of the projects was at the Ogden Arsenal. I had worked for the carpenter's local long enough to have good standing so they sent me out to the arsenal as a lead man or foreman on a project. We were building underground igloos to store shells and powder. I had about 200 carpenters and about 100 laborers working under me.

...The war effort caused things to boom. In 1942 there was lots of expansion at the government bases in Utah, therefore work was plentiful.³

Public Service

Throughout her life Lettie had been community minded. She had been a judge of elections. That job was not to be continued as Roy jumped in war stimulated populations growth. Referring to her part in officiating at elections, Lettie said:

And sometimes, I have counted ballots until two, and three, and four o'clock in the morning. It would take us that long to count up our ballots and things; but as the town got larger, it was cut up. The last time I was in, I counted ballots up here in Roy—that was before they divided Roy into more than one precinct—and we didn't get away until five o'clock in the morning—when we left for home, after counting the ballots. ...I went around and taken the census....⁴

1 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, December 29, 1978. p. 31.

2 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book # 1, p. 58.

3 Marvin Charles Venable, *Marvin Charles Venable, an Autobiography*, compiled by Beverly Venable Wiberg. pp. 48-49.

4 Interview between interviewer, Ben Reeves, and Interviewee, Lettie Hammon Stoker on August 9,

The Call to War

Lettie's son, Allen, left for the Air Force where he trained to be a B-29 pilot in Montana. Her grandson Dee Garner served in the navy. Her grandson, Wayne Venable, served in the army. Her son-in-law, Willard Nelson, served in the navy. Max Reeves, Ruth Venable's husband, also served in the army. Leora Garner's husband, Neil McCrary was also in the service.

Lettie's son, Ivan, with a wife and a young son, was thinking about joining the CBs when his oldest brother Herman, living in Burley, Idaho and operating a dairy with their brother, Lee, appealed for him to come to Idaho and work with his brothers. Herman insisted that Ivan could escape duty in the war if he went to work for him. The farm work and dairy operation would defer a man from the service and Ivan could logically be that person.⁵

Lettie opens her House and Purse

Early in 1943 Lettie invited her pregnant daughter, Verda, to live with her. Verda's husband, Willard, was with the navy in San Diego. Lettie wanted to be to be supportive of Verda who was expecting a baby in March. Verda wrote:

Willard returned [at] the end of January [1943] and we spent a very enjoyable time before he had to return to San Diego. We rented our home at 780 Bel Mar Drive out, and I moved in with my mother, who was now alone in Roy.

On the day of March 4th[, 1943,] I felt different and discouraged—it was time for the baby to be coming. My mother and sisters gave me the old treatment of orange juice and castor oil—telling me it would make me better off bring on the baby if 'the apple was ripe.' I also walked over to Thelma's and back a couple of times. We went to bed that night and I awoke about 10:30 in mild labor. Mother called my sister, Thelma, over and the two of them be-

gan the arduous task of talking me through my labor.

Willard had been gone from Dec. 14th to March 4th and as yet I had not received any allotment check. I was lucky to have a family to help me during this time for food and a home.

The pains were getting very regular and hard by 2:00 AM. Mother and Thelma drove me the 10 miles to the Thomas Dee Mem. Hospital. ...It was a horrible blow...hearing the admitting clerk tell my mother that I couldn't be admitted without fully paying in advance all the money for the 14 day delivery and hospital stay. My mother and sister finally came up with the necessary \$150 and I was admitted to the office ...I was finally taken into the delivery room and our first child, a girl, later named Nadine, made her appearance.⁶

Verda underscored the goodness of her mother: The hospital refused to even let us in until we had paid for her delivery which was quite a sacrifice for my mother and sister to do for me because the army had not paid me and I had no money to pay for her delivery.⁷

In April 1943 Willard moved Verda and Nadine to San Diego, California to be near him in the navy. Lettie was left alone in Roy, but not for long. She went visiting, a practice which she used throughout her life. Shortly after Verda's move to San Diego into Willard's single bedroom which he rented in the house of two sisters, Lettie visited them. Verda, Willard, and Lettie slept on the floor in the cramped quarters.

