

Life Story of John Astle

Written by his daughter, Sarah Astle Call, 1953

John Astle, son of Francis Astle and Felicia Raynor, was born 16 June 1846 at Hucknall, Torkard, Nottinghamshire, England. As a boy in early life, we know but little of what he did; but we do know that he was born of goodly parents and into a family of noble heritage that extends back to early times in England, and connects with a long line of ancestors that were prominent citizens of that land.

His family life must have been a happy one, as the parents and children kept close to each other. His father was an expert lace maker and worked in the mills at Nottingham, as did John and his older brothers. In England, at that time, children began work in the factories at an early age. His Mother cared for her husband and children in a very efficient way, with great love for them all. So John grew up just as other English lads.

He was a rather independent person, desirous of doing for himself whatever was possible without aid of others; a tireless worker, never afraid of doing more than his share of the tasks before him. This trait remained with him throughout his life.

When he was about four years of age his parents met the missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, otherwise known as the Mormons. They were converted to this faith and baptized in 1850. This was not a popular religion at that time. They were ridiculed and shunned by relatives and friends, but there was no turning back into the old religious life. His Father was so thoroughly converted to the newly found truth that the whole family partook of the same spirit and followed the example of the parents. A strong desire took possession of them all to immigrate to America and join the Saints in Utah. As a unit they worked and saved in a financial way to accumulate enough money for this trip to Zion.

John was of a religious nature. He believed wholeheartedly the cause to be a just one. He carried great responsibility at an early age. This formed a close relationship between father and son which held through life. John was baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 26 April 1857. His brother Joseph was baptized on the same date. John had arrived



John Astle

at the age of fourteen years when all was in readiness for the long journey. On the 7th of May 1860, with his parents and brothers he bade good-bye to the old home in Nottingham, England.

It may be well to mention here that his only sister, Mary Astle, had at an earlier date, 1856, immigrated to Utah with a Hand Cart company, after crossing the sea. While onboard ship, in mid-ocean, she was married to William Severn, a young convert to the Church. They located in Hyrum, Utah, and later in Montpelier, Idaho.



“William Tapscott”

The family traveled to Liverpool, England, a sea port city, and on 8 May 1860 they boarded a sailing vessel, “Tapscott”, and began the voyage. No steam or other power was used to sail the ship; all was dependent upon the winds and waves of the sea. It was a long, cold, and stormy trip of six weeks in crossing the ocean from Liverpool, England, to New York City, U.S.A. There was much sickness among the Saints. Some died and were

buried in the sea.

This was a new experience for John and his family. He spent his fourteenth birthday, 16 June 1860, on board ship; but at this time they were anchored in New York Harbor, detained for vaccination because of illness on the ship, and were anxiously looking forward to the time when they would land upon the shores of America. This they did three days later.

Instead of proceeding on their journey across the plains to Utah that year as they had anticipated, they were counseled by the Church authorities to stay at least one year in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Here it was possible that they might obtain employment in the factories, as they were all trained workers in the lace mills. Through the assistance of two of their father’s acquaintances, Edwin Spencer, a former resident of Arnold, Nottingham, England, and Henry George, also formerly of England, the three boys, James, Joseph, and John, obtained work in the mills at Germantown, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia. This helped them financially in preparing for the long trek to Utah. They remained here a little more than two years.

While here the boys had their first opportunity to see and visit with their grandmother, Rachel King Astle, who was then living in either Clinton or Lebanon, New Jersey; as were several of her daughters. Her husband, James Astle, grandfather of these boys, died 8 May 1846 at Clinton, Hunterdon County, New Jersey, U.S.A., the same year John was born in England. The grandparents had immigrated to America sometime prior to 1846.

This was a joyous meeting with the grandmother! During their two years stay in Philadelphia, they probably visited her several times. This gave them the opportunity of gathering genealogical data of the immediate family that proved useful in later years. Through

correspondence John kept in touch with these relatives for many years, by writing to his Aunt Sylvia. For years he purposely refrained from telling her he was a “Mormon”. But in 1890 he decided to write and tell her he was a member of the LDS Church. When she learned this, the letter writing came to a close. She never wrote again.

