

## A SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF RICHARD BIRD

In the State of New York, about 1801, we find that Benjamin Bird married Meribah Reeves. From this union came a very large family, nine sons and three daughters: Phineas Reeves, Charles, Samuel, James, Elizabeth, George, Kelsey, Polly, George II, Amanda Ann, Richard, and William.

Richard Bird, the subject of this sketch, was the eleventh child. He was born in South Port, Chemung County, New York, October 13, 1820. South Port is situated near the center of activity of the church in early days, not more than seventy miles from Fayette, where the church was organized and near Seneca Lake where the baptisms of the first members of the Church were performed. H.H. Roberts says: "What historical associations will yet gather about these localities—Fayette and Seneca Lake! I venture to predict that these places will in the ages to come be as Capernaum and Lake Gennesaret."

Of the early life of Richard Bird we have very little information. At the age of twelve years, his mother died. No doubt this was a very great trial and sorrow for a boy of that age. Soon after the death of his mother, his father married Margaret Crane and three children were born to them: Margaret Jane, Benjamin Tucker, and Martha Maria. Richard, being a very industrious and energetic young man, did all he could to lighten the burdens of the family.

Just three years previous to the death of his mother, the Gospel of Jesus Christ had been restored to earth through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Members of the Bird family joined the church and when the call came in 1838 for the saints to gather west, Richard Bird, then a young man of eighteen years, while not yet a member of the church, went with the saints and shared trials in the state of Missouri, arriving at Adam-ondi-Ahman, Davis County, Missouri, in September, 1838. They were only there until December, 1838 when they were ruthlessly driven out by the mob into Caldwell County, Missouri, suffering severely from cold and hunger.

Crosby Johnson, in his history of Caldwell County, says: "If that strange people who built Nauvoo and Salt Lake City, who uncomplainingly toiled across the American Desert and made the wilderness of Utah blossom like a rose, had been permitted to remain, how different would be the history of this place, Far West. In place of ruins there would have been a rich prosperous city, among the streets of which would be pouring the wealth of the world."

Richard Bird remained in Caldwell County among the Saints until the spring of 1839 when he was compelled to lay down his arms and sign away his right and title to his property to his enemies to satisfy the mob. He stood by and saw members of that wicked crowd occupy that hard-earned home while he, at the point of a bayonet, was forced to leave the State of Missouri and again seek another spot where they could build a home and live undisturbed and free from persecutions. This time they sought refuge in Quincy, Illinois, and settled in that new city which sprang up in a few months, the City of Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois. They lived in poverty

for several years, but in spite of the trials, he found time to labor months without pay in the erection of that magnificent Temple in Nauvoo. He became personally acquainted with the prophet Joseph Smith and between them grew a true and loving friendship.

The important event for the descendants of Richard Bird to remember is that, after he had been in Nauvoo for about five years, he met Emeline Crandall, who then lived at LaHarp, Illinois. He said he only courted Emeline about two months when they were married, March 7, 1845. Richard was twenty-four years old and his wife twenty-one years. Their short courtship, which was the custom with the Saints in those days, was a courtship which lasted all through their married life, for they were very devoted to each other.

Six months later, Richard Bird was baptized a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, September 21, 1845, at LaHarp by William Bird, his brother.

Richard and Emeline Bird made their home in Nauvoo and while they were being threatened by the mobs and times looked dark, yet they were very happy. February 10, 1845, a baby girl was born to them, Amanda Fedilia, but she only lived until March 20, 1846, a great sorrow for this young husband and wife. A short time after this the mob came upon them and Richard Bird described it thus: "In the spring of 1846, we were expelled, together with the Saints from the United States and in July landed in Pottawattamie, Iowa, and under-went many hardships such as sickness, cold, hunger, and death."

The great desire of Richard Bird was to secure, if possible the comforts of life for his loved ones and to see them turned out into a wilderness to exist or perish as God should decide was to him a very severe trial, this being the fourth time in eight years that he was compelled to leave all he had. They arrived at Council Bluffs where they worked hard to raise crops and teams and struggled four years to prepare an outfit to cross the plains.

While at Council Bluffs, now known as Kaneshville, two sons were born to them, Richard Leroy, September 11, 1848, and William Martin, December 1, 1849. What pioneer mothers we had to be willing to bear children under such privations. They felt it an honor, a lesson to those who enjoy the fruits of their struggles and who have every comfort and convenience possible.

On May 15, 1850, they began their long and tedious journey across the plains. They were in Aaron Johnson's company which consisted of 135 teams. Richard Bird says: "We passed through everything that mortals could endure." The trip across the plains was tiresome and monotonous and the spell was only broken by the dancing, singing, and prayer around the campfire at night. They truly felt that they were blessed, and were sustained by their cherished prospects of the future. After a long and dreary march of three months, they came into Salt Lake Valley, September 2, 1850. Although weary and tired they had no time to rest. Richard Bird went up north of Salt Lake into Davis County, where his brother James then lived, to seek a place to build his home.