Marriage to Charles Call

Probably sometime in 1944, Lettie married a Roy neighbor, Charles Call. He was a man up in years. They were married in Lettie's home by her son, Leslie, who was the bishop of the Roy ward. Shortly

1971 for the Weber State College Oral History Project, p. 10.

5 Conversation of Jim Stoker with Grace Thomas Stoker, October 24, 1996.

6 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, pp. 66-67.

7 "The Family History of Willard Edwin and Verda Stoker Nelson," compiled by Verda Stoker Nelson and Tonya Nelson Myers in November 1977 at Navaho, Arizona.

after their marriage, Charlie talked Lettie into moving to a lumber town in the mountains of California. Lettie wanted to sell her house before leaving Roy. Unfortunately, she faced some resistance in the family. Her house, which had been constructed by some of her sons and sons-in-law, was built on property deeded to Marvin Venable, her son-in-law. Jesse Stoker had often told his daughter, Jane, Marvin's wife, to never allow Lettie to sell her home. His wisdom was rooted in the belief that if she could never sell her home, there would always be a roof over her head when she needed it. Despite Lettie's insistence to sell the house, her efforts came to naught. Her daughter wouldn't budge from the instructions her father had given her, much to Lettie's distress.⁸

Verda wrote:

...after father had passed away, she remarried to Charles Call. He was an old friend of the family. When they married, they moved to a lumber town of Westwood, California, a little town in the mts above Reno, Nevada and Redding, California.⁹

When Willard went to sea with the navy and about the time Lettie and Charles moved to the lumber town, Verda returned to Utah from California to live in Lettie's home. Verda wrote:

I was going to live in Mother's home in Roy. She had married Charles Call and moved to Westwood.¹⁰

Life with Charles became rocky for Lettie. Verda wrote more about why Lettie was disenchanted with her second husband:

He wanted him and Mom to forget their families and go their way alone. Mother loved her family too much to do this. She addressed Christmas cards to her family and he refused to mail them. He burned them instead.¹¹

On March 1, 1945, Verda, 7 months pregnant, and her baby, Nadine, departed Roy on the train to visit her mother in California. Verda planned to stay with

her mother until her expected baby would be born. Those plans would be revised. Verda wrote:

Willard, my husband was overseas at this time and I was expecting my second child. I took Nadine, my oldest child, and rode the train to Westwood. Charles was so rude to Nadine and I the ten days we were there that I left and came back to Ogden to have



Lettie, Charles Call, and Verda

the baby. I politely asked him what I owed him for having stayed there. He said, "\$20." I gave it to him and left. That really upset Mom and I couldn't understand why a man who had a family of his own could be so cold. I guess Mother was really hurt by his actions and that added to her decision to divorce him. He even spanked Nadine (1 1/2 yrs old) if she even touched

8 Separate conversations between Jim Stoker and Grace Thomas Stoker and Jim Stoker and Beveraly Venable Wiberg on October 24, 1996.

9 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, p. 31.

10 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, p. 104.

11 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, p. 32-33.

the radio and she really was a well behaved child and very lovable.

After a couple of years of marriage to Charles, she decided to get a divorce. He had a heart attack in Westwood, but as soon as she had nursed him back to health, they moved back to Roy, Utah and obtained a divorce. He died of another heart attack a couple of years later¹²

Lettie resumed working at Hill Field for some time. Lettie was on hand to help Verda with the delivery of another baby. Verda wrote:

While living at my mother's house, on May 15, 1945, Steven Arthur was born at Hillfield Air Force Base.¹³

