

BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM HILL STRONG AND WIFE
CLARA ANN BISHOP STRONG

By Harriet Strong Speirs
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William Hill Strong, son of William and Harriet Neeley Strong was born at Springville, Utah County, Utah Territory, February 21, 1863.

His father was a member of the "Mormon Battalion", Company "E", in the war with Mexico.

The family moved to Salt Lake shortly after his birth and settled in the Tenth Ward on the location now designated as 827 East 4th South Street.

He was blessed by Bishop John Proctor of the Tenth Ward in 1864 and baptized by Rasmus Borgquist in 1871. He was confirmed by Bishop John Proctor.

His schooling commenced in the old Tenth Ward meeting house about December 1873, but he was able to attend but very little because his father's health was very poor and he was the main support of a very large family.

When he was about fourteen years of age, he herded sheep out in Skull Valley one winter. I am quoting the following letter that he wrote his father from there under date of February 9, 1878:

"Dear Father, it is with grate plazzure that I take my pen in hand to rite you a few lines to let you know that I am well at present, hoping when these few lines reach their destynation they will find you the same. I am a long ways from home. I am glad to hear that you are getting along all right. They tell me I am groing ofel fast. It is ofel lonsome away out here on the desert, the scab is started in prity rough, we have prity bissey doctoring it. I would rite often but I don't have no chance to send my letter. Bennions have only been out here once all winter. Expecting John and Hyrom Bennion out every day. I would love to be home and see you all. Tell Maw to make me 2 shirts and get me a hat. I had John Bennion get me a pare of shoes. I want to know when you want me to come home. I don't know that I have any more to say, get me a pocket knife, this one is so small I can't do anything with it. There are lots of big wolves out here. I aint been a bit sick. I am healthy and fat. It is getting late so good night, God bless you are with health and strength, rite often to me, from your loving son, Willie Strong. I love you all."

What a great blessing the wages he earned proved to be to the big family of little brothers and sisters awaiting him when he returned in the spring. His earnings amounted to about fourteen or fifteen dollars a month. It must have been quite a sacrifice for a boy of fourteen to remain in a place of that kind solely alone save for an occasional visit from a member or two of the family who hired him.

Many other winters he worked in the Salt Lake and Wagner Breweries and in the summer on the farm in Emigration Canyon owned originally by his Grandfather Jacob Strong who came to the valley with the pioneers in 1849, and settled in the Tenth Ward. According to an article in the February 1951 lesson of The Daughters of the Utah Pioneers by A.P. Cederlof, William, Hyrum, and James T. Strong, sons of Jacob Strong owned the farm at a later period. Irvin J. Strong, son of Hyrum commented on this article at the Strong Family meeting held at Gordon R. Strong's home February 12, 1951. Alvin C. and Ernest J. sons of James T. Strong also told of some of their experiences on the farm in their boyhood days. It must have been the scene of much color

and adventure as it was the road through which the emigrants passed to enter the valley. Irvin stated that milk and butter were furnished to many of the emigrants from the farm. It was the summer home of the Strongs and when great grandmother got too old to live up there a caretaker by the name of Larson looked after the place. The boys remembered his saying "My wife, he very sick, I think they have to cut him open." They also remembered taking the rim of a wagon wheel to a plateau above the cabins one day and setting it loose down the hill. It got considerable momentum on its way and leaped the fence bouncing on top of the roof which brought the occupants out of the house in a hurry. The old wagon road followed the creek bed. Alvin and Irvin were driving the buggy up to the farm one day and as they crossed the creek at one place they stopped to give the horse a drink and at the next crossing the horse stopped in the middle of the stream again so Irvin touched him with the whip and the lunge of the horse bounced Alvin out into the middle of the stream.

My father was the "Willie Strong" mentioned in the Cederlof article and the subject of this sketch. He was the cousin of Alvin C., Irvin and Ernest but much older. He told us as children about the Indians gathering around the cabin of his grandmother Strong in early times while the men were distant working in the fields. She was very frightened and fed them all of her biscuits, which were a rare treat. Also he used to tell us about his Aunt Sarah Lizzzie who was carried off by an Indian on his horse. She had a switch from a tree in her hand and used it with all her might on the Indians bare legs until he dropped her. Their diet most of the time consisted of corn meal mush and milk. He attributed his very fine white teeth to the coarse diet of his youth. His job was herding the cows for his folks as well as other Tenth ward folks. He often dug sego roots for food while out with the cows. Wild currants, wild peas and plums from the Johnson orchard were available in season to augment the food supply and give variety to it. Trapped tree squirrels were used by Grandmother Strong on occasion. The cabins had dirt roofs originally. More will perhaps be written about the Strongs in Emigration canyon by the three cousins and the article by Mr. Cederlof will be found in the Jacob Strong Family Society record.

