Kingston Charles Autobiography

Born at Peterborough, Northamptonshire, England, November 9th, 1856. My father Frederick Kingston leaving my mother-Mary Ann Hunter and I-when I was but 6 months old, coming to the United States. My mother was forced into service leaving me to be raised by my grandmother, Elizabeth Freeman-a very religious woman. She was a real mother to me and the wife of William Freeman; he was a school master residing at Sawtry, Huntingtonshire. He taught school at the same town where William Cowper the great English poet wrote most of his great sonnets, including “God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform”. I have understood my great grandfather and he were on most intimate terms.

I attended a national school until I was 13 years old, when I went to work, later attending a private school for a short time and then obtained a job with a great book house where I had access to many volumes, with time to study, which I did naturally, it being, it seemed, part of my very nature to desire to read, which desire I have fostered and maintained ever since.

After my work with the book house I obtained employment with the Great Northern Railroad Company in the electrical department; during the following 5 years I worked up in this vocation-attending also, at the same time a night school at Nottingham, England, fostered by the government, taking a course in the theory of Magnetism and Electricity. A the end of the 5 years mentioned I was approached by one of the chief men of that department requesting that I go to London at the Kings Cross Station to take charge of all the electrical works there. This was a great opportunity; which however I declined, as I had already received transportation to Utah, from my father, who resided at Morgan, Utah. This representative mentioned tried to persuade me to give up my contemplated emigration to Utah, saying if I would do so I would be well cared for. However, I declined and away I started for Utah. I arrived at Morgan September 23rd, 1879, crossing the ocean with a company of saints on the steam-ship, “Wyoming”.

I had been raised to look upon Mormonism-so called-owing to my father marrying another wife-Emma Morris, a very fine woman and a real mother to me-as one of the vilest institutions in existence, and I actually went to studying Mormonism with the thought in mind of showing my father where he was wrong. I had some knowledge of the bible taught me by my grandmother Hunter, so felt quite well able to judge of the matter. However, it came about, that the more I read and pondered the subject, the more I became convinced that Mormonism was true. I found myself actually defending the same with apostate Mormons and outsiders, \_\_\_ working on the section of the U.P.R.R. However, I had yet no desire to accept the doctrine and embrace it. I refused absolutely to go inside a meeting house, my prejudice still being unabated. However, there came along one day a man who I had met in Nottingham who was a member of the church, he, after much persuasion, got me to attend a meeting of the Young Mens Mutual Association, at South Morgan. I was still smoking a pipe, and had it in my pocket while attending the meeting. It was about the time the mutual work started in the church, the year 1880 in September. At that meeting as visitors were Elder John Hyrum Smith and Junius F Wells; and \_\_\_ was the same year that Elder Smith was ordained an apostle. Elder Smith, a man of wonderful presence, and a fine speaker, spoke on the word of wisdom, I drank in every word he spoke, and my prejudices vanished away, I knew he told the truth; I no longer resisted the spirit of the work, and that night, going home from that meeting, I laid my pipe and tobacco on a shelf, and said, that is all I want of you. Three months afterwards, on my birthday I was baptized by Bishop Dickson of the Richville Ward, and confirmed the same day, in my father’s house. It was a time of rejoicing among the whole settlement, who had learned of my much reading on the subject of the gospel.

My First Spiritual Manifestation

Some of the aged saints would gather in my father’s house and I would read to them out of the New Testament. On a particular night in the month of February, I had read from the gospel of St. John the 19th chapter-“Jesus before Pilate.” My heart went out to Him in his sore distress. I retired that night with that feeling still with me. I do not know how long I had been in bed; but I suddenly found myself in a dark enclosure, it seems about 20 to 30 feet square and about 16 feet high and build of rock, without a roof over it. I tried to find a way out of this place, but it was so dark I could find no escape; the thought came to me that the only relief from the darkness was to call upon the Lord for deliverance; so I made my way as near I could tell to the center of the enclosure, and there I kneeled down and prayed most earnestly for deliverance out of that darkness. I had prayed some time, when all of a sudden a light appeared above the building, and seven men descended and stood around me, so close, I could have touched either one of them; they were dressed in clothing exactly as the angel Moroni is pictured when he appeared to Joseph Smith. One of these men held a two-edged sword in his hand, point up, his arm at the square. Neither of them spoke to me, nor me to them, and they ascended and left me still praying; I found myself directly afterwards wide awake on my bed.