Children to the Northwest

About the time the war was winding down, Lettie's daughter, Thelma, and her husband, Dewey Garner, wanting to find a farm of their own, departed Roy,

which was becoming urabanized, to settle on a farm near Emmett, Idaho. In the meantime, Ivan, who had worked for Herman in Burley, helping him on the farm and also in constructing a house. Ivan was given cattle in partial payment for his labor. Ivan became independent enough to rent a farm next to his brother, Lee, for the year, 1944. Dewey Garner had some pasture land on his Emmett farm which needed cattle to be utilized. On his farm was also a barn. He proposed that Ivan could bring his cattle to Emmett, use the pasture and the barn for one half of the milk check. In 1945 Ivan accepted the Garner offer.¹⁴

Meanwhile, Lettie's son, Leslie Stoker, had purchased a 40 acre farm near Adrian, Oregon. Not a farmer but a building contractor, Leslie rented out his property. At the war's end Leslie induced his younger brother, Allen, to join him as a carpenter. The promises included housing which turned out to be a basement apartment.¹⁵ Leslie helped construct



Verda, Lettie, and Nadine at Yellowstone, 1946

12 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book # 1, pp. 31-33.

13 "The Family History of Willard Edwin and Verda Stoker Nelson," compiled by Verda Stoker Nelson and Tonya Nelson Myers in November 1977 at Navaho, Arizona.

14 Conversation between Jim Stoker and Grace Thomas Stoker on October 24, 1996.

15 Conversation which Jim Stoker had with Allen Verl Stoker and his wife, Betty, on October 24, 1996.

an LDS chapel in Nyssa which later became the stake center.

Yellowstone trip and a Jesse Stoker family reunion in 1946

Lettie often traveled with her children. Particularly, Verda, her youngest daughter who had lived with her for much of the war time, was sensitive to Lettie's need to get away from home. Lettie was good traveling company. She was helpful and was always a source of conversation. Verda wrote:

We began the tradition of a week trip annually to Yellowstone Park on a fishing trip the last few days in June and usually until after July 4th. This tradition was carried on until about the late 1960's. ...We usually took my mom....¹⁶

Near Jesse Stoker's birthday, July 17th, in 1946 the family converged at Unity in Burley for a reunion. Most noted was Dee Garner dressed in Aunt Verda's two piece bathing suit when the family went to the third lift canal for water activities.

Lee and Ivan join Brothers in Oregon

Lettie's son, Lee, bought a farm near Leslie in Adrian in the fall of 1946. Keith, Lee's 16-year-old-son, moved to Oregon to live with Leslie's family and to begin plowing the 40-acre farm which Lee had rented from Leslie. A couple months later, Lee moved his belongings from Burley to a 156 acre farm near Adrian, located adjacent to the Snake River.

Dewey Garner wanted to join his brothers, Delbert and Vern who were farming in Nyssa, Oregon. He told Ivan, he was going to sell. With that information, Ike sold his cattle. Dewey was not able to sell his farm until the 1950's when he moved to an Adrian farm. Ike moved to Adrian to work for Leslie with his brother, Allen. Later, Ike moved to Nyssa where his daughter, Karen, was born. His sons, Jerry and David, were also born there.

Lettie marries Ursel Taylor

Lettie was not to remain single. She was much too gregarious. Verda wrote:

On May 7, 1947, my mother and my uncle, A. Ursel Taylor, came to see to see me and handed me their marriage license. They had been to Evanston, Wyoming and got married. His wife was Mother's sister, Rhoda. She passed away in 1945 ...The marriage was a very good one and his children treated Mother like their very own and our family the same to Uncle Ursel.¹⁷

Ursel and Lettie work

About 1948, Marvin Venable, who following the war had been a contractor building homes to meet the demand, decided to join his brother, Ray, in starting a business to retail feed and seeds which they called Lakeview Feed and Seed. Marvin was still running a construction business. The feed busi-



Lettie and Ursel at construction site in Idaho, 1950

16 *Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, p. 121.

17 *The Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book # 1, p. 123.

ness grew rapidly. Often the Venable brothers hired Ursel Taylor to help out at the store.

