

Childhood History of Edna Bennett Duncan

I was born on the 27 August 1913, in Meadow, Millard County, Utah, the last of eight children to William Hyrum Bennett and Elizabeth "B" Bushnell. The following is a personal history of my childhood as told to one of my four daughters, Dayle Duncan White on May 5, 1980.

My earliest memory is that if ever there was a choice to be made between my parents, I would go with my Father. I had a horse, a mare, called doll. She was with foal. I was leaning against her stomach and the colt kicked me away. I asked Dad what was the matter. He took my hand and let me feel the baby as he explained this miracle of life. Dad always called my topsy.

My Grandmother, Elizabeth Brockbank, lived with us and she let me sleep with her in her feather bed. Grandmother always felt like our home was her home. We had an Apple, Pear, Plum, Gooseberry, Current and Peach Trees in our yard. We stored the Apples in a pit through the winter. In the late spring I found a last Apple in the soft dirt in the side of the pit. Uncle John, my mothers brother was visiting us, he saw the Apple, and gave me a quarter for it and gave the Apple to Grandmother. For the most part it was a happy childhood. I was invited to a party, mother forgot to tell me. I was upset. The first time I tasted Jell-O was at a Birthday Party. I was about ten. I helped mother make quilts. We had quilting bees. Mother would piece the quilts into different designs. Neighbors, Friends, and Relatives would come and spend the day quilting and eat lovely dinners.

My sister Leona (Lee) shared the outside summer bed with me, under our big silver Maples and Humming Birds lived there. She would get me to do errands for her by telling me she "would just die" and then pretending to do so if I would not do what she wanted. One day when she was again threatening to die I said "well then die". That was the end of that. We had Blue Bird Nests every year on the porch. Arvilla (another sister) slept with me when she was teaching school in Meadow. She caught Chicken Pocks and I did not, but I helped scratch her back. I did get them when three of my four girls were little, however. I also played Florence Nightingale to Lola Duncan (my future husband, Floyd's sister) by scratching her chicken pocked back also. I worked for Geneva (my oldest sister) for three of her babies. The first at 16 years. Eugene, her oldest boy was afraid of me because Geneva had been taking her unhappiness out on him. After this lesson, she quit. With her third baby I was called to help and had to can tomatoes and wash and iron. I started the washer, did bottles and tomatoes, baked bread, shook cream in a bottle until it separated into butter: all this for two long weeks. Geve was always motherly toward me. Once I woke up with a sick headache. She brought me a dish of cold tomatoes and toast. It helped. Vaun, my brother just older than me, brought a puppy to raise. The puppy adored mother and protected her. Vaun took it out to the herd. It ate some poisoned meat and died. Mother cried. That was the only time I ever saw her cry over an animal.

We had an old dog named Ted. I loved to dress him and wheel him around in our baby carriage. Once during the spring run-off the stream in front of our house was high. The kids had made a pool to swim in. Old Ted would retrieve things from the pool for me. If I got too close he would push me back. Old Ted died from arthritis. We had an old cat named Cat. Vaun would mistreat the cat, I would scream and Mother would come running. Vaun also had rabbits to

raise. My job was to see that the cows got up to pasture in spring. I learned to milk when just a little girl. I thought it was such fun, I would milk three or four times a day and mother would scold because at night there was not any milk left for milking. Vaun and I would chum together. I would help him break the horses. He on the wild one and me on a tame one. One was a little donkey. Somehow, on the way to warm springs, the rope had come loose but the donkey still held its head up, as though still snubbed. Vaun was shook when he realized what could have happened. The donkey went on to become a very naughty donkey. When I would go to mount him he would jump across the ditch. We finally worked that out by having him jump to the side with the fence so he could not go any place.

Holiday were always a big occasion. Girls always had a new dress for Christmas and the Fourth of July. On the Fourth we would have a Liberty Queen. She would give a talk or have a talent. Several of my sisters were chosen to be the Liberty Queen. At day break a cannon would go off.

A town band would then parade the streets, playing. The band had two or three selections in the program too. I was on the program several times. It was always at ten o'clock. We always had a childrens' dance and the girls wore their new Fourth dresses. We also ran races for prizes and every child got a bag of candy and nut mix. On the twenty-fourth we had a Pioneer Parade. Once dad and I rode in our wagon in this parade, and an Indian swooped me up and put me under a tub. Another time we dressed up in costumes for the parade. The costumes were authentic as nearly all of us had Pioneer ancestors who settled in Millard County. Childhood was lower income. Plenty to eat and Mother sewed so I dressed quite well, however there was no money for Christmas one year. Vaun went to the mountains and brought home a cedar tree. We got apples out of the pit and tied them, along with old Christmas cards on the tree. Mother kept saying there would be no Christmas so we would be prepared and not be disappointed. There were no presents on Christmas morning. Howard, my oldest brother, came home and saw us crying. He went to the general store and bought a naked rubber baby doll for me and a pocket knife for Vaun. I saved that little doll as she was my last one. One day Geve came down from Fillmore to visit. Her kids got hold of my doll and tore her apart. I cried and cried. Mother sympathized but it was too late.

My earliest memory of a friend was a cousin named Zola Bushnell. She was about six years old when an epidemic of Diphtheria took her. This was a hard lesson. I played then with her younger sister Olean. She had long black hair and I wanted to comb her hair and put her in the baby carriage. Aunt Annie, Zola's mother, had a player Piano and I would coax to play it. In grade school I usually was a lead in the operas. I had a beau named Gerald Edwards. He lived cut-a-corner from us and I think he went with me because we lived so close and he was afraid of the dark. He would walk me to school and back. I played up to Aunt Lydes. We played summer games with all the kids. In the fall everyone raked leaves and burned them and baked potatoes under the burning leaves for a fall feast.

I remember when electricity came. I was about fourteen years. When I came from Elementary school (we went to eighth grade there) the men were at our house hanging lights (just a cord with a light-bulb on the end). Previously we had used coal oil or gas lanterns. I took religion class from Aunt Rin Sorenson every Thursday after school. I didn't go to primary regularly and was spasmodic at Sunday School until I taught classes at both Primary and Sunday School. I did

attend M.I.A. regularly. Every year the M.I.A. put on three act plays. Floyd Duncan was in them lots as either the hero or villain. I was in one as the Grandmother, it was a large part. I was about twenty. My clothes were always home made. I raised pet lambs and bought my first coat. It was Maroon with Gray fur. Mother, Geve and Lee helped make my clothes. I sold eggs to take Piano lessons, but never had quite enough eggs. It was a special treat to take a quarter and buy a large chunk of curd. We would all sit around eating it and enjoying each others company.