The time came for them to leave Philadelphia and begin the trek across the plains by ox team. This they did traveling in the Joseph Horne Company. They arrived 13 September 1861 in Salt Lake City and were immediately sent to Hyrum, Cache County, Utah. This new locality was just being settled.

John was now sixteen years of age, studious, and deep thinking on all problems that came his way. He was very religious and at an early age was strongly converted to his religion, the LDS Church, and all its principles. Father stated that he had attended school but three weeks in his life. And yet it was said of him that “He was an educated man – well learned.” A great lover of the scriptures, he understood them far better than the average man. Often he was called upon to explain various scriptural problems that do arise among the people. He was referred to as a “Walking Bible”. One of his sons, John Alva, had this to say: “Dad not only read the scriptures, but he studied them.” When he decided, after full consideration, upon any special problem he knew must be met, he went ahead with determination and worked for its accomplishment.

Through hard experience, as settlers in a new country, among strange people of various nationalities, they found it necessary to adjust themselves to a different way of life. The first movement was to secure a piece of land on which to erect a log house or dug-out to shelter them as a home. No one could afford to be idle. The motto was, “Work and help yourselves and the neighbors.” They never thought of doing things in any other way. When a little older, John purchased a few acres of land near Hyrum for a few bushels of wheat. (I believe it was four bushels.) Here he built a small log house.

In 1866, when the call came from President Brigham Young for volunteers, as missionaries, to go with ox teams back to the Missouri River to meet and bring Saints who were immigrating to Utah without financial means to continue the journey, John volunteered for this unselfish service.

This took about five months of his time. When ready to return, he found his passengers to be Scandinavians. Some of them proved to be quite quarrelsome and disagreeable about the unexpected hard, tiresome way they were to cross the plains.

While in Omaha, Nebraska, John purchased a cook stove for the intended house keeping with his bride-to-be. This was one of the first, if not the first stove in Hyrum.

Living in the same town was a young woman with whom he was in love. He wished to marry her, but up to this time he hadn’t told her so.



Isabella Jane Bradshaw

Mother tells the story in this brief way: “John and I were standing outside near the woodpile when he proposed. I just had time to say ‘Yes’ when Mother appeared on the spot.” Later, as she and her mother were discussing the marriage and the probable consent or not, as parents were always asked about it, to grandmother’s great surprise Belle Jane said, “I’d run away to marry the man I love, if necessary!”

Well, it wasn’t done that way. With the blessing of her widowed mother, and of his parents, they were united in marriage. John Astle and Isabella Jane Bradshaw (called Belle Jane) were married at Hyrum, 9 December 1866. The ceremony was performed by Bishop O.W. Liljenquist who also was the first mayor of Hyrum, Utah. They, at a later date, 24 May 1869, were married for time and eternity in the

Endowment House of the LDS Church in Salt Lake City, Utah.

They lived in the snug little log cabin John had built until the next summer, when another change came. They were called to help pioneer the Bear Lake Valley in Idaho. Obedient to authority, the young couple, courageous and brave, gathered their few possessions and left loved ones and friends to depart for the new place. It was especially hard to leave his wife’s widowed mother. She remarked, “I shall never be happy again until John and Belle Jane return to Cache Valley.” One-half of the wagon box held all of their household effects. In the other half were two pigs, two sheep, and a few chickens.

There were no roads, as we call such, nothing more than a trail, where ever a place was found that might be passable. It might be in the bottom of a canyon, on a side hill, or as Mother and Father pointed out to this writer, up over a steep mountain. It is still a mystery how they ever succeeded in reaching their destination. They went by way of what was known as Mink Creek.

Their first child was expected during the early months of the coming year, 1868, but not one word of complaint was heard from either of them. They were cheerful and brave about a hazardous undertaking for in those days the only assistance to be had was the aid of some kindly neighbor lady, or perhaps none at all. This child, a daughter, named Elizabeth Felicia for her two grandmothers, was born 4 February 1868.

They had located at what is known as Montpelier, Idaho. It was a trying experience, in a new, uncultivated country with a very cold climate, where they were never sure of their crops, for more often than not, in those early times, they were frozen just before harvest time.

Everything was scarce and what could be purchased was extremely high in price: sugar, \$1 per pound, buttons \$1 per dozen; and other items in like proportion.

