Samuel Bryson's Journey

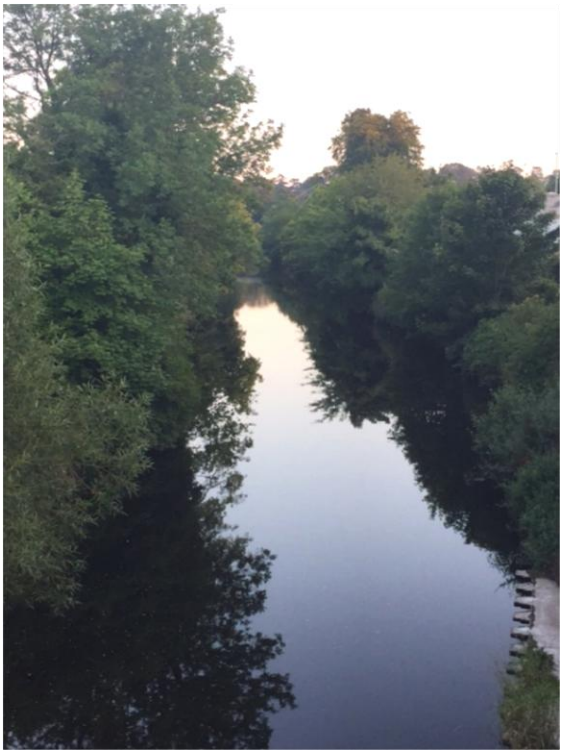
Ireland to Woodruff

By Janet S. Porter



Countryside through which the River Bann flows

Samuel Bryson didn't remember much about his home in Ireland except that there were trees everywhere. He was born April 11, 1845 in the tiny town of Banbridge in County Down, Ireland.



The River Bann at Banbridge

He remembered his early boyhood in shades of green: green trees, green grass, a green canopy of leaves covering the River Bann which flowed under the bridge near the village square.

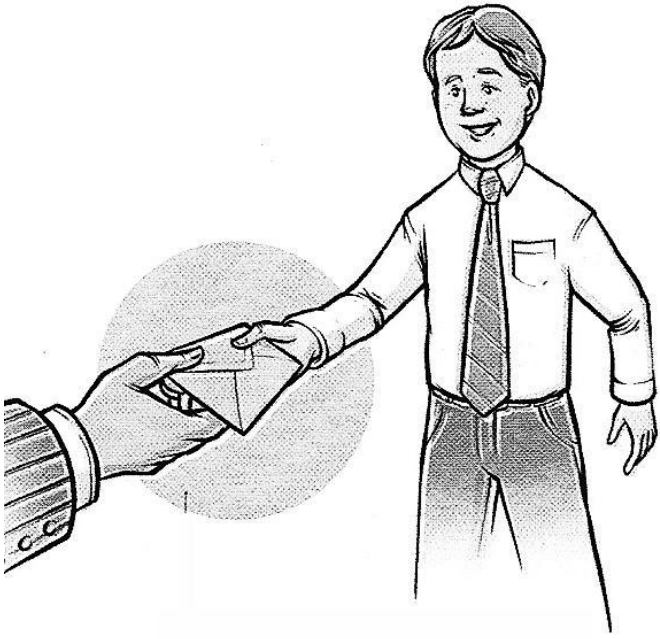


A road in Hillsborough on which they may have traveled as they attended the LDS Church meetings

Beginning when he was a baby his family had attended meetings in a nearby town called Hillsborough where the Mormon Elders held meetings. His parents and grandmother had been baptized before Samuel was born.



When Samuel was almost five years old his parents left Banbridge. Samuel didn't remember angry people who didn't understand their new religion. He wasn't even aware the missionaries from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were no longer welcome in County Down, the northeast part of Ireland.

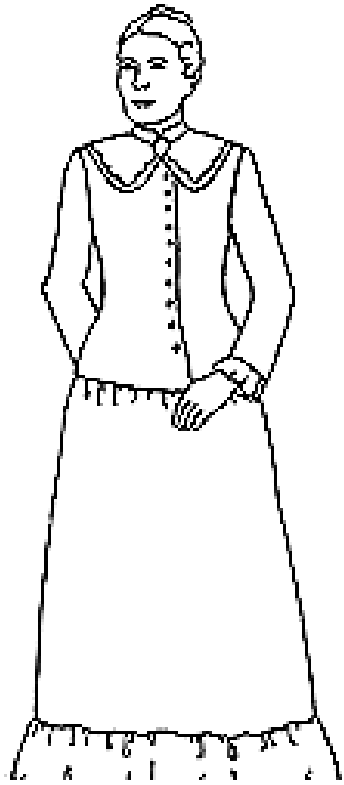


He didn't realize the land holders who were Catholics withheld wages and goods from people who attended church with the Mormons. He was too young to understand why anyone would try to punish someone for believing in God and following his conscience.