I was afraid to tell this matter to any one, fearing I might not be believed. However, some months afterwards, I went to the patriarch of the Morgan Stake and told him of the circumstance, asking him what that which I had seen meant. He said, my boy; that was a testimony that the Lord had shown you thru his Holy Spirit how he had brought you out of darkness into light. The sword was the “sword of truth” spoken of by Paul.

In the year 1881 I went to Colorado to work for the Union pacific Coal Department under Bishop Hopkins of Croydon who was at the time superintendent of coal mines for that company in that state. I worked there 15 months among a tough set of men, mostly Catholics, who because I would preach Mormonism to them, dubbed me the Mormon priest. During my stay there I never took a cup of tea or coffee, and never went to bed one night without going out on the mountain side to pray. I was offered a good position by the Western Union Telegraph Company superintendent who I had become acquainted with at Gunnerson, Colorado, but declined the offer not being willing to settle among outsiders, and also I had my eye set on a very handsome, rosy cheeked girl, who I later married in the old endowment house Salt Lake City, President-He-Daniel H. Wells performing the ceremony. Soon after our marriage I acted as a teacher in the South Morgan ward, and I was stake clerk for two years and was then called on a mission to England. Before this we had born to us a son and a daughter during my absence the daughter died, and 8 months after I left for the mission my wife gave birth to twin girls. My wife having much the harder part to play in our mission.

Upon my return I went to Rock Springs to work where I was set apart as first counselor to Bishop Saulsby. We remained at Rock Springs 2 years and then went to Star Valley and bought a farm at Grover, Wyoming. The Star Valley Stake being soon organized I was ordained a high priest and set apart as a member of the high council. I was also appointed superintendent of the Stake mutuals, and a member of the stake board of education. I was also appointed by Judge Riner, United States District Judge a United States Commissioner and most of the homestead and other land entries were made before me. I built a store at Auburn and was the first postmaster at that place; I also raised the first grain ever grown there the ground squirrels being so bad, that grain planted there was eaten like a fire hand gone thru it. Andrew Jensen happening along at the time made the fact of my being first to grow grain there a matter of history.

Leaving Auburn-selling my business there I was importuned to go into business by my bishop, at Afton, which I did, and I then also started the creamery business bringing thousands of dollars into that district and which finally grew into now what is one of the greatest dairying localities of the West.

After living in the valley about 6 years I was appointed Register of the United States Land Office at Evangston, Wyoming by Prest McKinley, I served in that capacity for two terms of over 8 years.

When the Woodruff Stake was organzed I was chosen second counselor to President John M. Baxter. I was also set apart at-the- soon afterwards to preside over the stake young mens mutuals. During this time the Big Horn Country attracting attention. I was requested by elder Owen A. Woodruff to go there and look the country over with a view to our people making settlements there. I went in November, met Williams Cody who wanted to sell a canal he had built to the church; inspected our location and also the prospect for building a canal and returned making a report to President Snow and wight of the twelve at Salt Lake City.

Elder Abraham O. Woodruff was appointed President and I secretary of the Big Horn Colony, by President Snow.

This investigation resulted in a colony being organized an in the following May, 100 families moved into that country and commenced the building of a 30 mile canal out of the Shoshone River.

The following August I was requested by Elder Owen A. Woodruff to visit the colony and look into the finances of it. I found the colony out of money, practically and in debt $3000.00 with merchants at Red Lodge Montana. The Burlington Railroad heading in that direction halted 30 miles away on account of a financial crisis. This left the colony in distress; the winter not far away, no work, and living in tents. I conceived the thought of trying to influence the railroad to again start work on the grade. I wrote to Congressman Frank Mondell who was a director of the railroad laying before him the absolute necessity of the colony being aided by contacts in grading; or I said the colony will probably break up and scatter, thus undoing what the railroad people evidently desired, that was the peopling of that then forbidding country. I received an immediate response to my appeal; the railroad president a Mr. Holdridge sent in his chief engineer to look oer the situation, and after inquiring as to the number of teams that could be set to work-the number 100, he ordered immediate resumption of grading, the result being, that the colony was saved.