Year after year they persevered. It took all the grit they could muster to subdue the soil, raise the crops, and build a home. Many times they would have liked to return to Cache Valley, but they had been called to help settle this wilderness and must prove true to their leaders who had faith in them and believed they had within themselves the right kind of metal to succeed. This they did in time.

Sometimes a trip to Cache Valley had to be made by ox team for flour and other necessities. Of course they enjoyed seeing their loved ones who still resided in Hyrum and Paradise. A brother, Joseph Astle, had preceded them to Montpelier, Idaho. Grandfather Francis Astle and Grandmother Felicia Raynor Astle soon followed them, as did also their other sons, James and Thomas, and the family rejoiced in being together again. Amid the hardships of the new home, the friends and neighbors enjoyed themselves in social activities, such as dance, house parties, picnics in the near by lovely canyon or on the shores of beautiful Bear Lake.

Church duties were not neglected. A ward was organized and a log meeting house had been built. Among other duties, Father was given the responsibility of helping in care and burial of the dead. He and his brother Joseph dug many of the early graves (gratis) in the cemetery of Montpelier. On one occasion when Brother Daniel H. Wells was visiting the Bear Lake Stake, John met him at Paris, Idaho, to receive instructions as to the clothing of the dead, etc. One remark made to him by Brother Wells remained in his memory for life: "John, keep your eyes on the big guns (meaning the authorities of the Church); little guns often miss fire, but big ones seldom do." This advice was closely followed. Members of the family were never allowed to criticize or find fault with any of those placed in authority.

Father was a very industrious person. There wasn't a man in that locality who could accomplish more work than he. He liked to labor and was very adept in more ways than one. If building a house or barn, making a fence, putting new soles on our shoes, repairing his machinery, or whatever else was to be done, it was a finished product when he did it.

Father and Mother struggled on through the early days, making the best of whatever came their way. Finally they did prosper financially and in all else. Acreage of very choice land close to town was now owned and cultivated. Abundant crops of hay and grain were produced every year. There was no modern machinery with which to cultivate the soil, plant the seed, or reap the harvest. By following the plow and harrow on foot, driving a team of oxen, and sowing the seed by hand, the soil was prepared and planted. Later horses were used. How well we remember the team of black horses, Sam and Coley – a fine pair of animals.

The hay was cut with the sickle or scythe, the grain with the cradle. Wheat, oats, and barley were bound into bundles with a band made from the grain itself. Several men followed

the cutter, tying the bundles. This work was all done by hand, a slow process compared with our machine age.

The threshing machines were run by horse power. We remember, as children, the fascination of watching the teams of horses going round and round, with a man driver sitting in the center, whip in hand, with which he occasionally tipped one of the horses and then another, which he thought lagging a little in speed, or not pulling its share. Or again, we would watch the bands on the bundles being cut by the Band Cutter and pushed into the machine by a man called the "Feeder". Then down by the side of the great machine we watched the kernels of grain come rushing down into the sacks to be carried to the granary and dumped into the bins for storage. Yes, Father was a successful farmer.

Just at the peak of this prosperity he, like others who believed in plural marriage, decided to marry a second wife, which he did. On the third of April 1884, he was married in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City to Melvina Ann Banks, daughter of William Holmes Banks and Margaret Jane Armatage. She was only seventeen years of age, much younger than John, he being now 38 years old. To such a young, inexperienced girl this must have been a real adventure, and at times, a trial. Adjustments were necessary for family life. His first wife, Isabella, was now the mother of nine (9) children, seven (7) of them living. Melvin Ann (Melley) was only eleven months older than John's oldest daughter, Elizabeth.

There were two houses on the same lot, only a few rods apart. The smaller one consisted of one large room with a lean-to on the back that was used as a kitchen. This log house was the first home of Melley after her marriage. It was here that her first child, Alma Paul, was born 5 October, 1886.

The persecutions of all these families which entered into this form of marriage was bitter and severe. Often prison sentences were served for the offence, and extreme hardship endured. Father had to do like others in similar circumstances, go on the underground, as it was termed, (into hiding from the Deputies of the law). They would come at all hours of the night or day, especially at night, demanding admittance to search every room.

