

ARZA ERASTUS HINCKLEY

A sketch of the life of Arza Erastus Hinckley, son of Nathaniel and Lois Judd Hinckley, born at Bastard, Leeds County, Canada, N. A. on 15 August 1826. His parents were citizens of the United States and did not remain long in Canada. His father died when he was five years old and his mother married Evi Judd, and Arza went to live with his Grandfather Judd to whom his father had given him before he died. Here he did all the chores and herded sheep. For a number of years he was the only support his grandparents had. He was by nature very religious.

I have often heard him say how he used to take a Book of Mormon with him when herding sheep, and the pleasure he experienced in reading it. He said, "I used to read the Book of Mormon, pray, and cry." His nature was one of the most sympathetic I have ever known. His prayers and tears were always ready for those in sorrow and trouble. He heard and accepted the Gospel when he was nine years old, and devoted his life spiritually, temporally, mentally, physically and financially to it.

Often I have heard him tell with pride of his grandfather's strong will. He was 70 years old when he heard the Gospel, and at the time he was a user of tobacco, snuff, tea and coffee. All of which he quit at once when he was baptized in 1835 and never touched them again. Arza, himself, was very fond of coffee and at one time was almost a slave to it, but he decided it would not do and gave it up. For nearly 40 years he abstained from tasting it under varying circumstances and temptations.

His grandfather, soon after joining the Church, started to Illinois to be with the Saints. Father tells of his life at that time: They went in John E. Page's Company-- "We landed in DeWitt in time for the men, and the boys who were old enough, to take part in the battle. After the battle we moved into Caldwell County, about three miles from Far West, and were there during the surrender when Joseph Smith and several of the leaders were betrayed into the hands of the mob by George M. Hinkle. They were court-martialed and sentenced to be shot, but were taken to prison and kept for many months and were much abused. The whole people were disarmed and a guard set around the place. Then bands of marauders went out to Mormon settlements and committed all manner of depravations. They came in and marched our brethren up to a table in the center of them and, at the point of a gun, demanded that they leave the Church or sign away their property to pay the expenses of being mobbed and leave the State forthwith or be shot down. He, as one of the boys, used to be allowed to pass the guards to bring in the cows at night. Some of us were allowed to stay until Spring.

For the want of mills to grind our corn in, we had to take tin pans, punch holes in them from the inside to make rough, boil our corn to soften it, and rub it on the pans to make meal of it. Flour was out of the question. He well remembered the time they had a change--We lived in Allen Taylor's house--They sat him and a sack of corn on a horse to go to the mill. When I got there, I had to hitch the horse to the mill-sweep to grind the corn. It took about three hours to grind it, but we had a treat.

In the Spring they went to Illinois. Then in 1840 they moved to a place four miles east of Springfield. They moved from one place to another until 1845. Part of the time they lived in Nauvoo. Arza and his brother, Ira, were in Nauvoo on a visit when Sidney Rigdon made his plea to be guardian of the Church. When Arza heard of the death of Joseph Smith, he would not believe it saying that they could not kill him.

Early in the Spring of 1845 he went back to Nauvoo to work in the Temple Stone Quarry. One day Brigham Young said to him and two other boys when the rest had gone to dinner, "Go ahead and complete the temple and prepare to go West and come back to the starting point--the Center Stake of Zion." Arza held to this as a promise all through his life, and it seemed he could not give up to die because he felt that this was a call to go back and build up the Center Stake. He worked on the temple until the capstone was laid. He received a blessing with many great promises by John Smith, the Patriarch.

He worked on an island in the Mississippi River getting out logs for the Nauvoo House. An attack of ague stopped his work here. In November he went to Springfield to get a team to take his grandparents West. He and Ira got a bull team and were ready to start to Nauvoo when word came that their grandparents were too feeble to travel West and were coming to Springfield to live with their son, Ira. So they traded their bulls for guns and started to Nauvoo on foot. Many people questioned them about their journey, and they told them that they had heard so much about the Mormons they were going to see for themselves. The trip was a hard one and Ira suffered much with sore feet. Ira stayed in Nauvoo and came West with Uncle Benjamin Beason Lewis. Arza went out to Mt. Pisque with Joel Ricks who furnished three yoke of oxen and two wagons to haul Church property. Arza drove them to Council Bluff. Here he learned what short ration fare was. There were six boys hale and hearty. They had a cup of milk each and a thin flapjack between them for breakfast and a small pot of mush to go with their milk for supper.