William attended school two or three months in the winter at the Tenth Ward and one winter at the Eleventh Ward district school under the tutorage of Professor Kendall stopping when he got to the fifth reader. However, he attended John Swaner's night school one winter after his marriage taking penmanship and bookkeeping. He became a very good penman.

He started working for the D & R G Railroad Company at Wasatch about the year 1881, being overseer of the tram drivers in Little Cottonwood Canyon.

My Mother wrote me in May 1931 about hers and father's courtship. She was in the Hollywood Hospital at the time following a serious automobile accident. In one of my daily letters to her, I requested her to think about her courtship, wedding dress, etc., and be prepared to tell me about it someday so that I could put it into this story. I felt, too, that it would give her something pleasant to think about during those painful and uncomfortable days that she laid in a cast. I had a report from my sister, Blanche, soon after and within a few days a letter from my Mother which she had contrived in some manner to write from her bed. This was typical of my Mother's cheerful and courageous nature. I shall quote from her letter in part:

"The first time I met your father was on the corner of 4th South and 8th East Streets. I was between seventeen and eighteen years of age at the time and had accompanied my sister, Lizzie, and Johnny Strong to the Tenth Ward meeting that night. Lizzie was living with the Barnes family who were old friends of my Mother and Grandmother and I was living in the Twentieth Ward with the C.R. Savage family. John introduced me to his cousin, Will, whom he vouched for as

being 'a very fine fellow.' Lizzie had to be in by 9 o'clock and she and John couldn't get me home and back by that time so my new acquaintance saw me home. The following Friday I went to a dance in the Tenth Ward with him and from then on we were very devoted lovers. The day we were married, we came to Salt Lake from my home in Cottonwood on the train. Daddy's father was there to meet us. Daddy hired a hack and drove us to the Ninth Ward where we were married by S.W. Darke. It was New Year's Eve, December 31, 1882. We stayed in the old "Valley House" that night and the next morning, Daddy's father, mother, sisters and brothers met us at the depot. We, along with other guests from town, were taken to Murray on the D & R G Railway Company train and as a special favor the train stopped at Simper's Street where our home was located and the wedding was celebrated. Daddy was working for the D & R G at the time. My wedding dress, as well as I can remember, was made of a plum colored silk with a fine white line or stripe in it. It had a basque and skirt with a pleated ruffle around the bottom of them and the sleeves and neck were trimmed with pleated white tulle. This white tulle was removed later and it made a nice street dress. I wore a white flower in my hair. A big dinner was served which included roast chicken and some of the families represented at the wedding aside from the relatives were Doctor Raucher, the Cahoon, and the Tripps. Sarah Cahoon, my old school teacher, was there."

Clara Ann was the daughter of Frederick and Eliza Robinson Bishop. She was born at American Fork, Utah County, August 19, 1862.

The winter following their marriage, William worked down on the Green River with the piledrivers, still in the employ of the D & R G and back up to Wasatch the following summer, where he and his wife rented an old boarding house with two large rooms and a kitchen adjoining. The stove they used as also a rented one. They lined the one large room with factory. All of their holdings consisted of a bed stead, one table and four chairs, the rest of their possessions were the savings of Clara before their marriage, consisting of home-made carpets, braided rugs, crocheted window curtains and bed spread, together with pillows and mattress filled with cat tails! Down. They would gather the ripe cat tails, for this purpose, that were perfectly dry, stripping them and filling the bed and pillow ticks; afterwards sunning and shaking them until they were as fluffy and soft as a feather bed. These would have to be replenished every year or so. They completed the furnishing of their "little canyon place" (so named by their friends who visited them) with accumulated vases, home made doilies, and wooden boxes covered with cretonne and lined with pretty paper which were used for wardrobes.

As there was no place for the tram drivers to board, Clara took care of ten or more boarders that summer at the rate of twenty-five dollars a month each. William received tow dollars and fifty cents a day.

October 6, 1883, a still-born premature daughter was born to them nearly costing Clara her life. Serious kidney complications had set in. They moved down from the canyon just before winter, locating in the Eleventh Ward. William helped that winter to dig a well for John Lund and he in turn helped build a well for Will's Father. Between times he quarried out enough rock from Emigration Canyon for the foundation of his new home which was built at 831 East 4th South. His brother Heber helped to haul the rock. When spring opened up he worked at the Brick Yard and earned enough brick for his home.

They moved from the Eleventh Ward to Eliza Swaner's home at about 363 South 10th East where a son, William Frederick, was born to them, October 18, 1884. The baby died there January 4, 1885 with pneumonia. At this time William was employed at the Tithing Store where

he took charge of receiving and elevating of the grain, lumber etc., for about seven years. He earned enough lumber that summer to partly complete their home.