One night Father had secretly come home expecting to spend the night. That happened to be one of the very times when the "raid" was on. A "hide-out" had been arranged under the floor of Mother's bed room, dug deep enough for a bed, or resting place, to be made on the dirt underneath. It was reached through a trap door under the bed, which was completely hidden by pulling the carpet back over it. Father was in this place when his wife, Isabella, let the officers in. They searched everywhere, upstairs and down, without success. Father could hear every spoken word. Trembling with fear, he wondered if they would find him. One can well imagine his feelings.

At another time they again came in the night, seeking both Father and his young wife, so determined to find them that all were made very uncomfortable by their unkindly remarks and threats. As a child, this writer remembers this visit. We children were sleeping upstairs, the boys in one room, and I was in bed in another room with our eldest sister, Elizabeth, who was caring for our baby sister, Violet, as Mother was ill. It was a time never-to-be-forgotten. The marshals believed they had really found the young wife. At this time Melley did not have a child.

Search was made in every conceivable place. Our brother Richard said, "Better look in the flour barrel; you might find him there." The officer replied, "Well, we have found them in smaller places than that." He looked in. The barrel was filled with flour. Finally they were convinced it was Mother's own baby. But these trying times continued. Father would hid out in the hills or wherever possible, once in a while coming home in disguise.

This left a great responsibility upon the family. There was too much work for the three older boys, Francis (15 years), Richard (13 years), and William (11 years). It was said in Montpelier that it was simply a marvel the fine, systematic way they did the work. Another remark, "No boys of such tender age, with their sister's help, had been known to accomplish such a huge task in Bear Lake Valley." Their sister, Elizabeth, worked with them in the fields like a man, and she was now only seventeen years of age. Together they succeeded in harvesting the crops which were abundant that year.

Father came home in disguise at threshing time. He found the boys all busy in various places. Elizabeth was on the stack of grain pitching bundles to the threshing machine. The younger children who were old enough, Sarah and Joseph Hyrum, were in the bins, shoveling back the grain as it was emptied from the sacks by the carriers. The women cooked the meals; for we, like all others, had the threshers, and all other help, to feed for the length of time it took to do the job. Often this was for several days, especially if the machine broke down. All worked, both old and young.

This was too much for Father's feelings. He felt he could no longer endure this arrangement. What to do, he knew not, but he trusted in God to help him find a way, and a place to live in peace with his families. His eldest son, Francis, said this of the occasion: "It was more



L to R: Sarah Isabella, Isabella Jane, Violet Eliza, Joseph Hyrum

than Father could bear. He broke down and cried like a child and said, 'It is too much, too much, for children of such tender age to work as they have done.'"

About this time, or probably the next summer, the Ashley Valley in northeastern Utah was being opened for settlement. A Mr. Kovene from Montpelier had moved to that place, but later returned to Montpelier. Our Father, John Astle, and a close friend and neighbor, Christian Hoganson, who was living in similar conditions, decided to investigate the possibilities of the new country.

It was another long and uncertain trip over rough roads and a dangerous route. They started out with a team of horses and a covered wagon, going by way of Green River, Wyoming. There was only an impoverished dirt trail to follow, it could hardly be called a road. It led over rugged mountains and down steep canyons.

An incident happened that proves they were good men, watched over and cared for by a higher power than that of man. While going through one of these very dangerous canyons which looked and seemed impossible for travel, they found themselves accompanied by a man riding a white horse, and directing them where to go and what to do. As soon as they were safely past the perilous place the man disappeared and they knew not from whence he came or where he went. The Lord surely takes care of those who serve Him and live worthy lives.

They arrived in what was then called Ashley's Fork, now Vernal, Utah. After investigating conditions there, they decided that this was not the kind of place they were seeking for a home, and over the same tortuous trail, the return trip was made to Montpelier.

A little later, Father decided to go to the Star Valley in Western Wyoming, as others with the same problems were moving to that place. In the latter part of October, 1886, with his young wife and three-week-old baby son, and accompanied by his eldest son, Francis, he started on the way to Wyoming. The weather was very inclement. Francis said it snowed and snowed, and was very cold. The roads were extremely difficult. Montpelier Creek had to be forded many times. They persevered, and succeeded in reaching Afton, Wyoming, where they passed the winter. Francis returned to his Mother's family in Montpelier to take charge of the work and property.