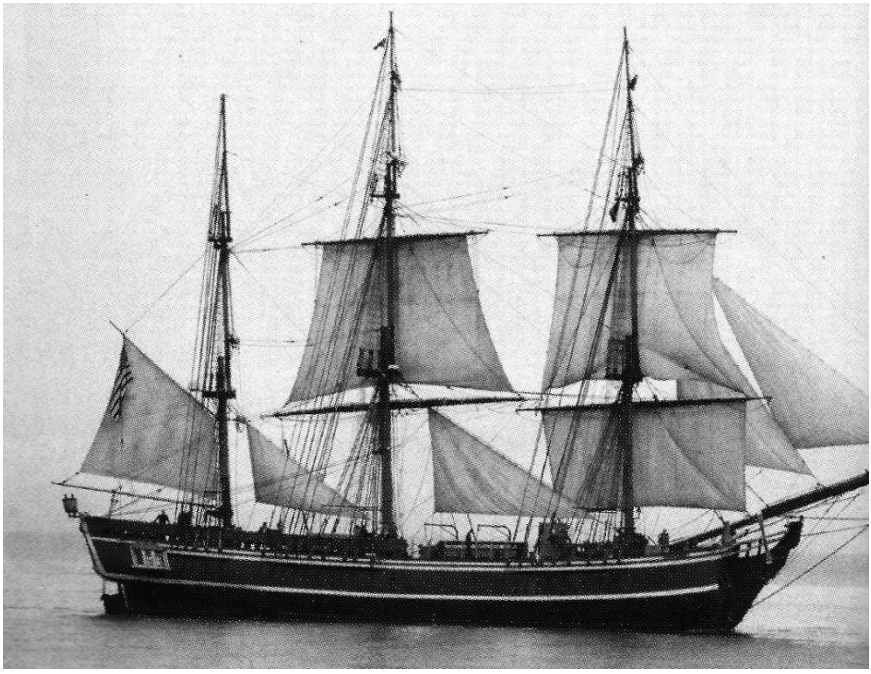


Banbridge Town Square

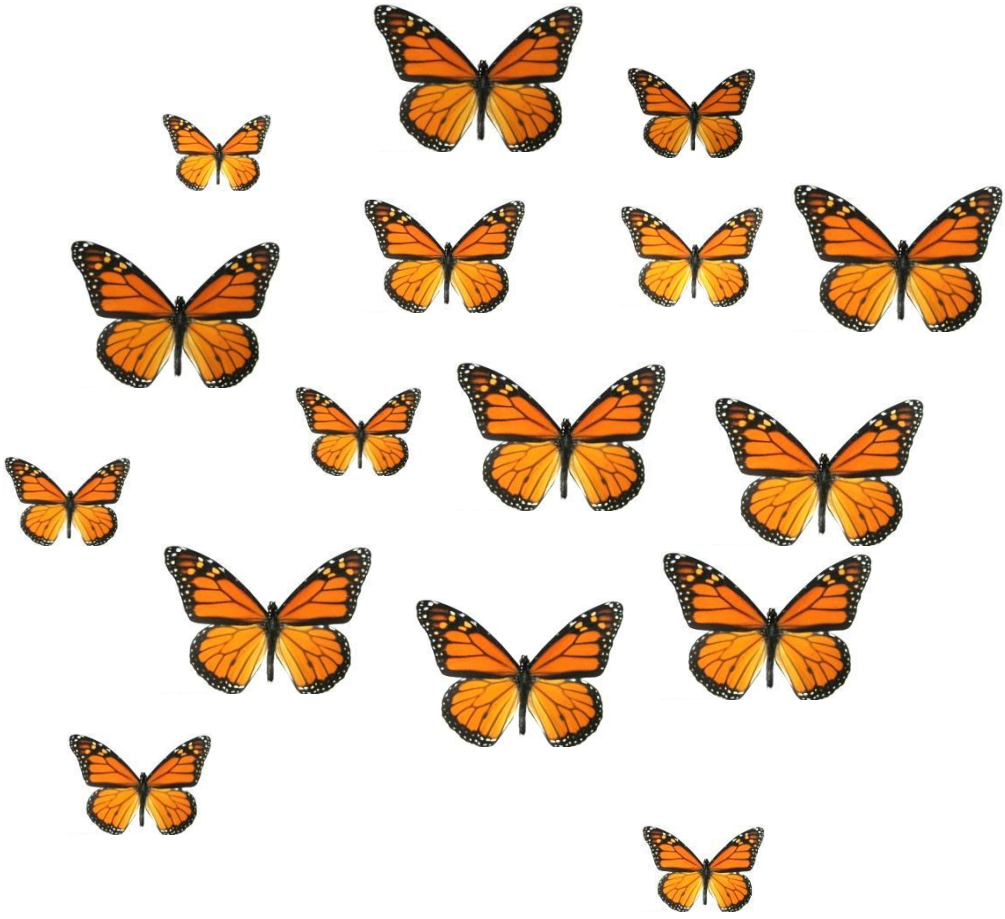
He only remembered the family left their small rented cottage in Banbridge and rode on a passenger boat to Scotland.



Another thing he remembered was saying goodbye to Grandmother Margaret Cowan Bryson. When his family moved to Scotland, she decided to go to Zion and be with the Prophet Joseph Smith and the Saints. She lived with and helped his brother Hyrum Smith's family.



Grandmother Margaret Bryson sailed on a ship to America away from her only son and his two children Samuel and Jane. They were her only family members.



It was hard for Grandmother to leave. She had no other family, and would have stayed to help them, but she had a dream that her tiny family turned into a butterfly, and then filled the room with hundreds of butterflies. She knew if she went to Zion her family would come and grow until it filled all the room in her heart.



While Grandmother was living in Nauvoo and traveling with an ox team to Winter Quarters and then Salt Lake City, Samuel and his parents lived in a small corner of a building in Glasgow, Scotland. There three more children were born into the family. Sadly, his baby brother and two sisters died, making two sisters and two brothers.



We think Grandmother Margaret wrote letters to her son and daughter-in-law because two of the children were named Hyrum Smith Bryson and Eliza Snow Bryson. Grandmother loved the church and wanted her family to know how wonderful it was to live with the Saints where the Spirit was strong and people loved Heavenly Father.



A city street in Glasgow, Scotland

Samuel and his parents lived in Glasgow six years. Back in Ireland his father knew the linen industry, and made beautiful linen fabric for many customers in Glasgow. Samuel was usually the one who delivered that fabric for his father. He learned the streets of Glasgow very well. His father was president of the Glasgow Branch of the Church, and was very busy.







Finally it was time to go to America to be with Grandmother Margaret, who was working to buy a house for them in Sessions Settlement, later called Bountiful, Utah.