When they came to Mississippi River, Arza worked two days on the ferryboat, then went down to Missouri Street to trade for provisions. The rest of the journey was not so hard. After this Arza went to the river and assisted in ferrying the Saints across until the call came from the Government for 500 men to go to Mexico to fight the battle of a nation whose citizens had driven, and was even then driving them, out of Illinois with the promise if the men were not furnished, the Saints would be entirely wiped out.

Arza enlisted in Company B of the Mormon Battalion. President Young said, "Go, my brethren, be faithful Saints and soldiers and you shall every one return again to the body of the Church." He also promised them that they would not have to fire a gun at their enemies. This promise was fulfilled. When the Battalion left July 16, 1846, the additional burden of caring for the families of the soldiers fell upon the leaders of the Church.

The soldiers marched to Fort Leavenworth, two hundred miles and were two days without provisions, where they received their guns, camp outfits, tents, clothing, etc., with \$3.40 (one month's pay) Most of the money they sent back to the Saints. Here Colonel Allen, their commander, died. He had all their supplies for the year, but at his death they went into other hands and most of them were lost to the Battalion. They lived sometime on one-fourth rations. It is the belief of some members of the Battalion that Colonel Allen was poisoned by Dr. Sanders who said on one occasion that these G. B. Mormons are always sick, but you can't kill them. The soldiers were called in council to decide upon a successor to Allen. They chose Captain Hunt, but the officers chose Colonel Smith.

Their Song: "Our officers sent by old U. S. have sold their brethren for a dram,
Or else they have forgotten to pray, and then have given their
power away."

During their march sixty miles of desert without water, except some they found in the tracks in a buffalo wallow. This they dipped up with spoons and strained it through their handkerchieves. This happened the last day the Saints were driven out of Nauvoo. That night Arza stood guard in the heaviest storm, he says, he had ever witnessed. At Santa Fe they received three month's pay and sent it back to Winter Quarters to support the Saints there.

They started for California October 20. Arza took sick that night with Mountain Fever, but travelled on foot all the next day. At two o'clock he asked permission to put his gun in the wagon but was refused. Soon after, he told the officer the gun must go in the wagon or on the ground as he could carry it no farther. The officer then told him to put it in but to take it out again before they reached camp, but he carried no gun for 40 days. He kept growing worse for ten days. His messmate stood at their tent door one day and a soldier called to him and asked how Arza was, "Oh, he is no better. We will have to burn a brush heap over him before morning," he replied. Arza, in a slow drawling voice, said, "You just dry that up, I did not come to this country to die, and I ain't going to die. If you don't burn a brush heap over anyone before you do me, it will be a long time before you burn one." Through faith he improved. He was sent with a sick detachment back 600 miles to Pueblo. He walked the entire distance. They had one wagon for their camp outfit, rations, and twelve sick persons to ride in it. The well ones who came to help care for the sick had to help pull the wagon over the sand hills. Three days' rations had to do for twenty days. They went with the wagon to Santa Fe and from there with pack mules. The strictest army discipline was practiced, notwithstanding the hardships. For the slightest offences, a soldier was tied by the thumbs to walk behind a wagon or with his hands over a stack of muskets with bayonets. If he became exhausted, he was pierced by the bayonets.

The doctor used to give his patients calomel quinine, and poison, with an old iron spoon, which was a sin against nature, and death to some. A sick man was left in a Mexican home, but never was heard of after. The Mexicans said he left the next day to follow the Company. Ten sick men were left at a wealthy American's home, who sent his carriage back for the other one, but found him not. So far Arza had passed as one of the invalids.