There were but few families living in Star Valley that winter. In the Spring of 1887 they returned to Montpelier, glad to be home again. The young baby, Alma, had whooping cough. Later we young children did, too. Conditions with the law hadn't improved during the winter, but had grown steadily worse. It was now more difficult than before to live here under existing circumstances.

So in the autumn of that same year (1887) it was decided to move both families to Wyoming and begin life once more under what seemed to offer more peaceful and favorable conditions. A goodly number of polygamous families moved there about this same time, for

safety and home surroundings. The governor of Wyoming Territory (as it was then) said, "I will never molest the Mormons as long as I am Governor of this Territory."

Elder John Henry Smith, when speaking in a Star Valley Stake Conference said: "The people of this place did not come here because they wanted to, but because that had to come. This valley got some of the cream of Utah and Idaho."

Father and his young wife, Melvina Ann (Melley), were the first to once more make the trip. A little later, in October 1887, his first wife, Isabella, and family left everything in the way of property except the household belonging, etc., and they, too, moved to Afton, Wyoming. It was not easy to pick up and leave a comfortable home, well kept grounds, good outbuildings for the livestock, and extensive, cultivated fields. This had been home to them for many years. Here their nine children were born. They would miss the close association of kindly friends and neighbors. Some of the choicest land in and near Montpelier had been acquired and cultivated. They had really prospered financially. A year or two later this was all sold, mostly to neighbors who were glad to own this improved and profitable land. The payments were not all in cash. At one time Father received twenty (20) cows for some acreage.

Making a home in Star Valley was a gigantic task - another pioneer undertaking. The country stretched for miles each way as a vast wilderness, without building or fence. The soil must be subdued and homes erected. About the first united effort of the settlers was the building of a meeting house or Church. This served also as school house and amusement hall. This was a log building, as were all early houses, small, with dirt roofs and floors of rough lumber, when it could be obtained.

At Afton, a log house with floor space 16 by 16 feet was our first home for parents and seven children. This was the fifth house built in the township of Afton.

A 160 acre tract of farm and ranch land was purchased from John Hurd for a twenty dollar (\$20) gold piece. That is, the settler living on it was paid to move off, so that father would have the homestead right to obtain title to the land. This property was located about three miles north of Afton, near the mountains on the east side of the valley. This was known as the Upper Ranch. There was a small dirt-roofed log house on this property and Melley and the baby moved into it.

In the spring of 1888 three hundred dollars (\$300) was paid to Hans Hansen for another 160 acres adjoining this property. This farm became know as the Lower Ranch and was homesteaded and title obtained by the eldest son, John Francis, eighty acres of it to belong to his brother, Richard. This was partly meadow land. On it was a two room log house, to which was added a third log room. The first wife, Isabella (Belle Jane), and family moved from Afton to this place in the spring of 1888.

None of this land was fenced. The children were kept busy watching and keeping away roving live stock, so that the grass would grow and make hay for the coming winter. This was truly primitive country. The whole Star Valley had been a summer hunting ground for the Indians. Wild animals were plentiful, especially deer and elk. Unafraid, they roamed the valley where and when they pleased. It was not unusual to have from one to two or more (especially deer) pass right by the house. This was a common occurrence, especially every spring and fall, when the animals would be crossing from west to east or from east to west, from one range of mountains to the other.

The men folk took great pleasure in the "Hunt". This furnished us with plenty of meat. The hides of deer were tanned into buckskin by the men folk and made into shirts, moccasins, gloves, etc. The sewing was done by Mother until the boys learned to do it themselves. Our boys also learned to knit gloves, socks, etc.

The winters were long and severely cold. Those Wyoming blizzards are still well remembered. Trees cut and hauled from the canyons were our only supply for construction of buildings and also for firewood. This was hazardous work but was all done cheerfully and without complaint. It was considered just one of many requirements, a regular routine in a new country.

Religious duties were not neglected. On Wednesday, 21 September 1887, very soon after their arrival there, the Saints who had settled on Swift Creek, Star Valley, Wyoming, were organized as Afton Ward, with Charles D. Cazier as Bishop. This comprised all the Saints living in the two valleys, both upper and lower.