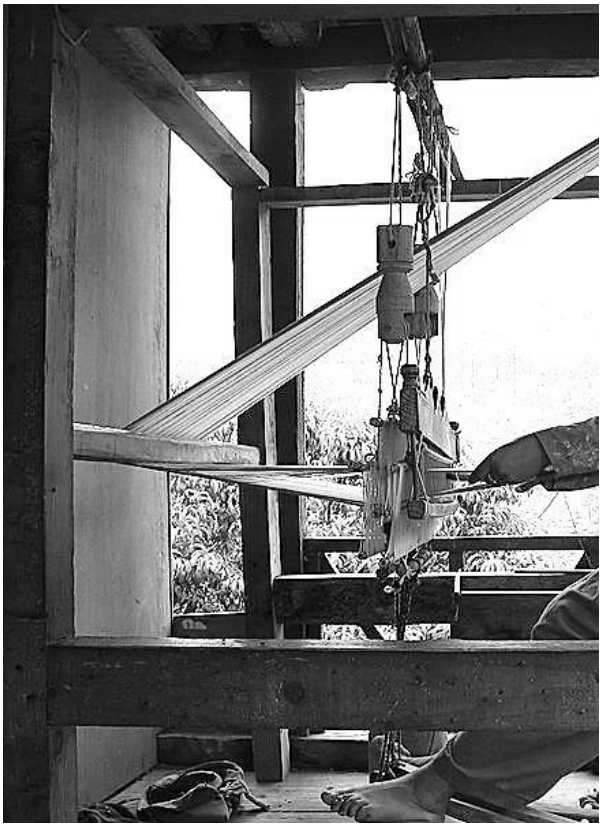
Samuel, his parents Samuel Sr. and Sarah Ann (Connery) and his brother and two sisters came in 1855 on the ship Samuel Curling. They rode the train as far as Iowa, and then walked beside a wagon with a team of oxen from Iowa to Salt Lake City. The trip from Glasgow took seven months and two days.



By the time they were settled in a little cabin in Sessions Settlement, Samuel was ten years old. Their little house was near the present site of 466 South Main on the east side of Main Street. There were not many houses at that time, and they didn't have many neighbors.



For many years Samuel continued to help his father make and sell fabric to customers in Utah. It was an important trade. Salt Lake City was more than 1,000 miles from the nearest store, and the only way to get there was on an ox team.



Loom for weaving cloth

The Brysons were the first weavers in Bountiful. As time went on people learned they could depend on the Brysons to teach them how to weave and sew. Samuel's father taught people to weave rag carpets. People would bring him cotton and wool warp they had spun, which he would weave into flannel and cloth.



Homespun clothes

Samuel always wore pants and shirts from cloth his father wove and his mother sewed. They had a garden and grew whatever they could. They were very hard-working, thrifty people and learned to make do with whatever was available.



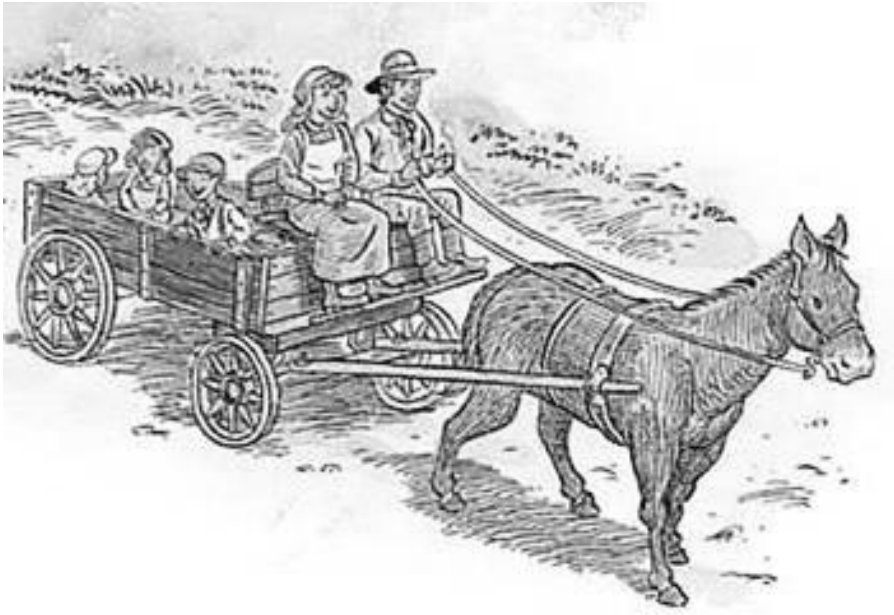


When he was 21 years old Samuel met a girl named Polly Tryphena Fairchild. She was a young school teacher at the Academy in Bountiful. They were married for all eternity May 25, 1867 in the Endowment House.



After two children were born to them, the prophet called them to help settle a desolate land in Rich County in northern Utah. The prophet was worried about that part of the territory. Ranchers from Texas were grazing their big cattle herds there because no one else lived nearby.

The murders and robberies and trouble caused by those big cattle ranchers worried the church leaders, who wanted all the land in Utah to be safe for families. So they called many Bountiful families to move north and settle the land, hoping the ranchers would move away.



Samuel and Polly had never seen the Bear River Valley, so they didn't know what to expect. But in 1871 when they loaded all their household goods and their children into a wagon and went 100 miles north, they were surprised.



It was the most bleak and desolate land they had ever seen. Polly was born in New York State where there are a lot of trees and rivers. Samuel remembered Ireland and the green landscape. This new land in Bear River Valley was nothing but dry ground and sagebrush. No trees grew there.



The early Bryson farm was down Little Crawford Road,
a mile southeast of Woodruff.

At first they were a little bit discouraged. They wanted to do what the prophet asked them to do, but it was very hard. The Texas ranchers and the railroad company owned much of the property in northern Rich County, so they couldn't buy their own land. They couldn't buy a homesite in town, so they had to live far out of town on a farm Samuel leased.