They had a very vicious mule to pack. It took several men to handle him. One morning at breakfast they were debating who should do the packing. Arza said he intended to pack that mule that morning and was met with jeers and laughter, but was told to go ahead and pack him, which he proceeded to do. The mule would kick and bite. Arza tied his head so he could not bite, then commenced a kicking match with him, in which the man was victorious. After that the mule stood as patient as could be while he was packed but allowed no one else to do it. As result he had a mule to pack the rest of the journey.

They crossed the Rocky Mountains where they were ten thousand feet high. Arza had sent all his money back to the Saints and his clothing, as he waded through snow four feet deep, consisted of a hat, a hichory shirt, blue drilling pants, and socks and shoes.

They reached Pueblo, N. M., December 23. There were no clothing stores there. Arza had to have some pants. So he traded for two deer hides, tanned them and made him some pants. They shrank when wet until they were skin tight. He said his muscles were largest at the joints. Although his health had been improving for fifty days, he was almost a skeleton. I imagine his appearance in skin-tight buckskin trousers.

He took cold before the cabin was up and soon began to feel the effects of the great amount of calomel the doctor had given him. The pain was terrible. He heard that lead would draw calomel out of the human system, so he beat bars of it and put it around his ankles, knees, neck, wrists and arms. This brought the desired results. In three weeks some of the bands were eaten away by the calomel. They stayed in Pueblo until May then crossed the Plains to the Great Salt Lake Valley, arriving July 27, 1847. They were all re-baptized.

They started to build a fort consisting of a row of buildings around an open space of ground. Some of the buildings were of logs. Some of adobe. Arza made the second 400 adobe built in Utah. He intended to remain in Salt Lake Valley, but as he had no supplies he went back one thousand miles to Winter Quarters. Three of them started back with supplies consisting of thirty pounds of beef. Arza got three quarts of corn from his Aunt Jane Sherwood at Pacific Springs, and two pounds of flour at Laramie. They got some cornmeal from the immigrants they met. Sometimes they ate prickly pears and rosebuds, which impaired his digestion to such an extent that he never got over it. At Strawberry Creek they met the last company of immigrants. There the Sioux Indians stole 55 head of horses. Arza started in pursuit, got on their track and in sight of them, but was unable to overtake them and went back to camp.

After they had gone 100 miles farther the Indians came and took ten more head. The chief and some of his men came into camp. A council was held and the Indians agreed to return the horses. Arza was on guard and knew nothing of the agreement. When he was released from guard one of the men told him. His horse was tied just outside of the camp in the brush. He loaded his gun and started out for the horses. He met Apostle Lyman who asked him where he was going. Brother Lyman told President Young who said, "Young man, you go back and put that gun up and let that horse alone." With the spirit of obedience that ever prompted his actions, he replied, "Alright, your boss, but it seems tough to have a horse in camp and have to walk six hundred miles on foot." This prompt obedience to his file leader averted dire consequences to the entire camp as his taking the horse after the agreement would have maddened the Indians who probably would have committed all kinds of outrages. The horses were returned.

At the South Fork of the Platte River the Company was delayed by mush-ice in the river, but it went out the second day. Some of the men were obliged to help the wagons across the river, as the bottom was quicksand and the horses could not get over alone. The water was cold. Arza helped four wagons over and had trouble to get warm again. Brother Kimball took him and others into his carriage and warmed them up with warm drinks and dinner.

Arza stayed in Winter Quarters a few days, a short time, then went to Ft. Leavenworth & work Ira, was working at a mill. Here he worked in a cooper shop where he learned that trade. In September 1850, he returned to Salt Lake City and worked as a cooper the first winter. In the Spring he drove a team for the Church. He continued this work and in the employ of Daniel H. Wells for 17 years, except when he went out to meet the Handcart Company and Indian expeditions.

His first trip to meet a Handcart Company, he went 400 miles and the second one, 300 miles, met them at Ice Springs. A Company had been sent out ahead of him to meet this last Company, but it was so late and the weather so severe that they had given it up, and was returning to Salt Lake City when they met Arza. Their leader told Arza it was useless. They could not go to meet the Company. Arza replied that he had been sent to meet that Company and he was going to do it. The others said they could go any place Arza could and turned and went to meet the Company, thereby saving many lives.