The Sabbath was observed as such. No work was allowed except the preparation of the meals by the housewife and the feeding of the livestock by the men folk. Of course the cows must be milked and pigs and chickens fed. Once a month, on the first Thursday, a fast day was observed with Fast Day and Testimony meeting held at ten o'clock a.m. and Relief Society Meeting at two o'clock p.m. All labor was halted for this day. Old and young attended the meeting, especially the morning meeting.

We, as a family, believe the Upper Ranch was the most loved of all places where we lived. In about 1889 both wives and their children were living on this place. A larger home had been erected for the first wife. The two houses were now only a few rods apart. The older children of the one family and the younger children of the other family grew up together.

This ranch was a beautiful place to live near the high mountains and a beautiful canyon with springs of clear water, lovely pine, aspen, and other trees with enough willows and other shrubbery to complete the scene. Truly, it was nature in all its glory. Water from these springs was piped to the front of each house where it emptied into a wooden trough hewed from a log of wood. This had an open mouth called a spout placed several feet above ground. Water flowed

continually, making a miniature waterfall as it rose and fell into the ditch below. Service berries and choke cherries grew abundantly, not only on the side of the mountains and in the canyons, but right in the yard near the house. Sage hens and pheasants came right into the garden, helping themselves to whatever they pleased.

There were plenty of wild animals roaming about. The cry of the coyote and mountain lion was frequently heard. Their presence was occasionally felt as they came too close for comfort.

An incident told by members of the family may be interesting to relate. Upon returning home from some ward affair at Grover one moonlight evening they heard the shrill cry of a lion. It sounded very close, and came from near the mountain and just outside the corral where the cows and calves were penned up for the night. The animal was crying and howled at the top of its voice. Naturally the family became somewhat alarmed and decided to get inside the house as quickly as possible. The key to the house could not be found. It was lost. What to do next was the question. Well, they broke a window and began putting the children through as fast as it could be done. Once inside, they watched and listened, wondering what they should do. In plain view the lion sat upon its haunches and howled. Finally the animal stood on all fours, yawned, stretched, and leisurely walked away.

Another time a fox was killed over by the lone pine tree that stood in all its majesty next to a lone cedar amid a beautiful grove of aspens and other shrubbery. This was in the south east corner of the farm.

Father was a very systematic and tireless worker, blessed with unusually good health and plenty of determination to finish whatever he began. With the help of his family he soon had both farms under cultivation. They produced abundantly grain, hay, and livestock. Later the dairy products played a very important part when a Creamery was set up, and still later a cheese plant was established.

The climate was extremely cold, the winters long and severe, with lots of snow. Here, as in Bear Lake Valley, the wheat was often frozen just before harvest time. But this was now our home and we had learned to love it, for here we found peace and relief from persecution by enemies of our religion.

All machinery was kept in sheds during both summer and winter months and always in a ready condition to be used. If repair was needed, it was done at once. There was a place for everything and everything was kept in place. For instance, if we children would ask, as we often did, the use of Father's saw or hammer, or whatever else we wished to use, he would say, "All right, if you will put it back where it belongs when you are through with it." There was no arguing. If we were careless, we must leave such things alone; and we knew better than ask again.

He always kept one lantern hung on a certain peg in the stable or barn, to use if emergency arose. It was filled with oil, wick trimmed, ready for use at any moment in the darkness of the night. Every pitchfork, harness, saddle, or other equipment had also a certain peg of its own. There was no misplacing of anything under Father's care.

He was a very strict "disciplinarian." We, as children, felt he was too much so for his or our own good. His daughter Sylvia recently remarked, "With our Father 'Yes' meant 'Yes' and 'No' meant 'No'. There was no back talk." But he never issued a command – never said, "Go do this or that." He always asked, "Will you do it?"

He had a very quick temper and sometimes lost control of it; but as soon as it had run its course and had an outlet, it was all over, and he was humble as a child. No, he wasn't a perfect Dad, for like all human beings, he had his faults and failings. We never expected perfection, yet he had so many good and fine qualifications that we wouldn't trade him for any other. One of his sons, Lee, said recently, "Yes, Dad had his failings, but he was a man of character."