Crawford Road leads to the early farm house site, still a remote spot in the Woodruff landscape.

Polly felt lonely a lot of the time, all alone out in the little cabin while Samuel planted hay and established his own herd of cows. The only time she could talk to her friends was when they went into town for church on Sunday. Later she taught school and had to get into town every school day.

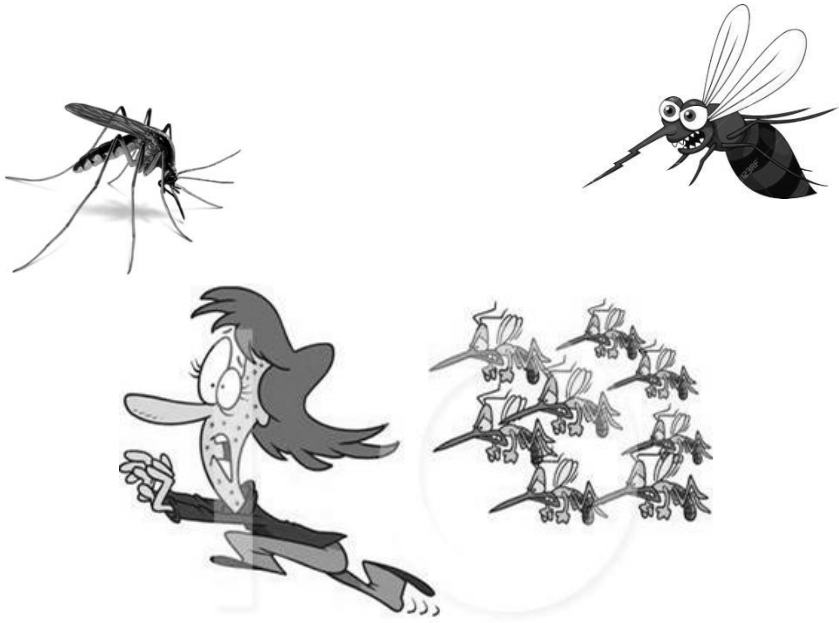


Eliza Snow Bryson when she was older

When their baby Eliza Snow Bryson was born April 17, 1872, she was the first child born in that part of the Bear River Valley to anyone besides Native Americans who shared their valley.



Samuel felt a bit discouraged as he tried to dig up the sagebrush, which has strong roots sometimes two feet deep. He tried to plant hay and barley to keep his family alive. It was hard work, and he sometimes thought of Ireland and Scotland where he could help his father make linen fabric and carry it to customers. For a long time there was no use trying to make fabric in his new home. People had no money. Most of them were scratching for a living just as the Brysons were.



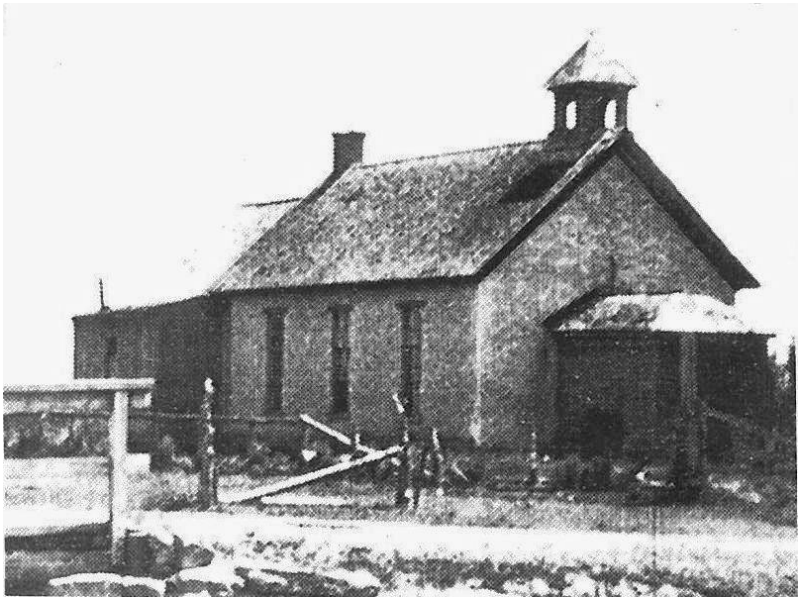
Soon the town was named Woodruff, but by any name it was a hard place to live. In the winter the temperature went down to -40 F. In the summer there were great swarms of mosquitoes everywhere. The Bear River flowed through Wyoming and came into the north part of the valley, winding back and forth and creating thousands of shallow ponds for mosquitoes to live in.



Every year Samuel grubbed out a few acres of sagebrush so he could plant hay, but until he could buy the land, it seemed futile, and the land around Woodruff wasn't for sale. It was very hard to do what the prophet had asked.

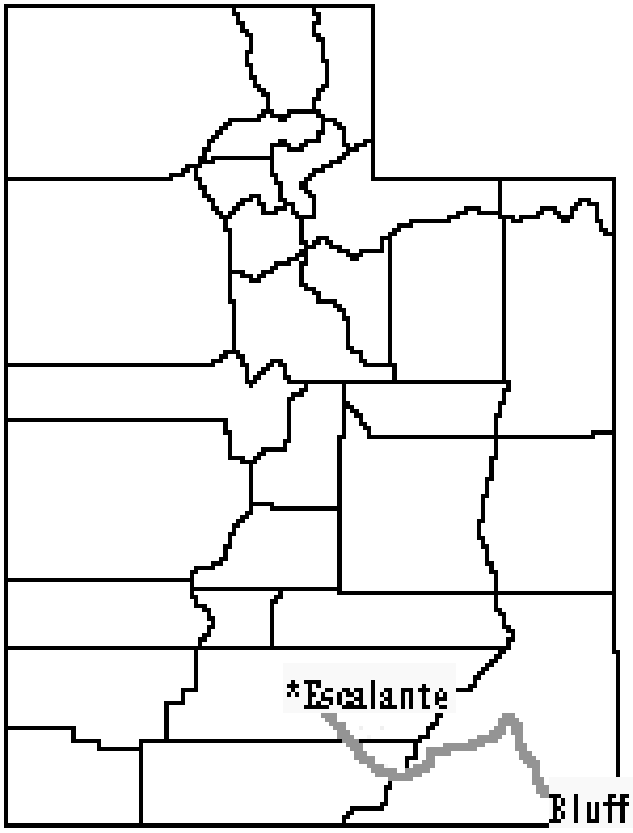


They tried to plant potatoes and carrots, but at 7,000 feet altitude the winters were too long, and the summers too short. The farmers became accustomed to selling cattle and sheep and buying food staples from other places. Samuel kept digging out sagebrush and wondering if he would ever have his own land as others did in the central and south parts of Utah Territory.