About 1949 Leslie had financial problems in Oregon. He had bid a contract to construct the Malheur Memorial Hospital at Nyssa. For some reason the job was shut down for reasons beyond his control. When he later resumed the job, the price of building materials had increased and he lost quite a lot of money on that job. At this point, Allen left his employment with Les and found a job in Richland, Washington working at the Hanford project.¹⁸ Betty moved back to Utah.

During the summer of 1949 and 1950, Les with his sons, and Ivan began building bridges near Warren, Idaho. He had quite a few workers. He hired his mother, Lettie, and stepfather, Ursel Taylor, to cook for the men. The two lived in a tent and served meals to the men in it.¹⁹

The Decade of the 1950's

The Korean War Starts

Probably while cooking in the large tent in Warren, Idaho on June 25, 1950, Lettie and Ursel heard the news reports over the radio that a North Korean army had crossed the 38th parallel into South Korea causing America's involvement in another armed conflict. President Harry Truman ordered American troops into battle. Lettie would shake her head at the lost of American men on foreign soil. Her main concern was feeding the laboring men on Les' work crew. When the coldness of the season caused the construction work to wind up for the winter, Lettie and Ursel were ready for a vacation which was offered them by her son, Lee.

A vacation with Lee and Ethel

Lee Hammon Stoker wrote the following about the trip with his mother, Lettie, and his stepfather, Ursel Taylor:

Ethel and I had several trips acrossed the United States. In 1950 we made purchase of a new 1950 Buick car and the dealer asked us if we would like delivery at the

factory in Lansing, Michigan.

...At that time my mother and Uncle Ursel Taylor were married and they had been working for my brother, Les, and I knew they had saved a little money, so I suggested to Ethel that we ask them to go with us. They agreed to go and I told them it would only cost them train fare as we had to pay the gas anyway. They also paid for



Lettie Matilda Stoker

their lodgings and meals.

So we caught the train out of Nyssa, Ore at 4 O'clock in the morning and 30 hrs. later we arrived in Chicago, Ill. We started to see Chicago. We walked around for several hours and never got to see very much of the town.

In the afternoon we caught the train from

18 Information from a conversation between Jim Stoker and Allen Verl Stoker on October 24, 1996.

19 Information from a conversation between Jim Stoker and Grace Thomas Stoker on October 24, 1996.

Chicago to Lansing, Michigan. We went to the Buick Co. and left there with a brand new Buick and the roadway before us. We got a map and started east.

We crossed the river into Canada and drove to Niagara Falls. We saw the beautiful falls from the Canadian side where you get the best view of Niagra Falls. We



Lettie & grndghtr, Joyce Stoker Jorgenson, & pigeons

also saw several barrels and different things all bent up that people in the past had ridden over the falls with.

We went from there to Palmyra, New York and the Hill camorah. We visited the home of Martin Harris & the Joseph Smith home as well as climbing to the top of Hill Comorah and visiting the visitor center there.

It was late in the day and we asked if there were any places to stay for the night. They told us the Church had a farm close by and they took in people for over night stay. The people we stayed with was a sister to Merna Marchant, our neighbor in Burley, Idaho. We went into the living room and they had a television going and that was the first television we had ever seen. We had an enjoyable stay there with that family.

We left Palmyra the next day and drove

to New York [City]. ... When we got to New York City, we came via the Holland Tunnel which is 8 miles long and runs from New Jersey side of the Hudson River under the river to New York on the other side. The sides of the tunnel was lined with tile and the road was pavement. Every little ways there was a police station.... We were told that the New York rooky police started their job in the tunnel.

We drove into New York City and directly to the statue of Liberty.

...The next morning with our car in the hotel parking lot, we decided the best way to see the city was to find a sight seeing Co. that could show us the town. We went down to the side walk and looked for a taxi to take us to a sight seeing Co. We flagged down a cab and told him where we wanted to go. ...The cab driver was a Jew and he had a little wit and he really made a day for us. He took us to China Town , to the Italian, Greek, Jewish, Polish sections of town.