Upon his return to Salt Lake, he found that President Young had selected the first eight wagons from Captain Johnson's company to go to Hobble creek, afterwards known as Springville, to build their homes. Those eight teams belonged to Aaron Johnson, Myron

Crandall, John W. Deal, Amos Warren, and brother, and Richard Bird. On the first of October, 1850, they commenced their little settlement. Before the winter set in, they built a fort of logs covering one and one-half acres, about where the old school house stood. This was done to protect their families from the savage Indians. They built log and block houses around this fort, with clay roofs, windows, and doors opening into the center. There were two reinforced gates, one to the east and one to the West. They had cut wild hay, which grew in abundance, for their cattle. They had gathered from the canyons Service berries, and choke cherries and dried them for winter, and had brought wood and corded it for winter. While they had very little to eat, yet these pilgrims were once more sheltered by a home, which to them was a castle and they were too happy for us to try to describe.

As other families joined them, they all worked and shared so each one was provided for. They felt that twenty families were all that could consistently live there, because of the limited supply of water in Hobble Creek.

In February, 1831, Richard Bird and John W. Deal did the first plowing in Springville in what is known as the Big Pasture showing that he was an "early Bird". In fact, in all the pioneering of Springville, he was always found to the front, ready to lend his strength and substance for the upbuilding of his church and his town. He held the office of constable for many years. He was an active man in all military matters and Indian wars of the early days, holding the position of aide-de-camp in Major General Johnson's staff.

To the family of Richard and Emeline Bird were added seven more children as follows: Emeline Adelaide, October 25, 1851; Vernon David, April 26, 1855; Charles Monroe, June 15, 1856; Margaret Luella, November 5, 1857; Luanna Maria, February 8, 1861; Amasa Crandall, July 20, 1863; and Arus Lavell, May 30, 1870; a family of six sons and four daughters, two daughters having died in infancy. As a father he worked unceasingly to provide for his family; he made their shoes; he raised the sheep and had his boys take them to the creek to wash them. Then, after they were sheared, the mother and daughters took the wool, corded, spun and wove it into the family's clothing. He raised flax and made their brooms. They manufactured their own candles and made most of their own furniture. He was happy when his family was well provided for, and built a fine home in Springville, which is now owned by the family of his son, Amasa.

In 1853, Richard Bird was called to help build up Fillmore, but was released at the end of one year and returned home. In March, 1855, he married his second wife, Laura Crandall Johnson, a sister of his wife Emeline, who had buried her husband Willis K. Johnson, while crossing the plains at South Platte River. She had a son, Willie Johnson, who was loved as a brother by the children of Emeline Bird, and he says: "Richard Bird was indeed a good father to me." To Richard and Laura Bird were born five sons: Spicer Wells, October 29, 1856; Roswell Darius, April 7, 1861; Delbert Wallace, July 27, 1862; Milton James, January 28, 1864; and Arvil Taylor, November 5, 1867. The last two sons died in infancy. So Richard Bird had two good faithful wives who loved each other dearly and love and harmony existed in this large family.

In 1868, Richard was called on a mission to Dixie to assist in establishing a town on the Muddy. He, together with his wife, Laura, moved to that desolate place. They did all they could

to make that mission a success. While there, he was appointed presiding Elder over that branch. They were forced to pass through many trials and hardships because the country was unfit for habitation and it did not produce enough for them to live on.

A little incident occurred while on their journey to the Muddy that portrayed the presence of mind that Richard Bird possessed in emergencies. A man by the name of Potter was traveling with them, and they were crossing the Virgin River, a very treacherous stream because of the quicksand. Richard crossed first; then Potter drove in and unfortunately in mid-stream/ the team stopped and the back wheels of the wagon began sinking. Potter lost his head, but Richard took his long whip and sprang into the water up to his armpits and by whipping and shouting, the team pulled them out, thus probably saving the lives of that family.

This little group underwent many privations during their stay on the Muddy. Also his wife Emeline at home. Her older boys, La Roy and Martin and Vernon, were away working on the railroad, leaving her at home with the younger children. Charles age twelve was the oldest boy left at home. He had to take care of the cows and pigs, and with his mother, they provided for the family as best as they could. But the aspiration of the two families was not for long. When the state of Nevada was surveyed, it took in this part of the country here these people were trying to colonize, so President Young released them, after two years and they came home.

Richard Bird was a financier. He planned well, worked hard, and was prosperous. He had good control over his children. He was kind, but firm. His daughter Luella says: "Father never scolded no whipped, but we always obeyed him." His son Charles says: "When father sent us boys into the field to work, we all felt it our duty to do a full day's work."

Richard Bird was a lover of horses and always drove a fine team. His grandchildren shall never forget the joy rides that they had behind Pes and Bird.

In 1872, Richard Bird, again called on a mission, went this time to the eastern states, back to his childhood day home. Among his relatives he spent two years preaching the gospel. While not a good public speaker, he did his good work as a fireside visitor. He did much to allay the prejudices of his family in the East. He won the love and esteem of all he associated with. He also gathered while there, and extensive genealogy that has been recorded and hundreds of names have been taken to the temple and work done for them. He, with his wives, did work in the Salt Lake, St. George, and Logan Temple and that spirit of temple work has been handed down to his descendants. His children and grandchildren now have a genealogical association of the Bird family. Also, we have missionaries in the field preaching the Gospel at the present time.

Of Richard Bird it can be said that all loved him who knew his, old or young. He was a comrade to his sons, a boy with the boys as long as he lived. He shared with the needy. He was a man free from malice. He had a forgiving heart and was a true friend and fearless advocate of the scriptures. Any discord in his family was a source of grief to him.

He died February 27, 1893, at Springville, Utah. He left to us, his descendants, a character worthy of imitation.