

HISTORY OF JAMES PETER AHLSTROM

James Peter Ahlstrom was born September 6, 1861, at Ephraim, Utah. He was the third of nine children born to Jons Peter Ahlstrom and Mary Larson.

He learned to accept responsibility at a very early age because the very existence of his family depended upon those things they could raise on their own ground, and every child was expected to do his share as soon as he was old enough. Jimmey learned to manage the livestock and spent his early summers working in his Father's fields. Schools and books were at a premium and the Ahlstrom children tried to take advantage of any opportunity to learn the three "R'S".

At the age of fourteen he started working on neighboring farms during the summers and he returned home for the winters to help his family.

His Father worked on the Manti Temple as a carpenter and Jimmey would often go with his Father and work at different jobs on the Temple and Temple grounds. One winter with two yoke of oxen he hauled the large stones that were used to form the window sills in the Temple.

When the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad went through Utah, Jimmey drove mules for the engineer, from Price Utah, to the Grand River. He would sometimes be out weeks at a time, never seeing another wagon track except those made by his own wagon. One year he freighted from Ephraim to Nevada, first with mules and later with horses.

When he was twenty-three years old he came to Idaho. At that time there was a "boom on" in the Lost River and Wood River Mines and Jimmey came up into that section young and eager to get into the thick of things. Instead of mining, he decided there would be a good profit in ranching, and with the help of an old Civil War veteran, who was a very good gardener, they raised truck garden vegetables and sold them in town to the miners. They worked at this for three years and did very well but then came the panic of Grover Cleveland's administration and all the mines were closed down.

From Idaho, Jimmey went to Oregon and got work on the railroad. He stayed there one summer then returned to Southern Utah and settled at Garfield County in a little place now called Tropic. The town was just being built and in order to get water to it, a canal had to be built right over the mountains. James was the first president of this canal company and worked on this project for three years. He supervised the blasting done in the construction, being the only one available with a knowledge of the use of dynamite. When the canal was completed the town held a celebration — with lots of food, dancing and songs. A line in one of the songs that was made up was, "And the water, it was muddy when us fellers got it through".

During this time he joined the State Militia and like all soldiers, was popular with the ladies. He met Matilda Jolley and their first date was attending a Military Drill in Cannonville. They rode to the drill in a big lumber wagon.

At one time, James lost some horses and followed their tracks up to a canyon he had never seen before. He thought it was such a beautiful, thrilling place, he returned and told everyone about it. He and some drummers (salesmen) from Z.C.M.I., Salt Lake City, went into the canyon and upon return wrote a piece for the Salt Lake Paper about its beauty. This, apparently, called the attention of the canyon to the Governor of Utah, and Mayor of Salt Lake City, because they too visited the canyon and from there its fame spread. The canyon was named after a Mr. Bryce, who had a cabin there and now Bryce Canyon is enjoyed and visited by all.

On June 24, 1896, James Ahlstrom married Matilda Jolley. They were married by Bishop A.J. Hansen. Their Marriage was later solemnized in the Salt Lake Temple, June 1908.

James Built a two story white frame home with ten rooms and a basement. The house was built on a quarter-acre city lot in Tropic and he also purchased a forty acre farm out of town on which he raised hay, grain and corn. They sold their produce, taking calves as pay until they had accumulated a good sized herd of cattle, then another recession hit the country and they had to sell their cattle...a cow and calf brought barely ten dollars.

He sold his cattle and with his two brothers bought a sawmill near Bryce Canyon. This was a busy time for him...farming and working at the mill, which put out 10,000 feet of lumber per day, surfaced on one side. This sold for eight dollars per thousand and that eight dollars usually had to be taken in farm produce. He worked the mill for five years then a fire of unknown origin broke out and the mill burned to the ground.

In 1906 the family moved to Idaho and bought a little farm at Basalt and rented more land and raised potatoes, receiving twenty cents per hundred the first year. They farmed at Basalt for four years and then came to Shelly, where they purchased a home and a small irrigated farm. Later they sold the town property and bought a dry farm near Woodville. Jimmey invested in a lot of modern farm machinery and when the drought of 1919 came they "didn't harvest a kernel" and lost their farm.

The family moved to Idaho Falls, in 1922 and James took a position with McConnons Products selling in the outlying districts. He resided in Idaho Falls until the time of his death, May 6, 1940, at the age of 79. He was the father of ten children, five girls and five boys. James held the position of High Priest in the Church.

As his posterity, we have inherited from him more than material wealth --a good blood line — and a good name - known for the qualities of honor, integrity, and square dealing, a name untarnished and respected.