He was liberal almost to an extreme. He would aid or assist anyone when his service was needed. Truly converted to his Church and its duties, he freely gave of his time in its service. As before mentioned, care of the dead and the living was one of his responsibilities. The gift of faith and healing of the sick had been given him, and he exercised it willingly by answering the numerous calls made of him. Often, at any hour of the night, the call was answered to go to the home of someone sick or dying. On horseback or on snowshoes was the usual way, but often he walked many miles through storm or hot sun. Never did we hear him complain. He knows it was service to his God and fellow men.

In these early winters there was not too much farm work that could be done except chopping the wood, feeding and caring for the livestock, and milking cows. Often, during the afternoon or evening, neighbors and friends would visit each other. Sometimes the whole family came and spent the day and even the night. Those were pleasant occasions for all. A good meal was prepared by the housewife in whatever home they happened to be. Many evenings were spent at our house by some of the brethren, Father's friends and co-workers in the Church, sitting around the fire engaged in pleasant conversation. Usually the general theme was topics of the day but ended by relating experiences and discussing various principles of doctrine.

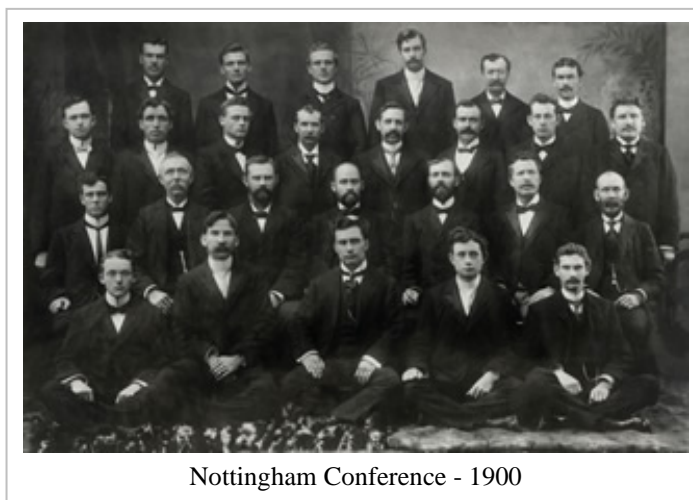
We children were supposed to be asleep in an adjoining room but were often more awake than they knew. They never did know how we listened. It is still remembered and many of these talks have aided us in establishing a true conception of many problems that have arisen, especially in regard to Church authority and principles. These men had helped to bear many persecutions and the brunt of ridicule. Each one gave his own testimony to the truth of his belief.

He who begins and constructs the foundation of any movement, religious or civic, has a hard task to build it strong and solid enough to endure. They who follow can add to the structure unmeasured heights, but the foundation must be firm and unyielding from the ground up.

In a few years the older children, Elizabeth, Francis, and Richard were married and had homes of their own. Sometime later the first wife and her youngest children were moved back to Afton. The second wife with her family of nine children remained on the farm for several years longer.

On Sunday, August 14, 1892, the Star Valley Stake of Zion was organized by President Joseph F Smith and Apostle Francis M. Lyman, including the residents of both valleys. George Osmond was sustained as Stake President with William W. Burton and Anson V. Call as counselors. John Astle was chosen at this same time as an alternate to the High Council of the Stake. He was very exacting about attending stake and ward meetings. All work was suspended for the monthly Priesthood meeting and the regular stake conference. All the family members were instructed to put Church duties first.

Father had always wanted to return to England, his native land, for a visit and to see the old home. This desire was granted when early in June 1900, he received a call to fill a mission in England. When he was set apart for this mission his blessing stated that his call came through revelation. He left home 9 July 1900 for Salt Lake City, Utah, accompanied by his son William W. who was also on his way to the



Nottingham Conference - 1900

mission field, having been called by the authorities of his ward to the Northwestern States Mission. Richard, another son, also received a call about this same time, but was deferred because of his Father and brother both going from the same family. His call came through the Seventies Quorum.

After fulfilling one year of his mission, William W. was transferred to the British Mission. Both Father and son were assigned to Nottingham Conference, the “Old Home” of this branch of the Astle Family. While here, Father met some old friends and relatives and gathered some genealogy from the Parish Churches of Chellaston and other towns in Berbyshire which later was the foundation of a final successful connected family pedigree.

