

Life History of David Elmer Astle

August 12, 1902 – June 6, 1974

David Elmer Astle was born in a log home in Grover, Wyoming to John Francis and Laurretta Hepworth Astle on August 12, 1902.

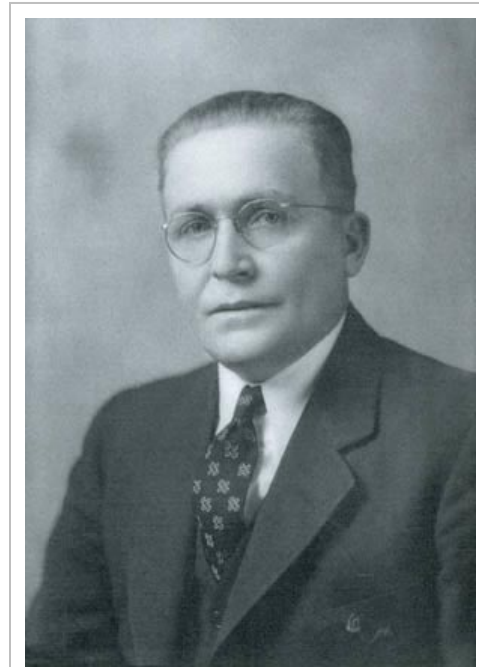
David was the seventh of thirteen children born to John and Laurretta. There were three brothers and nine sisters: John Francis Jr., Klea, Vernon, Arstanie, Pearl, David, Evelyn, Doretta, Agnes, Elva, Grace, Jane, and Isaac. Most of the children lived to become adults except for Evelyn who lived for seven years, Jane lived four months, and Isaac who died shortly after receiving a name and a blessing from his father on the day he was born.

At the age of seven, David began working on the farm with his father and brothers. Some of David's responsibilities included milking the cows, driving them to pasture and bringing them in from the fields at night.

On August 12, 1910, David was baptized a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in an open spring among the willows about a mile from the family home by his uncle Geo W. Hepworth.

David attended school in a two room building across the street from the family home. His first teacher was Edna Rogers from Nebraska. Schooling was not a high priority and David attended during the time when he wasn't needed on the farm and during the winter. When David was in the seventh grade he was almost kicked out of school for throwing a snow ball towards the school. By the time he reached the eighth grade, the school had grown sufficiently to justify three teachers. David finished the eighth grade. He was now needed to get on with his life and become a full time worker on the Astle family ranch. Even though he had a limited education in the classroom he always tried to further his knowledge throughout his life by reading and exploring his surroundings. He was considered an educated man. He spent many hours learning about his world and its wonders.

David's high school nick name was "Steamer". He received his nickname because whenever he would play ball with the guys or otherwise exert efforts, he would breathe heavy. This may have been a result of poor lungs as in later years his lungs would prove to be his real weak link in his health. He ultimately developed emphysema and died from the disease.



David Elmer Astle - 1937

David was an active teenager and liked to participate in normal activities with his friends. He enjoyed riding horse and did this frequently. On one occasion as he was riding he was knocked off his horse. David fell under the horse and was stepped on as the horse passed over him, stepping on his chest. This was a serious accident and left a hoof print in the middle of his chest. This impression on his chest stayed with him throughout his life.

“The 1918 influenza epidemic started in the Valley. All schools were closed and no church meetings or other gathering were held. The doctors really didn’t know what to do and many people died. Vernon, my twenty-year-old brother, was put in the hospital where he died December 23, 1918. He was buried on the 24th. None of us got to see him. We were all sick at home. Mother and Dad were in separate beds in the same room when Dad saw Vernon come for Mother soon after he was buried. Dad cried out, "No, you cannot take her!" but he couldn’t touch them. This was Dec. 24 about 10:00 p.m. Mother died. The rest of us were in other rooms. It was almost more than Father could bear.” (*Life History of Arstanie Astle Nye*, pg.11)

The seriousness of the flu epidemic meant the dead were not given funerals nor taken to the undertakers. Laretta was placed in her casket in her bedroom and prepared for burial. When they tried to move the casket downstairs it was soon evident that the stairway was too small and narrow to navigate with Laretta in the casket. A solution was soon found and the casket and body were moved out of the second floor bedroom window and lowered to the ground.

The fear of the spreading epidemic meant that funerals were not held. The frozen ground also meant that those who died were buried in shallow graves. Thus David’s father buried his wife and son within two days of each other. This was a tragedy that he never really recovered from and ultimately resulted in moving the family out of the Valley to a new home in Providence Utah.