I was fortunate in being able to get all the legal work done in connection with a Carey Act scheme without a dollar of expense to the colony; I went to Cheyenne often, consulting with the State Engineer and the Secretary of State who willing assisted me in the work.

Having free transportation over the railroad in Wyoming, it came to my lot to visit the wards and branches along the Union Pacific R.R. in fact I had been set apart by Elder Lorenzo Snow at Coalville to visit and look up the saints along the railroad. Going to what afterwards became the Lyman Ward, I named it such in honor of President Lyman, who I looked upon as one of the great men of this generation; this was after the Woodruff Stake was organized, I going there to audit the bishops tithing records. What brought the naming about was that the ward was called Owen after Elder A. O. Woodruff, there however being already a town in Wyoming by the name of Owen, a post office could not be installed unless a new name was given the town.

I had gone to this settlement some time before it was known by any name. We met in a small long cabin which served as a day school house and meeting house. I promised the saints there at a meeting I attended that if they would be faithful, the gentiles who had settled on some of the best lands, would come to them and beg them to buy them out, which came literally to pass. I also promised that they should have a stake of Zion organized right there; this almost 30 years before the event.

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In November 12, 1901 I took my wife to the Salt Lake Temple, and there we did the first temple work. I was baptized for 20 males and my wife for 22 females. We also did endowment work and sealings. The next February after retiring to bed one night, my attention was attracted to a group of females walking on the sidewalk across the street from our house there were 22 of them walking slowly, all dressed beautiful white raiment gathered at the neck and falling to their feet with a girdle of the same material around the waist. The vision was so brilliant that I could see the weive and woof in the cloth worn by them. I have never, do do I ever expect to see anything more heavenly, their countenances were radient with heavenly peace, they walked a full half block and then suddenly disappeared. I woke my wife directly after they had gone telling her of seeing the 22 women as stated, and she answered that was the number I was baptized for. I might add, that they were all dressed alike, as was the arrangement of their hair.

While residing in Evanston, I built two telephone lines, one from Evanston to sage station on the O.S.L. and another from Opal, Wyoming to Big Piney, Wyoming, a distance of 80 miles. This at the request of the settlers along these lines.

Up to 1905, when I resigned my position as Register of the land office, we had had born to us 11 children, three boys and eight girls, one girl died as stated at 15 months; the remaining 10 grew to manhood and womanhood and were all married in the temple, they and their mates all womanhood and were all married in the temple, they and their mates all keeping the Word of Wisdom. We taught our children to pray, and we have never failed to pray in our family one day during the 50 years of our married life. We have not been perfect, but we have tried to live the lives of Latter-Day Saints, and we still have an abiding faith in the gospel restored to earth through the instrumentally of the prophet Joseph Smith.

A Story of My Father, Charles Kingston

Florence K. Nielsen

Written February 1951

Many times in my youth, I recall rummaging in a small box in which my father kept his very precious belongings, and marveling to see a yellowed and word letter headed ‘Sebastopol, Crimea, May 1855’. It was a letter written by my grandfather, Fredrick Kingston, who was at that time fighting with English troops in the Crimean War, to Mary Ann Hunter, the woman who was soon to become his wife. I don’t know when or where they were married, but my father was born at Peterborough, Northamptonshire, England, a suburb of London, November 9, 1856, about a year and a half after that letter was written.

In 1857, when my father was just six months old, Grandfather Fredrick left for America, promising to send for his wife and son. Grandmother has told Father that his reason for leaving was indebtedness due to a failure in business, and fear of a jail sentence, as was the law at that time. In the years that followed, Grandfather sent his wife money for passage four different times, but instead of making the trip, she used the money to pay his debts. In the meantime she had procured a position as house manager for a family of nobility in London. Her mother, Elizabeth Freeman Hunter, cared for the child. The story which I remember beat of those Father has told us about his youth was the occasion when at the age of seven he was allowed to spend two weeks with his Mother at the house where she was employed, due to the fact that the family were spending the winter in Italy. he said that he must have been very mischievous, because he remembered being in the yard one day, and throwing gravel over the fence which landed on the tables and in the food of the neighbors who were having a lawn party; he also remembered one of the party spanking him for it. He recalled that when the family returned from Italy, they brought his Mother a lovely cameo brooch. I, being his eldest living daughter, am now the very proud owner of the brooch, eighty-eight years after its presentation.