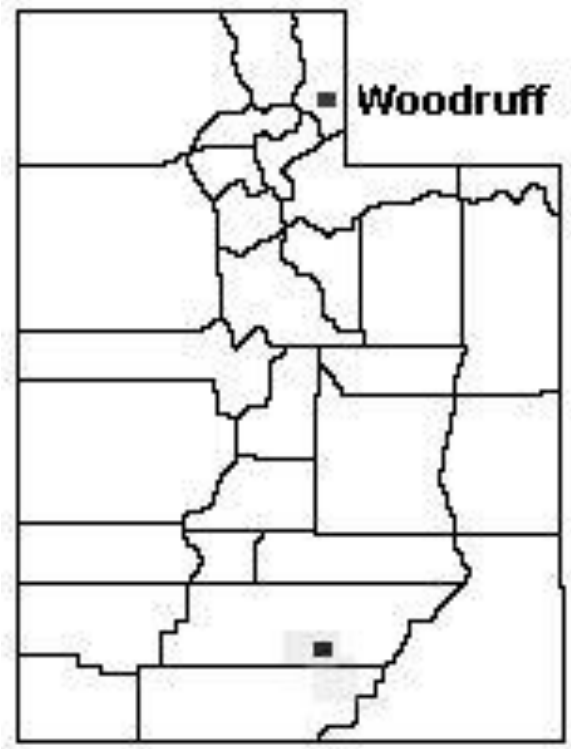


The old Woodruff Church used from the 1880's until a new church was built in 1898. Thereafter it was used as a school and as a community center for dances and entertainment.

The best thing about Woodruff was the church. Samuel was called as one of the first directors for the United Order by Wilford Woodruff in 1874. The Brysons may have been having a hard time, but they still knew the church was true. They chose to give their whole hearts to making this town successful and helping others who lived there.



Samuel still thought about places where trees would grow and where they could live close to town. Then in 1878 he heard about the San Juan Expedition. Most of the saints called to settle the Four Corners area of Utah Territory at the town of Bluff were from Parawan and Cedar City in Southern Utah. But the prophet invited anyone to join them who wanted to help colonize. The distance from Escalante to Bluff didn't seem great.



After seven years slaving on the land and freezing in the winter, Samuel wondered if he really wanted to live in Woodruff for the rest of his life. After all, he did what the prophet asked, and had gone to Woodruff while it was being established. Here was an opportunity. Samuel could do what the prophet said and be warm too. He had heard about Southern Utah, and knew it would not be as cold as Woodruff. Perhaps it would be as beautiful as Ireland or Scotland. He was tempted to try it.



Samuel found they were meeting together at Forty Mile Spring, between Escalante and the Colorado River, and made up his mind to go. Polly agreed it would be worth a try. He outfitted himself, packed enough food for the two months the organizers of the expedition expected to be on the trail, and made the 300 mile journey to join the San Juan Expedition.



The terrain at Lee's Ferry by the Colorado River is representative of the rugged area through which the San Juan Expedition traveled.

It was a difficult journey just to get to Forty Mile Spring. Everyone was surprised to find the entire distance from Escalante a series of deep ravines through which the wagons had to travel. Instead of taking a day or two, the trip across all the ravines took two months. By the time the Expedition assembled at Forty Mile Spring their food was almost gone. Then they found the Springs were almost dry, and they had no more water.



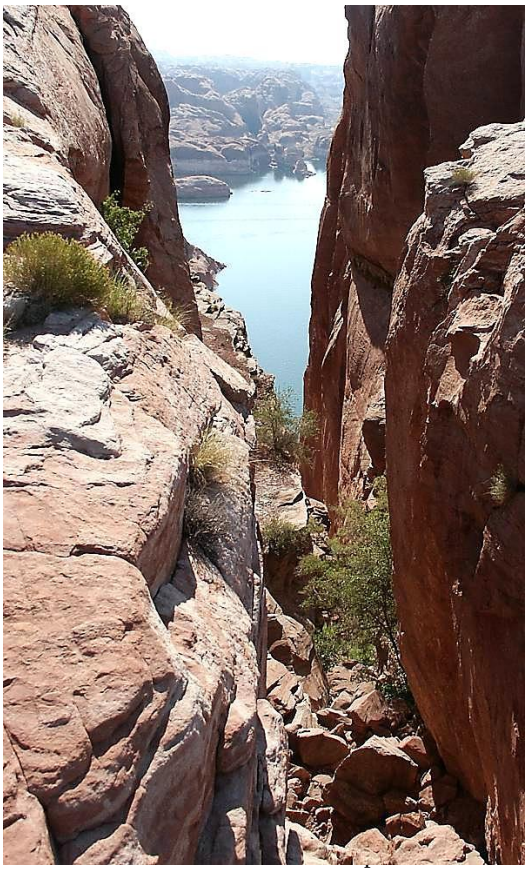
Everyone in the Expedition hoped to be in San Juan before Christmas so they could avoid the winter snow. As one of the few men without his family present, Samuel became one of the leaders, and they decided to continue the journey even though it was already December 6.