Next we left New York and traveled on Highway 1 to Washington. We visited many sights in the capital. When we visted the Capitol Building, as we walked into the rotunda room a guide was talking to a group of people and he said around this room is famous people of all the states in the union and we are just introducing the bust of the latest which is of Brigham Young of the state of Utah who is recognized as the greatest colonizer of all times & he gave a lecture on some of the things that Brigham did in spreading people thro out all of the western part of the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

After leaving Washinton, we came west and visited Carthage and Naurvoo. I am so happy that we invited my mother and Uncle Ursel to go with us. They enjoyed that trip so much.²⁰

Ursel's Death in 1955

As she was getting older, Lettie was not as easy going as she once was. In the past she had tolerated her husbands who occasionally smoked. Because she had lost one husband who had smoked, Lettie was

concerned about the effect smoking was having on her aging second husband, Ursel. She tried to get him to cut back on th tobacco. Life was increasingly dear to her and those for whom she was concerned. Nevertheless, Ursel died on November 19, 1955.

Lettie, living alone, found a new purpose in her life by opening a doll hospital in her home. She took in broken dolls and repaired them, putting on new limbs, heads, hair, and clothes. She was a godsend for many a small girl. For nearly ten years, she carried on this craft.

Another pursuit, she indulged was genealogical research. Often books and papers were piled on her tables in the Roy home. Often she would journey to Salt Lake to attend the library there. Sometimes her son, Herman, would accompany her. Lettie also visted the temples, especially when family members were getting married.

Leslie works for the Church

In 1957 Verda wrote about visiting Lettie's son,

Leslie, who was building chapels for the LDS Church:

While [we were] living on 1211 So. 9th East my brother, Leslie, and his wife, Annie, were called to build a chapel in Alabama. Willard took me on a 3 week trip to Birmingham, Alabama to visit them.²¹

In the fall of 1957 Leslie was in Reno, Nevada building another chapel. Lettie admired his devotion to the church in constructing the needed facilities.

Lettie Celebrates 75th Birthday

On March 13, 1958, Lettie observed her 75th birthday. Her children gather around her and posed for a picture. During this celebration, Lettie mounted a saddled horse and rode a quarter of a mile. Undoubtedly, the horse belonged to Ivan who often trained them. Late in the year, near Christmas time, Lettie, without telling her next door kin, climbed into her 1948 Chevrolet and drove alone to Idaho and Oregon to visit her family. Often Lettie, impulsively, did



Lettie's 75th Birthday, 1958—Back row: Allen, Leslie, Lee, Herman, and Ivan—Front row: Eunice, Thelma, Lettie, Jane, and Verda.

20 *Lee Hammon Stoker Personal Journal and History, 1989.*

21 *The Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson, Book #1, pp. 139-140.*

what her heart bid her to do. She didn't confide her plans to many because often they would try to frustrate her efforts, thinking of her safety.

The Decade of the 1960's

Lettie visits Hawaii

Lettie's son, Leslie, was called on an LDS Church building mission to Australia. Because that project was not yet ready, the Stokers were sent to Hawaii to work for a year on the Polyesian Village at Laie.

Verda wrote:

In November 1962 we took my mother, Lettie Stoker, and Willard's mother, Magdalena Nelson, on a cruise to Hawaii. The S.S. Lurline was a fabulous ship. It took us five days to arrive in Honolulu where we were met by my brother, Les Stoker, and his wife, Annie. They gave us the traditional lei greeting. Our leis were made of plumeria blossoms from their garden. Les and Annie were in Hawaii on a building mission...helping with the [construction] of the Polynesian village. They had a car and gave us a grand tour the ten days we were staying with them in Hawaii.²²

Stoker Family Reunions

Nearly every year following 1946, the Jesse Stoker Family tried to hold a reunion, one year in Utah, the next in Idaho, and the third year in Orgeon. Verda wrote about the 1965 reunion:

We had a Stoker family reunion and went camping for 3 days with about 250 of my brothers, sisters, and their families.²³

In July 1967 the Stoker family reunion was held up Little Cottonwood Canyon with overnight camping. The next year, it was held above McCall, Idaho.