I shall quote from my father’s autobiography something of his schooling and training in England: “I attended a national school until I was 13 years old, when I went to work, later attending a private school for a short time and then obtained a job with a great book house where I had access to many volumes.” It was here that he acquired the reading habit, a habit which he was to foster and maintain throughout his life. “After my work with the book house, I obtained employment with the Great Northern Railroad Company in the electrical department. During the following five years I worked up in this vocation, attending also at the same time a night school in Nottingham, England, fostered by the government, taking a course in “The Theory of Magnetism and Electricity”. At the end of the five years mentioned I was approached by one of the chief men of that department requesting that I go to London at Kings Cross to take charge of all the electrical works there. This was a great opportunity, which, however, I declined, as I had already received transportation to Utah from my father, who resided at Morgan, Utah. - - - I arrived at Morgan September 23, 1879, crossing the ocean with a company of saints on the steamship ‘Wyoming’.”

No one seems to know when Grandfather Fredrick joined the Church, but he has told of one time protecting Orson Pratt against a mob in England in the year 1856. Later when my father was in that vicinity on a mission he met a man named Markam who claimed to have been in that mob. In any event, by the time my father traveled to this country, his father had joined the church and, polygamy being the practice at that time, had taken another wife, Emma Morris. His wife in England was very bitter against him and Mormonism itself, and he had taught my father to hate everything about it; but at the age of twenty-two his father had enticed him with stories of the new world and he left his mother to join a father he did not know. I have heard him say many times that he could not and had not realized what he was doing to his mother to leave her, and that he was so disappointed when he reached Utah, that he would have returned to England immediately if he’d had money for passage. Knowing mothers, I’m sure that his mother would have gladly sent him the money if he hadn’t been too proud to let her know how he felt.

It must have been very difficult for him to adjust to living in a small log house with this family of strangers, which included five or six younger children. The pioneer life was so completely different from what he had known during his working years in London. The family told him later that he was very hateful to all of them at first, even refusing to speak to his father, whom he blamed for his unhappy situation. There was no work to be had that year, and he was completely dependent on his father. That winter was a very hard one, so cold that the cattle died of cold and hunger. There were no newspapers or books in the house except books concerning Mormonism. Having the time and the desire to read, my father undertook to read these books and prove to his father that Mormonism was false. Quoting again from his autobiography, “I had some knowledge of the Bible taught me by my Grandmother Hunter, so felt quite well able to judge of the matter. However, it came about that the more I read and pondered the subject, the more I became convinced that Mormonism was true. I found myself actually defending the same with apostate Mormons and outsiders working on the section of the U.P.R.R. However, I had yet no desire to accept the doctrine and embrace it. I refused absolutely to go inside a meeting house, my prejudice still being unabated. However, there came along on day a man whom I had met in Nottingham who was a member of the Church. He, after much persuasion, got me to attend a meeting of the Young Men’s Mutual Association at South Morgan. I was still smoking a pipe, and had it in my pocket while attending the meeting. It was about the time the Mutual work started in the Church, the year 1880 in September. At the meeting as visitors were Elder John Henry Smith and Junius F. Wells. - - - Elder Smith, a man of wonderful presence, and a fine speaker, spoke on the Word of Wisdom. I drank in every word he spoke, and my prejudices vanished away. I knew he told the truth. I no longer resisted the spirit of the work, and, that night going home from that meeting, I laid my pipe and tobacco on a shelf and said “That is all I want of you”. Three months afterward, on my birthday, I was baptized by Bishop Dickson of the Richville Ward and confirmed the same day in my father’s house. It was a time of rejoicing among the whole settlement, who had learned of my much reading on the subject of the Gospel.” His conversion meant such a change in his way of thought and way of living, and he was so very sincere, that he felt the spirit of it greatly. Being a great student, he learned the Gospel thoroughly and became a good teacher and preacher.