Samuel Bryson was the only man who had come from Northern Utah. A man named Silas Smith had found this direct route to Blanding and decided it would be faster than backtracking over 100 miles through Moab. He thought they could travel directly across the Colorado River and San Juan River Gorges, but no one in a wagon had ever been there before—not even Silas Smith—so they knew nothing about such a journey.

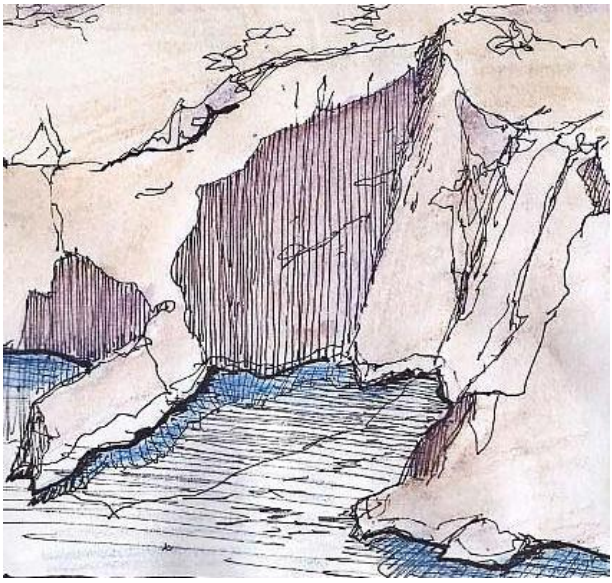


What they saw was a notch in the rocks
overlooking the great Colorado River Gorge.

Beginning the very next day the leaders of the group struggled over the rough terrain to what looked to them like the edge of the world: the great gorge overlooking the Colorado River in the location of what is now Lake Powell just a few miles north of Rainbow Bridge. Below them half a mile straight down, the Colorado River raced between solid rock banks.

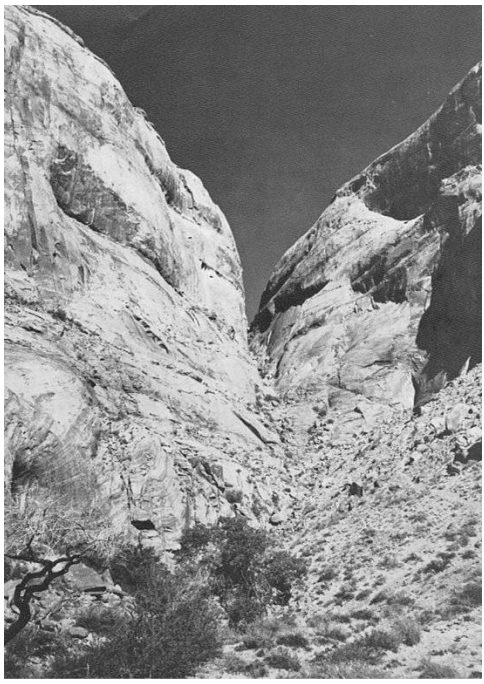


They couldn't believe anyone could get wagons down that gorge, really just a slit in the solid rock wall, dropping 2,000 feet at such a dizzying angle many people didn't even dare look over the edge. Some in the group believed it was a mistake to come at all, but they didn't want to go back over the fifty miles of gorges with their 2,000 head of cattle either. They didn't know what to do.



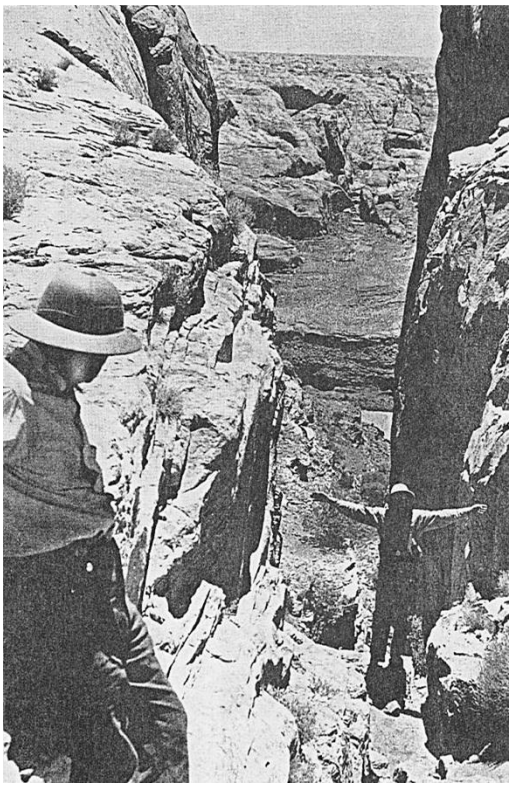
The notch through which the San Juan Expedition traveled from the Hole in the Rock. Today it is partially covered by Lake Powell.

Winter was already upon them, and their food was quickly running out. Finally they decided to do something. Platt Lyman took firm leadership of the group, and Samuel Bryson was always beside him. They divided into three groups which would work on different sections of the Gorge down to the river. Work began that very day to build a road where it seemed no road could be.



The top one-third of the trail from the notch.

Since a there would never be a road wide enough for a wagon and there was little blasting powder, they drilled two and one-half inch holes ten inches deep into the rock below the trail. Into these holes they drove stakes and then secured poles up to the edge of the rocky ledge. Onto these poles they piled brush, rocks and gravel which widened the ledge and supported the wagons.



An old picture shows the path after it had been blasted, chipped and widened, and also shows the rugged terrain across the river below..

Meanwhile the other group were being lowered in barrels to drill holes into the notch so parts of the rock could be blasted away and a level enough bed for a wagon could be formed. Others used picks and shovels to hammer a path into the narrow crack. They saved all the rocks chipped off to build up the trail and fill deep holes.