The Bishop of the ward asked two sisters to come and help nurse the family back to health following Vernon’s and Laretta’s death. They were promised that if they would come and help the family they would not suffer from the influenza. The sisters did come and nurse the family back to health and did not suffer from the influenza.

The harsh weather and grief of losing his wife and son to the influenza caused John Francis to leave Star Valley to find another home for his family. John Francis chose Cache Valley and purchased a large home with small acreage farm in Providence, Utah.

In June of 1920, John Francis purchased a car, returned to Star Valley and collected his children to move the family to Cache Valley. John Francis took the lead with the car and some of the girls while David followed with the team and wagon filled with the family belongings and a couple of the girls.

David was just 18 years old and was moving 130 miles to a new place he had never seen before. He knew the general direction but the roads were still rather primitive and poorly marked; never the less he set off with the wagon and two of his sisters to start a new life. They traveled two days and still had not arrived at the new home and were beginning to have concerns that they had strayed off the road. On the third day as night approached and it was getting dark they decided to camp rather than get lost any further. They made camp for the night. John Francis now was very concerned for his children who were seriously over due. He set out to try and find them. He had not gone very far when he came upon their camp and David making breakfast. It so happened that they had stopped the night before less than a mile from the town of Providence. It was a joyous reunion and they all proceeded to the new home in Providence.

The man that had purchased the Star Valley farm ran into difficulties and was unable to continue to pay John Francis. This resulted in the farm being returned to the family until John Francis was able to resale the farm. During this time, John Francis Jr. and David lived in Star Valley and ran the family farm until it was sold a second time. After the second sale of the farm, David came to Providence where he worked with his father. They developed a silver fox farm. The back side of the farm was fenced and many pens constructed to contain the foxes as they raised their pups. This became a very successful enterprise and David was recognized for the quality pelts he raised. They worked the fur business until 1945 when the fur business crashed due to the war and lack of demand for expensive furs. The fox farm was discontinued at this time. They also rented some land and farmed hay, sugar beats, strawberries, and black caps. This side of the farm was very small as compared to the fur enterprise.

In 1926, David purchased his first car a "Chevy" for \$700.00. He was very proud of his new found wheels. This now gave him mobility and he put it to good use as he returned to Star Valley and courted his wife to be.

On June 26, 1929, David married Gertrude Anderson, daughter of Marion P. and Louise Anderson in the Logan Temple. He had purchased a house on the lot at 100 East and 200 north just a block from his father's place and close to his farming enterprise. It was here that he started his new life with his bride. They were married a little over a year when Gertrude passed away on November 13, 1930. Gertrude had a heart condition that no one knew about and died rather unexpectedly. They did not have any children. This tragic event left David heartbroken and he moved back with his father. He immersed himself in the business of the fox farm. It would be 13 years before he would again marry and have a family.

In 1936, the Bishop called David to serve as a missionary to the Northern States Mission. It was at a zone conference that David met the woman who would be his second wife, Margarita Elfrieda Foerster.

David was released from his calling as a missionary a year prior to Margarita. He returned to Cache Valley and continued working with his father on the fox farm as he had been doing prior to his mission. David corresponded with Margarita a couple of times through the mail while Margarita served the remainder of her mission.

Upon completion of missions, the missionaries would return to Salt Lake City. When Margarita went to Salt Lake to report to Church officials and be released, a social for the Northern States missionaries was planned prior to her return home to New York. It was at this social that David and Margarita decided that they would correspond through the mail between Utah and New York. Margarita then returned to her family in New York City.

In 1938 Ernst, Ella, Margarita, and Dorothy Foerster decided that it was time to move to Utah after Margarita's urging them to join the Utah Saints. The family settled in Salt Lake City.

After Margarita moved to Salt Lake City, she and David continued corresponding through the mail, and began courting. David would travel from Providence to Salt Lake City on weekends. In September 1940, David asked Margarita to marry him. They were married in the Logan Temple on February 7, 1941. The young couple lived with John Francis and Clara, his second wife, in the Providence home while their home was being built on David's property up the street.



After moving his bride into their own home, David continued working with his father raising and selling silver fox furs. When the silver foxes were mature they would skin them and the furs would be marked with identification numbers and then sent to New York. The buyer in New York would then return payment according to the grade of the fur. When the market for furs began to fall apart, David decided to leave silver fox farming to raise chickens and sell the eggs. He raised 2,500 chickens that would produce four to five cases of eggs a day. Each day David would gather the eggs from the nest and then clean and grade each egg with a candle. The eggs would be delivered to the local co-op twice a week and marketed throughout the area. This was a cash crop for many years for his family.

During World War II, David worked the night shift at Utah State University. He was responsible for checking out tools to the students who were learning the skills that would allow them to work in air plane factories in California and the North West.