My mother, Mary Priscilla Tucker, was raised in this small town of Morgan, and telling of these years said “We girls used to refer to him as ‘that snob from England’” and has declared that she was introduced to him three or four times before he would speak to her. My mother was the eldest of ten pretty, brown-eyed, black-haired girls. Father, being very light, referred often to them as ‘all those beautiful brown eyes’.

To quote again from father’s autobiography, “In the year 1881 I went to Colorado to work for the Union Pacific Coal Department under Bishop Hopkins of Croydon Utah, who was at that time superintendent of coal mines for that company in the state. I worked there fifteen months among a tough set of men, mostly Catholics, who, because I would preach Mormonism to them, dubbed me the ‘Mormon priest’. During my stay there I never took a cup of tea or coffee, and never went to bed on night without going out on the mountain to pray. I was offered a good position by the Western Union Telegraph Company superintendent, with whom I had become acquainted at Gunnerson, Colorado, but declined the offer not being willing to settle among outsiders, and also I had my eye set on a very handsome rosy-cheeked girl, who I later married in the old Endowment House, Salt Lake City.” They bought a small piece of land and made a home in Croydon, Morgan County, Utah, and there was born to them a boy and a girl.

About this time, Grandfather Fredrick had again contacted his wife in England and finally persuaded her to come to America. She evidently came thinking her husband would leave his other wife and make a home for her, and he had hoped that she would join the Church and fit into the new life. However, she remained very bitter, and, after staying with my father and mother about six months, returned to England a very disappointed and unhappy woman.

Soon after this, father was called on a mission to his native country. \_\_\_\_ the little home in Croydon and rented a house for mother near her people. He wrote to his mother to meet him at Liverpool, but had the extreme disappointment to learn when he reached there that she had died the day he left Utah. Five months from the time he left home, the little daughter died of diphtheria, and eight months from the time of his leaving, my twin sister and I were born. Father was not able to convert any of his relatives near Petersborough as he had hoped. After spending 16 months in the mission field, he was released because of poor health.

“Upon my return I went to Rock Springs, Wyoming, to work, where I was set apart a first counselor to Bishop Saulsby. We remained at Rock Springs, and then went to Star Valley in Wyoming and bought a farm at Grover. The Star Valley Stake being soon organized I was ordained a high priest and set apart as a member of the high council. I was also appointed superintendent of the stake Mutuals, and a member of the stake Board of Education. I was also appointed by Judge Riner, United States District Judge, a United States Commissioner, and most of the homestead and other land entries were made before me.” The winters in Star Valley were very severe and the growing season very short. It seemed impossible to ripen grain or potatoes before the winter frost began. Father, being resourceful and determined on spring early dug some soil out of the vegetable cellar and scattered it on the snow, causing the snow to melt and making it possible to plant grain earlier that year. He was talked of as being the first man in the valley to have ripened grain.

He and a friend then started a grocery store at Afton, Wyoming, driving a distance of three miles each morning and evening in a two-wheeled cart. This was about the year \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and the year the government sent troops into Wyoming to drive the Indians from Jackson Hole, their summer hunting grounds, onto the reservation at Fort Hall, Idaho. Since there were no telephones or newspapers we knew nothing of this until an uncle, Gibson Condie, who was living with us at that time, returned from the village (Grover) saying that a messenger had ridden from the lower valley with the news that the Indians were on the war path and would probably kill everyone with whom they came in contact, and that they were passing through the lower end of the valley. The people were all to gather at the Stake House at Afton to protect themselves. My uncle left without mother and us children, but when he reached the store a mile away and heard the news that the Indians were as close as Willow Creek and everyone should make haste, he came back to take us with him. We all piled into his wagon and started on our way. By this time it was evening, and about half way to Afton, we met father coming home. Father had made many friends among the Indians, and he would not believe them to be as cruel as the rumors insisted. He said to mother, “You can go to the stake house if you want to, but I am going home. I don’t think the Indians would harm us, and besides if I am to die I’d rather die in my own bed.” Mother and her small baby shared a cart with father to return home, and the rest of us children walked. I remember that evening looking out to see how many homes were lighted, and we could see only one, where we knew an old lady lived. The night proved to be uneventful, as my father had thought, and the next day my uncle and his family returned, tired and sleepy after their frightening experience.

