

MEMORIES OF BENJAMIN & LOVINA BARRUS
by J. Ronald Anderson
DEC 1988

Mrs. Hutchinson (Myrtis) and I (Ronald Anderson) have talked of our memories and thoughts of the fine neighbor couple whom we elected to call Uncle Benny and Aunt Lovina although, no relationship was established between us. I was only 13 years old at the time of Uncle Benny's death, but I still have a very fond memory of this fine couple. Their character, cheerful natures, friendliness, and down-to-earth good examples has had a good effect on my life. Many older folks seem to have a problem with younger people. Their abundance of energy, noisy and mischievous natures, and often thoughtless conduct wears on the nerves of the elderly. My mother often said about me. "You would try the patience of Job," so I guess I was not an easy neighbor for them to endure. However, my memory of my early years, growing up next door bears witness of the quality of their understanding, patience, and kindness toward a young boy frequently on their lot and in their home.

In my memory I carry a picture of a friendly, smiling, warm pioneer type of woman with whom I visited in her modest home on many occasions. In her later life she endured much pain but as a young boy I never realized that she had a health problem. After these many years I treasure my mental picture of this warm, kind and very friendly lady, many years my senior, who I deemed it a privilege to call Aunt Lovina.

Now what of Uncle Benny. To the information Myrtis has been gathering about these folks I should like to add two things that were so much a part of the character of this outstanding man.

First, he was a religious man, a Patriarch, always in his place at church. After the Second Ward Chapel was completed on the southeast corner of Main and Church Street (Grantsville, Utah) He had a seat, an arm chair, placed at the side of the pulpit where he always sat. I suppose that was because of his calling in the church, and possibly because of his age he may have had some hearing problem. As a boy attending church I was fascinated by this clean, strong, saintly looking man with his beard. I guess his image was to me what I imagined the ancient prophets of God would have looked like. After nearly 70 years, I can, in my "Mind's eye" see him sitting quietly there by the pulpit, this, even though he has been gone for many years, and even though the church building has been dismantled.

The second thing I desire to mention was his industry and ingenuity. He was a worker and somewhat of a designer, living as he did when one had to make many of his own tools and build his own equipment. I have sat in his broom shop, as a boy, and watched him, step by step, turn out a broom, starting with a used handle for which he probably gave some youngster a nickel and which he then refinished, using the straw from the cane he planted, weeded, watered and harvested, plus the mechanism, much of which he designed himself. His sturdy brooms swept the floors of our homes in Grantsville for many years. The light rapid motion of his whisk brooms kept the dust and lint from our coats and other clothes.

It is my good fortune to own the land at 327 East Main street. My home is located on what was his major garden spot where he raised fruit trees, and cane for his broom business.

Located in the southwest corner of the lot, just inside of the front fence, was one of two wells he used to irrigate the land with. He constructed what may have been one of the first reservoirs in the Grantsville area. I desire to explain his simple but effective system as follows: His method was to store enough water to have the quantity and force to row irrigate the area planted. In those days the property was all fenced. Before the cement sidewalk was poured the ground had been raised to provide the north bank of an irrigation ditch running parallel to the sidewalk, at the street side. This formed a natural south bank for his system. He then built a dike east and west about six or seven feet north of the front fence to form the north bank of a long reservoir running across the width of the planting area. All of the dirt for the north bank was hauled in and no material excavated from the bottom of the enclosed area, resulting in the bottom of the little pond being maintained at ground level. The result being that he could drain all the water out by a natural flow when he desired to use it. Small gates and control ditches were constructed to efficiently control and distribute the water. By letting the well flow into his long narrow reservoir he could fill and empty it at will, watering a few rows at a time. In this manner he was able to produce a maximum from his ground area.

Living as we do now, in an age of high pressure and very expensive sprinkling systems, and deep well pumping, I thought this may be of interest to the posterity this fine couple.

It may be interesting also to note, the well played an important part in the life of travel in this early time. Most travel was by horse drawn vehicles, with very few cars in Grantsville. The well furnished water to a trough, an open box- like receptacle, for livestock. This was located, outside the front fence, in the borrow pit on the north side of the road. Here teams could stop for a rest break to water and feed their stock, and eat their lunch. This goes back to a time when our family did not own a car. We traveled by horse and buggy, I can remember Mystic and I driving our faithful "Old Doll", the buggy mare, to Tooele for dental work in Dr. Davis' office on Main St., this was shortly before Dad purchased our first family car, the famous Model T Ford - the arm breaker. It had to be hand cranked and had a bad habit of "kicking" (back firing) frequently resulting in a broken arm.

I might also note here that the two brick masons constructing the Second Ward Chapel (With the help of many Ward members) came to Grantsville by horse and buggy. Their horse was put up in Uncle Benny's barn, located where the home of Myrtis and Lind now stands -339 East Main.

THE LAST COW.

The Barrus family may not have this story so I will add it as I remember the event.

The family milch cow was extremely important, providing a number of items for the table. One day the cow completely disappeared. Everyone was alerted and all turned out to search for the lost cow. Men and boys rode the "bottoms", the area between Grantsville and Burmester. At this time no homes had been constructed in this area and alot of stock grazed there. Any area where the cow could possibly be was checked and double checked but to no avail. Uncle Benny's cow had completely disappeared.

Uncle Benny was a successful gardener, raising most of the vegetables necessary to feed his family. Like all pioneer families some provision for winter storage had to be made. To provide a root cellar, one was built on the north end of the Broom Shop. It was one room about 10 or 12 feet square and about eight feet high. The walls were very thick, constructed of home-made adobe brick - the same type as the wall of the home. A thick dirt roof closed in the top. The dirt floor was lowered to form a pit. At harvest time the winter supply of vegetables were stored here, safely covered with straw to protect from winter frost. The entrance was a door, opening in the east wall. That door had been left open for some reason or another, the day Uncle Benny's cow disappeared. Apparently the cow ventured inside. There was food for a feast, but getting to it the door was knocked shut. She was a prisoner. During the days everyone was looking for her, the cow was feeding on the winter supply of family food. One day Uncle Benny had occasion to go to the root cellar, the cow staggered out when he opened the door. The mystery was solved, but she had dried up so there was a loss of milk as well as the produce. This usually damages a good milker. I don't recall if they had to replace her later. Everyone was relieved by her reappearance.