David's lungs had become weak due to damage in his youth and the dust from the chicken coops was not helping. On one occasion David, Margarita, and Ernst (Margarita's father) were visiting Otto Wolfe who was a painter; Margarita jokingly said to Otto "Why don't you hire David to paint". Otto asked David if he wanted to work. David replied "Yes, if you have work". For the next ten years, David worked with Otto Wolfe painting the interior of buildings from Los Angeles to Idaho Falls. He painted in Temples, churches, schools, and a variety of commercial buildings. The interior painting consisted of staining and varnishing woodwork, cutting patterns out of paper then using the pattern to paint the walls. David would be gone from Sunday night to Friday night. Margarita did not like having David away so much. She needed him to be at home to help raise the children.

Margarita worked at the elementary school as the secretary and when the janitor, Alma Leonhardt Sr. was retiring Margarita suggested to David that he apply for the position. It would be less income but David would be at home, he would be his own boss and there was good insurance. David talked to Superintendent Lloyd Theurer and was hired as the janitor for Providence School. He also drove the school bus for a short time for the school district.

David kept the building and grounds immaculate for ten years with the help of his sons and three assistant janitors, Blanch Hill, Bud Mason, and Eldon Hodges.

Working as a janitor allowed David to be at home where he enjoyed gardening, yard work, and the out of doors with his boys.

David also volunteered as a janitor at the Logan Temple for three years following his retirement from Providence School.

David and Margarita were blessed with three sons, Ernest, Dale, and John. On a couple of occasions, because of David's age, he was mistaken for the grandfather rather than the father of the three boys. David and Margarita raised their sons to be strong and responsible men who have strived to excel in all their responsibilities.

The family enjoyed taking trips together and would often venture out on camping trips. They usually headed to Star Valley a couple of times a year. There they would visit with family and David would look for a piece of farm land in hopes of moving his family back to the Valley he had grown to love as a youth. Every Memorial Day the family would go to Star Valley to clear the family graves of the wild roses that grew in the cemetery and place fresh flowers on the graves.

David loved to spend time with his family doing things together. Many times they would take a few days to camp usually in one of the canyons to the east of Cache Valley. These camps

were in tents and open camp fires to cook over. They almost always involved fishing in the local streams and fish fry's were always a part of dinner. Short fishing trips were frequently taken in late afternoons and he would spent time teaching his boys to drown a worm and frequently small fish were caught. A lot of good memories were created between father and sons in the out of doors hunting or fishing. Even though he was never a hunter in his youth, he made it a point to take his son hunting when he (Dale) insisted that he would hunt when he turned 15 ½. That first year did not produce a deer but afford great bonding between father and son with a lot of walking in the mountains.

Some of David's church callings were Stake Missionary, Sunday School Superintendency, Elders Quorum advisor, High Priest Group secretary, and Boy Scouts advisor. David and Willis Leonhardt were both involved in creating the original charter for Cub Scouts in the Logan Stake. David was the chairman for the Genealogical Organization and with help from Clyde and Marian Demler, Adrian and Kathleen Gail, as well as several other couples. They collected names and dates of all those who had been buried in the Providence Cemetery for church records. The completed list was also given to Providence City so the sexton would have a record of who was buried in the cemetery.

David was a very loving and kind man, who was easy tempered and would walk away from a fight. He had a heart of gold and was extremely proud of his family. David always put priority in his life. He taught his sons to get their work done first and then play. He always said if the job is worth doing than it is worth doing it right. He was extremely honest in his dealings and felt that his word was better than a bond. He would always finish what he started. He taught his children that if you agree to do something than get it done and no excuses should be offered. He was a gentleman in every sense of the word and a man that had no enemies. He was very unpretentious and a friend to all.

David and Margarita were blessed to see each of their children married for time and eternity in the Holy Temple of the Lord.

Ernest David Astle married Sylvia Margaret Wuthrich on May 14, 1965 in the Logan Temple. They have raised three children; David Scott, Steven Blaine, and Jeffrey Lynn.

Dale Foerster Astle married Charlotte Christina Poulson on September 8, 1967 in the Salt Lake Temple. They have raised four children; Catherine, Robert Dale, Christina, and James Jonathan.

John Foerster Astle married Diane Johnson, on September 26 1969 in the Logan Temple. They have raised three children; Lori Marie, Travis Glen, and Troy John.

David was blessed to meet all but two of his grandchildren in this life. James and Troy were born after his death.

In April of 1974 David contracted pneumonia; he was in and out of the hospital for two months. He passed from this life on June 6, 1974. He died in his own home surrounded by his loving family. He was buried in the Providence Cemetery on June 10th.