After living in Star Valley about six years, father was appointed Register of the United States Land Office at Evanston, Wyoming, by President McKinley. He served in that capacity for two terms or eight years. When the Woodruff Stake was organized he was chosen second counselor to President John M. Baxter, and since he had a yearly pass on the railroads due to his occupation, he was set apart by President Lorenzo Snow to visit the Saints along the railroad. This took in the territory of Fort Bridger, Green River, and sometimes Rock Springs, Wyoming. During this time the Big Horn country was attracting attention. He was requested by Apostle Owen Woodruff to look over this country with the view of our people making a settlement there. In this connection he met William Cody, who wanted to sell a canal he had built to the Church. “I inspected our location and also the prospect for building a canal and returned making a report to President Snow and eight of the Twelve at Salt Lake City. This investigation resulted in a colony being organized and in the following May, 100 families moved into the country and commenced the building of a 30 mile canal out of the Shoshone River. The following August I was requested by Elder Owen A. Woodruff to visit the colony and look into the finances of it. I found the colony out of money, practically, and in debt $3,000 with merchants at Red Lodge, Montana. The Burlington Railroad heading in that direction halted 30 miles away on account of a financial crisis. This left the colony in distress, at he winter not far away, no work, and living in tents. I conceived the thought of trying to influence the railroad to start work again on the grade. I wrote to Congressman Frank Mondell who was a director of the railroad, laying before him the absolute necessity of the colony being sided by contracts in grading, or, I said, the colony will probably break up and scatter, thus undoing that what the railroad people evidently desire, that was the peopling of that then forbidding country. I received an immediate response to my appeal. The railroad president, a Mr. Holdridge, sent in his chief engineer to look over the situation, and, after inquiring as to the number of teams that could be set to work, the number 100, he ordered immediate resumption of grading, the results being that the colony was saved.”

During this time father had gathered the information require concerning his relatives and friends in England who had since died. He and mother completed the Temple work for about 40 of them. Because none of the accepted the Gospel when he had tried to bring it to them, he often wondered if they would still refuse it in the spirit world. One night in a beautiful dream he saw twenty-two women walking toward him. They were beautifully dressed, and seemed very happy. One turned and smiled at him. He awoke mother to tell her, and she reminded him that twenty-two was the exact number that she had done the work for. After that he felt sure that the work had been accepted by them.

All these years he had not put to use the electrical training he had had in England, until the people he met in the outer districts requested that he put in a telephone line. He hired the lines put up, and he installed phones from Evanston to Sage Station and from Opal to Big Piney, Wyoming, a distance of 80 miles.

In 1905 father left the Land Office and bought land in Ammon, Idaho, and later, due to mother’s health, moved to Ogden, Utah. There had been born to them eleven children, three boys, and eight girls. Ten children were, raised to maturity, and all ten were married in the Temple. When father was about 65 he opened an abstract office in Ogden, which he kept until the age of 80, driving a car to and from work each day. All this time he held responsible positions in the Church, remaining alert and young in mind and reading and studying every night.

Father was always interested in people, and made a special effort to be friendly to anyone of another nationality. When he lived in Star Valley he befriended the Indians, and later the Chinese who did the laundry and brought vegetables to the house.

When possible, he kept a spirited horse or a good dog.

He loved babies, and each day when he came home from work, he would pick up the baby and walk back and forth, saying “It gets tired of lying down all the time.”

He was also the doctor of the family. When the family lived in Star Valley there was no doctor there, so he bought a good doctor book and practically memorized its contents. Even after doctors were available, he still applied his remedies. As a consequence, he raised a large family with a minimum of medical bills.

It was Mother who taught us to cook, sew and knit, but father who gave us an appreciation of music, poetry, and our religion.

I am thankful to be one of the eldest children in the family and to have a memory of my parents in their younger years when they were still full of vitality and \_\_\_\_ for their children. As the years passed, I could see how the worries and cares of a growing family brought changes in them, and then when the children were all settled and doing well how they were released from their worries.

When father was 83, Mother passed away at the age of 78. After this he spent most of his days reading, sometimes eight hours a day. At Ogden, Utah, at the age of 87, In July, 1944, he was taken to his rest.