After seven weeks of work, the road was ready. It was necessary to rough lock the back wheels by wrapping a heavy chain several times around the rim and tire of the wheel and fastening the loose end to the wagon box. Then with between ten and twenty men holding on behind with ropes and chains, the driver started his oxen or horses down.



By the first day of February all the wagons were down the rock path and were being ferried across the river. But the journey was not over. Now there was a 250-foot sheer wall of rock on the other side. They knew they would have to cut a path wide enough for a wagon to get to the top of the mesa.



After cutting a path in the rock, they had to hitch seven teams for each wagon. The trail was so narrow two men had to walk behind with ropes to hold the rear wheels onto the path. One at a time the wagons, the families, the cattle made the arduous journey, finding a scene of unbelievable hardship when they reached the top.



Just one example of the harsh landscape in the area near where they traveled.

Cutting paths through deep rock gulches, finding anything on the mesa for their animals to eat, enduring a week-long blizzard while they tried to get across the mountain, waiting for a baby to be born—it was all made more livable by the arrival of food supplies from the saints at Parawan.



The San Juan River

Ledges and buttes made their path difficult up 500-foot mountains and down 1,000 feet on the other side to the San Juan River. Today this area is accessible to no vehicle but a helicopter. It is the wildest and most difficult terrain anywhere in America. Yet these people were determined to do what they were asked, and relied on God to help them do it.



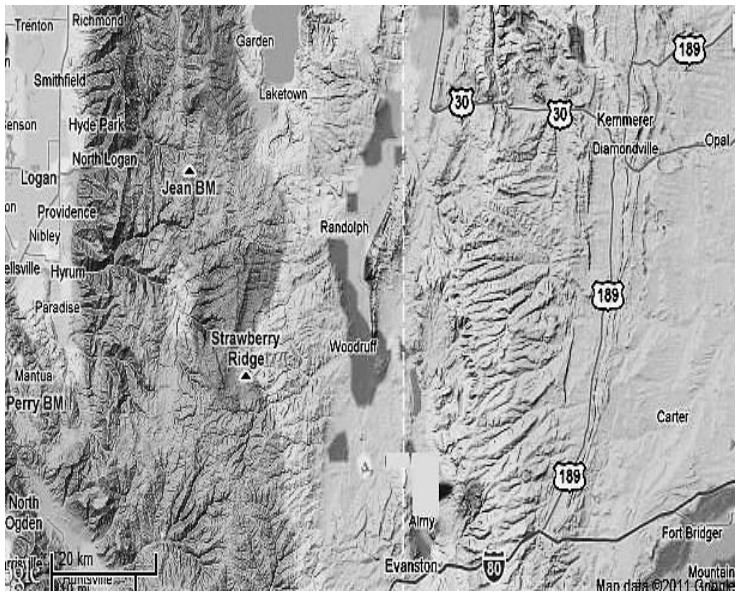
Samuel and Polly - About 1885

Six months after they started, the saints reached level ground and began a settlement. But Samuel Bryson had seen enough. Suddenly Woodruff didn't seem so bad. He turned himself around and set out for home and Polly. Woodruff never seemed as harsh after that, even when the wind blew and temperatures dropped to -40. He even learned to ignore the mosquitoes.



Daughters of Samuel and Polly, about 1900. Clockwise from front: Sarah, Eliza, Ellen, Margaret

Three years later, in 1882, Samuel was called on a mission for two years. They had seven children by then, but Polly was teaching school and the neighbors made sure they had enough food. Samuel served from February, 1883 to December, 1884 in the Northern States Mission.



Google Map, Rich County, Utah

Once again, coming home to Woodruff made him very happy. He didn't even mind that there were no trees. When he came home he and Polly helped every way they could in the Woodruff Ward. He was a Superintendent of the first Sunday School organized in the ward and held that position for 25 years.



The Woodruff Stake House office building was in Woodruff, a block north of the church (ask.com.wiki)

Samuel spent many years as a Seventy in the Stake and traveled on missionary assignments from Almy, Wyoming, on the South to Soda Springs, Idaho, on the north, a distance that took almost a week to travel with team and wagon. When the Woodruff Stake was created, he served on the High Council. He attended conference, and sometimes they went to Salt Lake City to be at General Conference.



After a few more years, the Bishop counseled Samuel to build a house in town so he and Polly wouldn't be so lonely. By then land was easier to buy, and Samuel bought a piece of land on the corner of Main Street and Center. In the early 1890's he built what some people believed was the nicest house in town. One of the first things he did was to plant trees by his house. If he couldn't live in Ireland, perhaps he could bring Ireland to Woodruff.

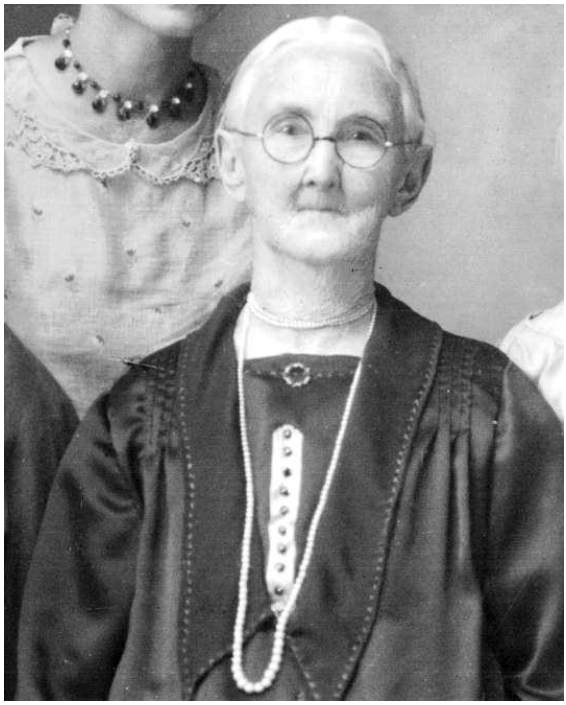


On East Center Street, looking toward the Bryson house and Woodruff Main Street

After a full life of service and sacrifice, Samuel grew old and tired. Near the end of his life he suffered severe dementia. He was taken to the hospital in Provo, Utah, where he died September 3, 1919. He had nine children, all of whom were still alive. They all loved trees too, and planted them wherever they lived.