During this time, and up to his last days in Rexburg, he has stood as much night watching in standing between our leaders and their enemies as any person in the Church without any compensation from any source. He was on the Police Force in Salt Lake City until 1859 and a minute-man until 1868. He had charge of President Young's office one night a week for ten years. He travelled with President Young as a guard about 5000 miles. The last ten years of this time he was President D. H. Wells foreman in the summers.

In November 1863, he was driving sheep through the mouth of Parleys Canyon taking the sheep from Coalville to Black Rock. The soldiers, on learning that he was a Mormon, used abusive language, pulled his cap over his head and beat him all over, bruising him and breaking several of his bones. Finally left him for dead. Barney Adams took him home in a mess wagon. He was laid up for one year from these injuries.

The following item was in the newspaper:

SOLDIERS ASSAULT ON CITIZEN

On the morning of the 14th, a brutal attack was made by a gang of half-drunk soldiers on Arza E. Hinckley of this city, and a fourteen year old boy named Smith, who was assisting him in driving a flock of sheep from East Weber. The affair occurred near the mouth of Parleys Canyon. One of the soldiers jumped down from the wagon in which the party was traveling and, without any provocation, struck the Smith boy in the face and knocked him down the dugway which had been constructed at that place. Mr. Hinckley was a short distance in the rear and rushed forward, giving the ruffian a smacking blow which sent him rolling after the boy. At this the whole gang jumped upon Mr. Hinckley and beat and kicked him in the most brutal and inhuman way. They doubtlessly would have killed him had not the least intoxicated member of their party restrained. As it was they left him unconscious and almost lifeless. The attack created great indignation in the community, and it was understood that Colonel Pollock, commanding at Fort Douglas, was going to order a strict investigation as soon as the victims of the outrage were able to appear as witnesses.

In 1866 he was in the Black Hawk Indian War. A commissary and Second Master Sergeant in General Wells' staff. He came home in July and took charge of a mule team that was to go out to meet Chipmans Train, who had had their cattle stolen, but they were ordered to go on to the last train (Lowerys) which they met at Lovinna Ford, consisting of eighty persons and their effects. This enabled them to reach home before the heavy storms and saved them from being robbed by the Indians, as Brigham Young said they would if not met. The second day after the Lowery Train passed the Platte Bridge Station, the Souix Indians took the Government mules and horses and left the soldiers afoot at the Fort.

In the Fall Arza returned to President Wells employ. Late in the Fall he left President Wells and moved to Coalville, Summit County, Utah, where he was appointed Probate Judge of Summit County, his predecessor having resigned. He was elected to fill another term serving in all six years. He found the County deeply in debt with five toll gates on the highway, no public works, their county warrants almost worthless, and their court in ridicule. It was the frontier county and the civilized world was looking to see what the Mormons would do. There were outlaws who were testing the officers to see how much they would permit. The county was in a discouraged state. Arza had officers appointed and succeeded in bringing the court into respect, collected tax from the Railroad, frustrated a design to break the City Charter of Coalville and townsite entry, spent \$8,000 on roads and bridges, rid the county of toll gates, built public works worth \$8,000. The warrants were made as good as any other money, and he left the county out of debt with resources due. The Union Pacific Railroad gave the county credit of having the best order of any district on their road. He labored without any compensation even neglecting his private business, the better to attend public affairs. He was pleased at the demonstration of the truth of President Young's statement that if he was not much acquainted with law, justice would always be his. For sometime after this he managed and worked in coal mines.

In August 1877, Apostle Taylor came to Coalville and organized the Summit Stake and ordained Arza a High Priest, and set him apart as one of the High Council. That Fall he moved to Cove Creek Fort, Millard County, Utah, and, with his brother, Ira N., took care of the Church cattle. He stayed there until the Fall of 1882, then moved part of his family to Logan and part to Morgan, then he went to Arizona on a mission to the Indians. He visited ten different tribes as a pioneer missionary. He was there 18 months. He settled some serious difficulties with the Indians caused by unscrupulous white men who had pretended to befriend them. He was ordained a bishop in the Papego Ward in 1884.