Father returned home to America and his families on the 25th of January 1902. His son William W. returned later the same year. He resumed his work on the farm for a time, then sold

the ranch, moved his wife, Melvina Ann (Melley), to Grover, Wyoming, and purchased another farm west of that town. The first wife, Isabella (Belle Jane), continued to live in Afton. She died on the 16th of May 1912.

A sad accident occurred very unexpectedly to a son, Ernest. He with two pals, was walking up Grover canyon one Sunday afternoon when a gun (a .22) was accidentally discharged by one of the boys. The bullet hit Ernest in the abdomen. He was fatally wounded and died the next day, 7 August 1911.

Father was a refined man in every way. He possessed that fine bearing and poise of an English gentleman. This he inherited from a long line of ancestors of noble birth and lineage. He was clean in his personal habits, almost to the extreme, if that were possible. He kept himself well dressed, his hair and beard neatly trimmed, his fingernails in good condition, and wore gloves for his hard work. His hair was of brown shade and not too dark; and his clear eyes were really blue. A fine looking person. When sixty years of age he measured five feet, eight and one-half inches in his stocking feet and weighed about one hundred fifty-six to one hundred sixty pounds.

Through the years, to the great delight of his growing young families, he enjoyed participating with them in outdoor games and sports. How memory takes us back to the times we played Anti-I-Over and the rivalry that ensued to have Father on our side. It seemed he could always catch the ball as it came over the house. He would sometimes compete with his sons and also his daughters in jumping or running a race. He was surely fast in racing, and could outdo any of his sons unless it was Elwood. He had two daughters, Sarah and Sylvia, who were close runners-up, but of course we were only girls.

He was extremely opposed to ball games and sports of any kind on the Sabbath day. He, with the other fathers of Grover, made an agreement with the young men of the ward, that if the boys would refrain from playing ball on Sunday they would be allowed Saturday afternoon off for the game, and the men would play with them. The plan worked nicely and all seemed to enjoy it.

One thing he did love was to play marbles – out of doors in the summer time, or on the carpeted floor in the house during the winter. When he was over seventy years of age he looked forward, every evening, to a game of marbles with his youngest son, Lee.

There isn't too much more to write from now until the end of his life as he was growing old, but his mind remained clear and alert until the trail was ended.

In later years he spent considerable time in the Logan Temple doing ordinance work for dead relatives. He worked unceasingly until every "link" that he then had, in the chain, or line, was complete. During this time he made his home in Smithfield, Utah, with his son, Joseph Hyrum, and family. They assisted him in putting the records in order and preparing the names

for the Temple. So far as Father knew at that time, the work was finished, and he decided to return home to Star Valley, the place he loved most.

Before leaving he seemed to have a premonition that this was his last trip to the Temple, that his life was drawing to a close. A very vivid dream came to him in the night, in which he seemed to be climbing a ladder, and continued going up, up, and away. He took the train to Montpelier, Idaho, and from there traveled by way of the mail truck to Afton, where he stayed over night with his daughter, Violet. Others who made the same trip with him said they had never known Brother Astle to be in better spirits and well in a physical way, than at that time.

The next morning he again traveled by way of the mail truck to his home in Grover. His son Alma saw him coming and talked with him a few minutes. Father told him he had come home to die. Soon after this his son Lee was coming home from school when he noticed the door was open. He knew Father had come home so he went inside and there was Father lying on the floor with his head resting in the suitcase he had been unpacking. At this time he recognized his son for a moment and then lapsed into a coma. Aid was summoned immediately and all was done for him that human hands could do; but he never regained consciousness, but passed away the next day, 11 October 1919, surrounded by a number of his family. It was a peaceful death. We all felt, as did he, that the end of the journey had come when he expected it and was ready.

Gone home to family and relatives that he so dearly loved, to continue his teaching of the Gospel and to assist in any other labor the Father has assigned to him. We know that he will never shirk any duty or responsibility given to him, but as in life, valiantly carry on.

And so our earthly Father has left us for a time, expecting his children and grandchildren to the latest generation, to go forward in the life work he commenced, leaving with us fond memories of his integrity and worthy life – never asking anyone of us to do anything he would not do himself. May he not be disappointed in us.