The Final Decade

A Heritage to her posterity, 1971

On Sunday August 9, 1971, Lettie's great grandson, Ben Reeves, interviewing her for a Weber State College Oral History Project, posed the following question: *You're in your eighty-eighth year, and, what do you feel is the heritage that you yourself have left for your grand-children and great grand-children?*

In answering, Lettie unfolded her guiding philosophy:²⁴

I'd want them all to keep an education; get the best education they can. Get out of life what you can. I don't believe in crouching around and all of that kind of thing. I think that a person should keep their body clean; they should be mentally awake, and know what good and evil are, and to teach their children—educate them to the best of your ability. But virtue means everything. And to keep yourself spotless from the sins of the world so that you can go back to your Heavenly Father with a clear conscience is the best thing there is on earth.

...I don't think that the good acts that you can ever do will ever worry you. It'll be the bad ones. And be careful of the little things. Don't ever say anything idle that you don't think about. And if somebody gives you heck, take it and smile about it. When they get through telling it, thank them and that will be it. If you want to whip anyone, you want to listen to them, and when they get through, tell them thanks but you can hold your head up and do that. That's the truth! ...I've tried it! Nine times out of ten they'll come and tell you they are sorry. Don't you believe me?

...But if you get mad, you both get mad, then hell's a-popping. I never mistreated a child. I don't care whose child they was. If they got into anything that I thought they hadn't ought to, I'd talk to 'em, but I've never got after 'em or bawled them out or anything. I'd say, 'Well, don't do that. That's naughty,' or something. Nine times out of ten a child

22 "The Family History of Willard Edwin and Verda Stoker Nelson."

23 *The Journal of Verda Stoker Nelson*, Book #1, p. 177.

24 Interview between interviewer, Ben Reeves, and Interviewee, Lettie Hammon Stoker on August 9, 1971 for the Weber State College Oral History Project, pp.18-21.

will turn around. There is once in a while a child defends—but very seldom.

The best thing on this earth is holding your own head up. And if you ever see anybody down, try to help 'em. Cause there's none of us perfect and everybody makes mistakes. I've made thousands of 'em. I've made more mistakes than anything else. But, that's the way you learn.

If you never had any mistakes you wouldn't learn anything. I've got a trial now. I've had a trial. But I look at in another way. Now you take Thelma. She's a step ahead of me now.²⁵ Never in her life has she been able to step ahead of me. But now she's ahead of me. Isn't she?



Five Generations: Front row—Lettie Stoker, Janet Faye Jensen, LaNeil McCrary Jensen
Back row—Thelma Stoker Garner, Leora Garner McCrary

...She's just one step ahead of me. It's been twenty-nine years since she's seen her father. And I believe she's over there visiting with him. If she ain't, it's okay anyhow. And if she is, it's joy to her.

An I don't think I should grieve, mourn of her being gone. She's lived her life. She's had lots of ups and downs. She's had sorrow. She's had pleasure. And everybody has to do it.

I've got—lets see—...I've got three children over there now.²⁶ I've got two babies and I've got Thelma. And I don't think when I go over there that I'm going over there and find my babies.

You hear people say, 'Well, you'll go over there and raise them up. I don't believe that. I believe that your spirit is growing over there, and it's grown up. My children have been dead for years and years. They're up in their fifties. Well, how are they going to be little, tiny babies for me to raise? As I look at it, we go on [to] perfection. They'll be grown-up men when I get there. Don't you think they will?...

1973 Newspaper Article

The following under the headlines, "Lettie Stoker Taylor" appeared in the Roy Sun Chronicle on Thursday, November 15, 1973.

Lettie Hammon Stoker Taylor is the oldest daughter of a Utah Pioneer living in the City of Roy. Her father, Levi b. Hammon crossed the plains with his parents when he was two years old. The family eventually made their home in Hooper. It was there her father met and married Martha Jane Belnap. Lettie was born in South Hooper March 13, 1883. She will be 91 years next birthday.