That summer he went home and worked in the temple at Logan, intending to go back to Arizona in the Fall with his family but was released from his labors there.

That Fall he and his son Silas went to Rexburg, Idaho, to locate a home and in the Spring he moved his family there. Brother Erastus Snow told him, while he was too old to learn a new language, yet he should lay the foundation for a great work among the Indians.

I met a lady, Mrs. Velma Black Harvey, who was there at the time Father was there. A small girl at that time. She used to show Father the trails from one camp to another. Her father took care of one of the Posts, and she said everybody truly loved him down there. And the Indians just worshipped him. --Mary L. Welch

The first summer in Rexburg was not altogether pleasant. There was a family of twelve to live in two small log rooms, no emolument for the grown girls, which caused them to be very discontented. He had claims to a great amount of land and thought for a time, he would be able to do pretty well. Part of this land was jumped, and part of it he was defrauded out of by brethren whom he had trusted. This was a sore trial to him and embittered his last days. For a time it looked as if the trial would be too much for him but conquered it and, in notes written during his last days, he says he forgives those brethren and leaves them in the hands of the Lord. In Rexburg, as elsewhere, he was always ready to serve the Lord and His servants without consulting personal

interests. Many times when the polygamous raid was on, he has guarded nearly all night to protect his brethren from those who sought them. He was ordained a patriarch soon after coming to Rexburg and has travelled all over the Stake of Bingham blessing the people of the Lord.

He and his boys did much breaking of land in the vicinity of Rexburg. The first years here were years of poverty. One winter there were times when the family did not have bread. I distinctly remember living three weeks at one time on potatoes. He felt this hardship very keenly and went for days himself without food, saying he thought he would be better off for fasting and praying. I have seen him sit in weeping that year and the tears just rolling down his cheeks in this sorrow. He never seemed to consider himself, but others.

He was very kind to his family and loved them with a pure deep affection. One of his greatest griefs was that there was not as much union between the members of his family as he desired. Many times I have heard him lament this fact. His was not a demonstrative nature. In his associations with his family, he was almost cold, and yet, if one of his children wanted anything that he thought proper, he would make any sacrifice or do any labor in his power to get it for them. I have seen him take censure from his friends, because of not having done some things for them, without a word in reply. When to my certain knowledge he had strained every effort to get that very thing for them.

I have heard my brothers say, they have gone to the field day after day with just bread in a sack for lunch. -- M. L. Welch.

I have seen him do things for his associates which were received without a word of thanks, when many a man would not have done it even if his efforts had been appreciated. I have known him to take censure for me, or rather my acts, where a few words from him would have shown that he had nothing to do with it and yet, to shield me from others ill feelings, he said nothing. Many a cold long ride he has taken for me to or from school where I was teaching. I thought I appreciated it then but now I appreciate it more now.

Some thought he was unjust or partial in his dealings with his children, but no man was more just. At times he may have spoken in favor of his motherless children, but it was not because he loved them more than the others, he felt that he was both father and mother to them. He felt that he had made a mistake in not being more demonstrative in his affections towards his family and grieved over it very much in his last days. He felt that he had spent too much time with the Public and not enough with his family. If I can keep my life as free from sin and wrong doing, I will feel that salvation is justly mine.

Of his courtship and social life when young I know very little about, as he did not tell me much of those things. He married his first wife, Amelia Woodhouse, in 1853. There were born to them five children, Amelia Ellen, Arza Erastus, Jr., Ira Nathaniel, Lois Ann, and Daniel Hammer. The oldest and youngest died in infancy and childhood.

He married his second wife, Temperance Ricks, in 1857. To them were born ten children, Lois Ellinor, Joel, Ann Elizabeth, Edwin Lewis, Ella Clarinda, Rhoda Adelaide, Silas, Arthur Seymour, Minnie Mary, and Nathan Roy. The oldest four of these died. Three in childhood and Joel, who grew to manhood, was killed by robbers at Franklin, Idaho, while in the employment of the Railroad Company.