His daughter said of him: "There was no sacrifice he would not make for the gospel's sake. (He always) put his duty to his church foremost in his life...a living example of obedience to authority. There were no half-way measures for him..."



Polly chose to be faithful to her family, to true principles, and to the church, through every trial. She served and helped everyone she could, and was a very caring grandmother. She was a wonderful example of enduring hard times in her life and staying faithful.

She had a lovely home in town, which was lucky because she lived to be 96 years old. She died March 25, 1943 after living 50 years in the Woodruff house next to Samuel's trees.



Woodruff is a small place. Almost no one goes there except to get somewhere else. The people buried in the cemetery there have been forgotten as we rush to become, to experience, and to acquire. Yet Samuel and Polly made our lives richer by their sacrifice and by their example. A little part of them is in us whether we know it or not.



The Woodruff Cemetery

In the late 1940's the town decided their cemetery atop a windy hill was a little too cold and unfriendly. They took out the weeds and sagebrush, planted grass and trees, and made lovely pathways. Suddenly the cemetery was a beautiful place. Not quite Ireland, but close enough.



Samuel and Polly Tryphena Bryson finished their work in Woodruff, and are gone. But we will never be the same. Their lives proved if we can live to keep our testimonies strong, sacrifice for what is really important, do what is necessary to raise good families, and be obedient to the principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—

Everything will be all right.

Documentation

Vital records for the family

"Genealogy of the Members of the Quorum of High Priests of the South Davis Stake of Zion, 1884-1925, book 36348. (LDS film 889368, item 2, Line 139, frame 5.)

Glasgow, Scotland Branch records for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Family History Library film 14516, item 4)

Transcript of record of members, 1840-1887 Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Glasgow Conference (Lanarkshire) "Samuel Bryson Sr., (Family History Library British Film, 104152 Item 2).

Woodruff Ward Record of Members, 1900-1958, Family History Library film 27,421, item 2

Polly Tryphena Fairchild Bryson Personal History gives her birth 11 December 1846 at Conewango, Cattaraugus, NY. Death 25 March 1943 is recorded on her death certificate, copy in possession of Janet Porter

Samuel Bryson Jr. birth date 11 April 1845 at Banbridge, Down, Ireland given by himself in the Woodruff Ward Records. His death certificate lists his death 3 September 1919, copy in possession of Janet Porter.

Baptism of the family into the LDS Church

L.D.S. Membership Record for Samuel Bryson Sr. and Sarah Ann (Connery) Bryson,(Family History Library film 104,152, p. 60-61)

The move to Scotland

Andrew Jensen, *Encyclopedic History of the Church*, p. 368.

International Society Daughters of Utah Pioneers, *Pioneer Women of Faith and Fortitude*, Family History Library book 979 D36p, p. 403

Immigration to America

"Emigration Records, 1854-1855," Book 1040, British Mission, (LDS film 25690, item 3, p. 92, 169.) Date of emigration is 22 August, 1855.

Their first home in Bountiful

"Samuel Bryson Sr." by Samuel A. Bryson.)

Vocation and other historical details of the Bryson family

"History of Sarah Ann Bryson Sessions," by Patty Sessions Mann.,

"The History of Sarah Ann Connery," by Dorothy Larson Bryson, p. 2

"Samuel Bryson Sr.," by one of the daughters of Samuel Bryson Jr.)

East of Antelope Island, by Ada H. Jardine, (daughter of Samuel and Isabella Bryson.) Family History Library book 979.227 H2d 1971

History of Polly Tryphena Fairchild

"History of the Pomeroy Family", by Kenneth Longhurst.

"History of Polly Tryphena Fairchild Bryson," p. 4, by Margaret Bryson Longhurst

First Pioneer in Woodruff

Polly Tryphena Fairchild Bryson autobiography p. 5

Hermia Ruth Putnam, *The Woodruff Book*, (Family History Library film 1,597,546, item 5, p. 15, 19) it states he was among the first permanent settlers, including W. H. Lee, Peter Cornia Sr. and Richard Warwich.

Bryson history in Woodruff

Woodruff, Utah, Centennial Committee, *The First 100 Years in Woodruff*, FHL book 979.213/W1 H2w, p. 136.

The United Order: *Deseret News* 23:307

Samuel Bryson's mission

"Chronological List of Missionaries, 1860-1894," Book B (FHL film 25664, item 1, p. 65.)

The First 100 Years in Woodruff, (FHL 979.213/W1 H2w, p. 135.)

Bryson service in the Woodruff Ward

Woodruff Ward, Evanston Stake, 1877-1900, LR 10277 #1 ll, LDS Church History Library.

The First 100 Years in Woodruff, (FHL 979.213/W1 H2w, p. 136.)

Samuel's experience in the Hole in the Rock Expedition

The First 100 Years in Woodruff, (FHL 979.213/W1 H2w, p. 135.)

David E. Miller, *Hole-in-the-rock : an epic in the colonization of the great American West*, Salt Lake City, Utah : University of Utah Press, 1959, FHL 979.259 W2m)

Cornelia A. Perkins, "The Saga of San Juan," Master's Theses, BYU, second edition, DUP, LDS book 979.259 H2p, 1968, p. 340-346.)

Lee, Rhey, *Incredible passage : Through the Hole-In-The-Rock*, Provo, Utah : Meadow Lane Publications, c1980, FHL 979.259 H2rL

"History of Samuel Bryson Jr.," p. 1-2, by Margaret Longhurst.