Lettie married Jesse Stoker, July 10, 1901 and his brother "Ren," married Lettie's sister Polly. Jesse and his brother Lorenzo were known as the "Dewberry Brothers," a monicker given them probably because of the closeness of their relationship as brothers.

Jesse and Lettie built the first home in Roy above the tracks in the Great Basin area where they raised their family. Lettie Stoker was a practical nurse and for years she assisted the doctors in the ddelivery of

25 Lettie's daughter, Thelma Stoker Garner, died of a heart attack brought on by seeing a crop dusting plane crash into a neighbor's house killing the occupant, a woman she knew well. This death occurred on August 2, 1971,—a week prior to this interview.

26 Lettie's infant sons, Claude and Alf, had died on 19 May 1918 and 19 December 1919, respectively.

many babes born in Roy or wherever else her services were needed. She is a spritely and happy nature, interested in the young people of the community and as a result her years of church activity were spent mostly serving in the Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association.

Jesse Stoker died in 1942. Lettie later married Alexander Ursel Taylor. He died in 1955. Until about a year ago when Mrs. Taylor became seriously ill, she lived alone in her home on 2700 So. independently caring for herself, but under the watchful and loving eye of her daughter Jane Venable who lived next door. Since her illness she has not been able to live alone and is presently taking turns living with her children.

Roy's oldest citizen operated a "Doll Hospital" in her home for about ten years, gladdening the heart of many young girls with the rejuvenation of their favorite dollies.

Lettie and her husband Jesse Stoker had eleven children, eight of whom are still living. They are: Herman Stoker, Burley, Idaho; Lee Stoker, Mesa, Washington; Mrs. Lee (Eunice) Southwick, Mrs. Willard, (Verda) Nelson, and Leslie Stoker all of Salt Lake City; Mrs. Marvin (Jane) Venable and Ivan and Allen Stoker who live in Roy.

Her sons, Herman, Lee and Leslie have all served as bishop of their respective wards and three of her daughters have been Relief Society Presidents. She has 50 Grandchildren, approximately 200 great-grandchildren and 20 great-great grandchildren.

Her Last Years

As Lettie entered her ninth decade, she was unable to care for herself. Her children care for her in their homes as best they could. She would spend a month or more in each of their homes, increasingly content to just sit in a rocking chair. At one point, she was committed to a rest home in Bountiful, Utah. Lettie was not happy there. She chafed against all the rules and what pills she should take. She was quite independent. At one point her grandson, Jim Stoker, stopped by to take her out for a drive on a Sunday afternoon. She had him drive to a drug store where she bought her own remedies.

Jim, not accustomed to defy his elders, allowed her

to make the purchases. When she was returned to the facilities. Jim quietly told the nursing supervisor what had happened. That nurse was very disturbed and told Jim that he should not have allowed her to make the purchases. Unfortunately, Jim had always revered his grandmother. Such an act would have been defiant of her. At the same time, Grandmother Lettie made no bones about how she didn't like the institution.

Lettie's Death

Lettie died on September 24, 1975 in the home of her daughter, Jane, next door to her own home in Roy, Utah. Concerning her death, Verda wrote:

It was really strange how all that happened, how the lady in the temple came up and insisted that Eunice leave right away, because if we would have waited until 1:30 PM we wouldn't have even seen Grandma. If I had waited for the car to get fixed I would have missed my ride with them.

So Grandma slipped away just kind of easy with no real pains or problems. I think that is the way Grandma wanted to go, just fall asleep and die that way. Kind of gives you a funny feeling to think that all these hands had to kind of turn to make sure we were all there with her and that Aunt Jane wasn't alone with her. As much as we had each taken care of her, we all had that fear that someday it might happen to us and we'd be home alone with her, but this way she had a lot of her family right with her.

