

History of Benjamin Mark Smith

Written and compiled by his son Charles William Smith

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Benjamin Mark Smith was born 1 Jan 1834 about 25 miles east of Nashville, Tennessee.

His father, Warren Smith, after the death of his first wife, Lydia Alexander, married Amanda Barnes Smith, the wife of another Warren Smith, who was killed at Haun's Mill. They were both blacksmiths by trade.

Benjamin Mark, with his father went to Far West in 1837 and they were with the saints when they were driven out. They camped on the banks of the Mississippi river and during the long severe winter his mother passed away, incident to the hardships and exposure she was forced to endure. Benjamin Mark was but five years old when he lost his mother. He was one of the first children baptized in the Nauvoo Temple.

Warren, his father joined the church in the year 1836, He was one of the prophet's body guards and a policeman for many years in Nauvoo, and also was a very intimate friend of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Warren Smith and his two families, crossed the plains in 1850 and settled in American Fork.

Benjamin Mark married Elizabeth Agnes Wood in 1855 in American Fork Utah. He came into the Provo Valley, as a pioneer and settled about one mile south of what is now Midway, on Snake Creek, at the Cottonwood Grove. He owned all of the land around what is now the Provo Valley Fish Hatchery. He found this country as wild as was all of the country of the far west in those days. The days during the summer were hot and the nights cool. This country was pleasant to live in but was infested with wild animals and snakes, mostly rattlers. The river bottoms were covered with patches of tall grass that waved in the gentle breeze and the streams were alive with fish. All kinds of wild game were plentiful in the

mountains and often “ we could see droves of elk trotting across the country,” says his history. The mountains contained plenty of building material and good fire wood. However, the winters were very severe, bringing with them much cold and deep snow.

“Jess McCarrell and I rode over the country. We found that the north west part was made of a peculiar formation. There were lime stone pots scattered over an area of some two square miles. They differed in size, some were as small in diameter as a large wagon wheel, while others were from 25 to 100 feet in diameter at the base. They were of an oval shape, some having water flowing from their top while others were dry. The water was strongly impregnated with lime, thus forming layers of rock as it flowed over the sides of the pot and out on to the level surface of the surrounding country during the past ages. The most prominent of these is some 60 feet high and several hundred feet across at the base. The water flowing out is hot to just warm from several pots. While visiting one of these dry pots, this same spring, we saw snakes coiled in a pile as high as a mans head and six feet in circumference. The snakes were close to edge of the pot and in the bottom we could see skulls of rattle snakes which would measure three inches in width. We named the pot the Snakes Den and it is still known by that name. On the walls on the inside of the snake den were painted pictures of wild animals and Indians.

This same summer while riding through a thicket of cottonwoods and brush we saw what appeared to be an old campground. There were parts of mens clothing, bottles, knives, forks and spoons. As we made a closer examination, we could see straggling locks of hair. It was the hair of some white men and there lay the skeleton, with a tomahawk still cleft in the skull. The Indians in those days were to be feared, We were often compelled to feed them when it seemed that starvation was unavoidable, Our firearms were a necessity and always kept within reach. During the night we always slept in thick brush, as it was the only place that we were

safe.

In the summer when it was sultry, bands of Indians came from the lower valley to spend the summer in the higher and cooler country. This was the time when we kept a vigilant eye on our horses as they would steal them every chance they got. Provo Valley at that time was the summer resort, or pleasure ground for the Indian, Beautiful mountains covered with everlasting snow reared their majestic heads into the very clouds, making of this valley a paradise indeed for the red man, who was justly jealous of the encroachment of the white man.

I later sold my property here and went to California, but came back at the time that the church called the saints in at the approach of Johnston's Army into Utah. In my life I made four trips to California by horse team, the last one after my family was all grown and married. This trip was made with my wife and grand daughter May Waddell. I returned with the same team of mares that I started out with, after driving to San Francisco, down the coast to Santa Cruz, thence over the Sierra Nevada mountains into Carson Valley, Nevada where we spent the summer, thence to Salt Lake City and home to Midway."

Martha Smith Bronson, narrating some of her parents history has this to say:

"My father has been a very faithful Latter-day-Saint and zealous worker, having passed through many of the early pioneer hardships. He was always cheerful and cast a ray of sunshine wherever he went, he died 15 Feb 1912 in Midway, Wasatch, Utah, of cancer.