In June 1885, he was ordained an Elder and on the 24th of June, 1885, he and his wife went to the Logan Temple and received their endowments and were sealed to each other for time and eternity. That same winter he was president of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association with Jed Higgs and Herman Grether as counselors. He was ordained a Seventy November 8, 1886.

The following children were born in their new home: Elmer Byron, Clara Virginia, Leo LeRoy, and Blanche May.

The summer of 1890 the family moved up Emigration Canyon. They took care of the old Strong farm and tended to fifteen or sixteen cows. They moved back in the Fall again to their home and later sold it for Thirty-six hundred dollars. William went to Manti in October and performed some ordinance work for his departed relatives. They built another home in the rear of 827 East 4th South and the following children were born there: Lewis Hyrum, Harriet Eliza, Elias John, Loretta Maud and Lillie Geneva. About 1904, William purchased the home of his Mother, one door east which was located at 345 Laker Street, (rear 831 East 4th South) and their last baby, Chloe LaPriel, was born there.

Clara, William's wife's schooling commenced at the South Cottonwood, 24th District School about December 1875 but as she was the oldest daughter of twelve children, her opportunity for schooling was also very limited.

She was baptized by Elder David Jones about May 1872.

September 18, 1915, she was set apart as second counselor to Sister John McDonald in the Tenth Ward Relief Society and as first counselor December 28, 1915. She was set apart by Albert E. Braby February 27, 1916 for the washing and anointing the sick. She was released the 1st of October 1922 and has since devoted herself to that work and Temple work. She received her Patriarchal blessing June 23, 1922, from Patriarch Hyrum G. Smith.

The Strong family sold the farm in Emigration Canyon to the City in 1890 and in 1891 started up Strong Brothers' Mercantile Company at 813 East 4th South. William put the thirty-six hundred dollars he received for his home into the business and remained in the store for about twenty-four years. He worked the remaining years of his life for Harry H. Pinnock, grocer, on the corner of 4th South and 9th East.

He was a faithful attendant at Priesthood and Sacrament meetings and was Chairman of the Tenth Ward reunions on several occasions. He also served as a block teacher for many years. His favorite religious hymn was "Nay Speak No Ill."

One of his outstanding qualities was his devotion to nature and the canyon where he spent so many of his childhood days. He built a few cabins up at Kelvin Grove and would move his family up there at the close of their school work each summer. Previous to the cabins, they lived in a tent. He spent most of his spare time there and in the cultivation of garden flowers. As children we gathered shells on the mountain slopes, had many delightful hikes with friends and relatives, gathered the native black currants for Mother to use in cobblers, also the wild choke cherries for jelly, guided make-belief boats down the mountain streams, caught fish sometimes down at the water fall hole in what was called Pioneer Addition at a later period. Many folks lived in the canyon and commuted back and forth to their work in the city, during the period of LeGrande Young's railway. Sunday school and Priesthood meetings were held at Pioneer Addition. Those were happy, happy days for us as well as for many of our relatives and friends.

The summer previous to his death, he and his wife spent a very happy two months with their son, Leo, and family in Hollywood, California. His death occurred very suddenly after three days illness and an operation for a strangulated hernia, October 2, 1919.

He received much joy and comfort in his last years from the organization he was instrumental in helping to form at the request of his sister Lucinda Strong Hogan, namely, "The Strong Family Genealogical Society" which was organized March 28, 1916.

His indeed was a mild and beautiful nature. To know him was to love him.

Clara sold the old home in August 1921 and made her home with her children up to the time of her death which occurred at Las Vegas, Nevada, February 16, 1932, at the home of her daughter and son-in-law Bryan L. and LaPriel Strong Bunker. Although she hadn't fully recovered from lesions sustained in her accident, of April 13, 1931, she had recovered sufficiently to serve her family and bless them with her cheerful and spiritually beautiful presence. The accident occurred while riding with friends in Los Angeles and the report of Doctor A. Huerad, 802 Avalon, Wilmington, California (Seaside Hospital) on the Deseret News Insurance Claim paper listed the following injuries she sustained: "Concussion of the brain - Contused right arm - Contused left thigh - Contusion of right lower chest - abrasion of right cheek - Fracture of left pelvis - ? Of pubic - Dressings to abrasions and sand bags to pelvis; chest strapped. Moved to Hollywood Hospital April 22, or 23, 1931."

Hers was a real life of service which won for her the love and esteem of all who knew her.

In summing up the characters of these noble parents, I like to think of the following lines taken from Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard":

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.
Far from the madd'ning crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool, sequestered vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

(Emigration Canyon data added February 20, 1951)