At the funeral we were really proud to think that enough of her grandsons who are bishops and high council men were there so that the entire funeral service was all done by the immediate family. I thought it was real special for someone her age to leave a living posterity of 317 blood descendants and eighty in-laws—that's quite a bit.²⁷

Another version that Verda wrote:

"So they left [the temple] immediately and

27 "The Family History of Willard Edwin and Verda Stoker Nelson."

came up and got me and we got up to Roy about 11:00, or maybe 10:30. Grandma was really not feeling very well. When we got there Aunt Jane told us that Grandma had woken up about 4:30 in the morning and had gone to the bathroom. She came out into the living room and said to Jane, "go to the door. Somebody's coming. They're coming to get me. Go let them in."

Jane said, "It's still the middle of the night, Mother. You'd better go back to bed and get some more sleep."

Mother said, "No, I don't want to go back to bed. Just help me over here to a chair and let me sit here a minute." Aunt Jane insisted she return to bed. So she took her back in the bedroom and put clean clothes on her. She left her garments out and kind of padded the bed and propped Grandma up on a couple of pillows and left a night light on for her and went back to bed. Jane said she wasn't sure but she thought she might have heard garbage trucks drive by out there and she maybe wondered if that might have disturbed Grandma and made her think someone was out there. We really don't know. Anyhow, that was about the exact time that I woke up when Grandma was up like that.

When we got there we took some medication up to Grandma and gave her some. She never did open her eyes while we were there but she kind of mumbled and when we went over close we could kind of tell her mouth was swollen and her throat and neck. You could hear this gurgling. She did talk to Eunice. She whispered to Eunice and she said, "It's so hard. It's so hard." Aunt Eunice gave her this sedative and she took it and kind of relaxed and went to sleep.

We went in to eat a bite of lunch and had just finished when I got up and went in. I walked in by her bed just in time to see her kind of open her mouth and just kind of

take a big gasp. I called Eunice and Lee and all of them in and they said, "Well, She's gone."

She just died peacefully in her sleep. She never moved off the bed again after Aunt Jane put her there. We were kind of expecting it, kind of prepared for it. I don't think any of us broke down.²⁸

Lettie's Obituary

ROY—Mrs. Lettie Hammon Stoker Taylor, 92, of 5649 S. 2700 W., died Wednesday morning at her home of causes incident to age.

Mrs. Taylor was born March 13, 1883, in Hooper, a daughter of Levi Byram and Martha Jane Belnap Hammon.

She was married to Jesse Stoker on July 10, 1901, in Roy. He died Oct. 30, 1942. She was married to Alex Ursel Taylor on May 7, 1947, in Evanston, Wyo. He died Nov. 19, 1955.

She was a member of the Roy 14th LDS Ward and had been active in Primary and MIA organizations. She was a charter member of Daughters of Utah Pioneers Camp 26, and was state president of the DUP Camp in Cassia County, Idaho.

She had formerly lived in Morgan, Utah, and Burley, Idaho.

Surviving are five sons and three daughters, Herman D. Stoker, Burley, Idaho; Leslie W. Stoker, Mrs. Lee (Eunice) Southwick, Mrs. Willard (Verda) Nelson, all of Salt Lake City; Lee H. Stoker, Mesa, Wash.; Ivan J. Stoker, Allen V. Stoker, Mrs. Marvin C. (Jane) Venable, all of Roy; 50 grandchildren; 207 great-grandchildren; 43 great-great grandchildren.

Also surviving are two sisters, Mrs. Robena Greenwell, West Weber, and Mrs. Ethel McEntire, Pleasant View.

Funeral services will be held Saturday at 1 p.m. in the Roy 14th Ward Chapel, 5850 S. 2575 W., with Bishop Byron P. Hughes officiating.

Friends may call at the Myers Mortuary in Roy Friday from 6 to 8 p.m. and at the ward chapel, Saturday from 12 noon until services. Internment is the Roy City Cemetery.

28 "Autobiography of Verda Stoker Nelson," related by Verda Stoker Nelson on a tape to the family of Tonya Nelson, March 10, 1977 at 2133 Roskelly Drive, Concord, California.

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