He married his third wife, Mary Heiner, in 1861. To them were born eight children; namely, Heber, Mary Louiza, Martha Adlegunda, Luna Ardelle, John Heiner, Frances Amelia, Franklin Arza, and Harvey. The oldest and youngest died in childhood. That made nine children that he had buried. His first wife died in 1861 in Salt Lake City. His third wife died in 1879 in St. George, Utah. Of his living children all are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and most of them are active members.

Arza had very few advantages for education, but he had an ardent desire for knowledge. Even in his last days when his body was racked with pain, he made efforts to study. This desire for knowledge was inherited by most of his children, however their scholastic advantages were also very limited. Nearly all succeeded in getting a common school education. Two children, Frank and Frances, are college graduates. Frank has his Masters Degree. Six others attended higher schools. Frank and Frances have been school teachers for a number of years. Frank was principal of a High School at Grantsville. Principal of the St. Johns Academy, taught in the Brigham Young College of Logan, Utah, for a number of years. At present he is principal of the Box Elder High School, where 40 or more teachers are employed. He attended the University of Chicago. Also the University of California. Frances served as County Superintendent of Public Schools for one term. She also received a certificate in Obstetrics. Mary and John both served as Stake Presidents of the M. I. A. John filled a three-year mission in the Southern States, served three terms in the Wyoming Legislature as a representative, and one as senator. He also served as Bishop of the Cowley Ward for 11 years. Every one in his Ward just loved him. Ella was at one time Stake President of the Primary. Nearly all of the children have served as Sunday School teachers and officers, and officers and teachers in the M.I. A. etc. Silas was an aid on the Stake M.I.A. Board and filled a mission in Europe. Lois has spent so much time and money for temple work, although her means have been limited.

Arza was blessed with a strong wonderful constitution. He lived to be nearly 75 years old, notwithstanding his life had been one of almost constant exposure, privation and hard work. His life was one long stretch of pioneering, and more than one desert he has converted into a garden for others to reap the benefit.

His last days were filled with physical suffering, especially the last few months. he suffered excruciating pain. During all his suffering and trials, he always bore testimony of the truth of the Gospel. He died February 18, 1901. The world lost a man true in the deepest sense of the word, and his family a kind, true, sympathetic father, friend, guide, and husband.

May God keep his family as pure and true as he was. Blessed is his name and memory.

P. S. Father was confined to his bed for one year after the soldiers beat him in Parleys Canyon. When asked by Brigham Young what should be done with those soldiers, he said, "Nothing, let them go." The boy who was with him lost one eye.

He helped to build a mile of railroad, he and three others. One of them went to Salt Lake City to get the pay and skipped the country with it. The others had to sell off their teams and wagons to pay their hands(hired help).

He helped to set the poles from Bridger to Salt Lake City for the first telegraph line that came into Salt Lake City. He built the first bridge over the Jordan River. It was built without a nail. He also built the first rock home at Garfield.

Written by his daughter - Frances H. Roskelly

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Compiled by Andrew Jenson

Hinckley, Arza Erastus - A member of the Mormon Battalion, Company B, was born August 15, 1827, in Leeds county, Canada, a son of Nathaniel Hinckley and Lois Judd. He was baptized in 1838 by Lyman Stoddard in Illinois, enroute to Missouri. Brother Hinckley migrated with the saints to Nauvoo, Illinois, and while there worked on the erection of the temple. After the exodus from Nauvoo in the Spring of 1846, and after his arrival on the Missouri River, he enlisted in the Mormon Battalion and, having wintered at Pueblo with the sick detachment of the Battalion, he arrived in Great Salt Lake Valley July 29, 1847, five days after Pres. Brigham Young. Elder Hinckley resided in Salt Lake Valley 17 years, after which he became one of the pioneers of Summit County, where he was elected probate judge in 1868. He was active in the construction of the Union Pacific Railroad through Utah, having charge of some of the contracts. From 1882 to 1884 he filled a mission to Arizona, and upon his return, located at Rexburg, Idaho, where he was ordained a Patriarch in August, 1887. He died at Rexburg February 18, 1901.
