

A brief sketch of the life of John and Sarah Ellen Bennett Criddle, and especially of Sarah Ellen, born June 26, 1862. She was the first of eleven children born to George and Nancy Melvina Taylor Bennett. He was a son of James Bennett and she a daughter of Allen Taylor.

The church authorities had called this newlywed couple to assist in settling Dixie or Southern Utah. While on the way to the new home in New Harmony (this side of St. George, Utah), Sarah Ellen was born in a covered wagon at Toquerville.

We can dimly visualize the conditions and trials in settling this desert country. Here she received her schooling, which went only to third grade. Although small of stature, she weighed but 90 pounds at the time of her marriage in 1883. At eleven years of age she was doing the family washing on a wash board. The heavy lifting injured her back, from which she suffered the remainder of her life.

When fourteen years of age, the family moved to Kaysville, Utah, where she met John Criddle whom she married on February 15, 1883.

After a short time in Kaysville, they settled on a small farm in West Syracuse, about two miles east of the Great Salt Lake. In this small log home six children were born; Nora Azellia, the eldest, died at three years of age. The others, Lonetta, Eva, Lorin, John, and Sadie all grew to maturity and had families of their own.

Because of much alkali the farm would produce but little, so John and Sarah Ellen sought to better their lot by moving to Idaho, not knowing just where. In 1894 John went by wagon as far north as McCammon, Idaho, intending to look at the Camas Prairie country, but was impressed to return to Downey and exercise his homestead rights, on which sage grew higher than one could reach, on a piece of ground northeast of Downey.

Logs were brought from the canyon and a one-room log cabin was built. The family came in the spring of 1895 to occupy the home which had a dirt roof, and for a time, a dirt floor. This one room was home for eight people, being the kitchen, bedroom, living room and bath for the next two years.

The first summer water was hauled from a neighbor's well a quarter mile away.

Part of the summer John would return to Utah to work to help support a young and growing family, ranging in age from nine to one. A new one joined them the first November named Ervin George. He died in 1903.

What must have been the trials and heartache of that mother with cows to milk, butter to make, pigs and chickens to feed, and clothes to make, including underwear and knitted socks for each member of the family. Sarah Ellen had the ability to prepare tasty meals, and each member was kept neat and clean by long hours over a wash board and the burning of coal oil lamps far into the night.

We are told that our times are appointed and the bounds of our habitation set. The Lord must have had a work for John and members of the family to perform in Downey and vicinity.

John was called into the Bishopric in the fall of 1895, serving until his death in 1913. His sons have also served in Quorum Presidencies, Counselors in the Bishopric, High Councilmen, and Stake President. A grandson, now in 1970, serves as Bishop of the Downey Ward.

Sarah Ellen and daughters have all served in church auxiliaries, as Presidents, counselors, secretaries, and treasurers, as well as teachers.

Through much hard work and sacrifice, a new frame home was built in 1897. It consisted of one large room, one small bedroom and a pantry. In this small home Orissa was born in 1897, James in 1900 and Vinnie in 1903. Thus the number now occupying the small home was increased to eleven. There was still no washing machine, refrigeration, or electric power. A large dog helped to draw water from a deep well close by, as he walked in a large wooden wheel which operated a pump. In this manner, and by hand, all water for animals and the house was supplied. The animals drank from a hewn out log and water for the house was carried in buckets. All water for washing or bathing was heated on a stove which was fired by wood brought from distant canyons, as coal was not to be had by these early pioneers.

To relieve the crowded condition, more rooms were added to the home in 1906. This is the home now occupied by John E. and Cloah Criddle.

When John and Sarah Ellen came to Downey it was almost nonexistent. There was no church or school, and only a small store and post office, which William A. Hyde and his brother George had opened the year before.

Cambridge, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles north of Downey, was the community center. A ward had been organized there in 1891. It was there the children attended school until 1906 when a school was established in Downey, with one teacher. In 1907 the Cambridge Ward was divided and the Downey Ward organized. In all these activities John Criddle and family played an important part, he being a member of the Cambridge and Downey Ward Bishoprics, and a school trustee.

Because of hard work John did not enjoy good health the latter years of his life, which ended in 1913 at the early age of 53 years.

For more than 23 years Sarah Ellen was to walk alone as she gave council and directed the steps of her family. She never knew the comforts of hot and cold running water. A round tub used to wash clothes in was also her bath tub. In her life, modern plumbing never replaced the outside toilet. She had great endurance and strength. She was never found idle, and taught industry and thrift to all her children. She kept the family close to the church through prayer, council, and example.

The loneliness and heartache of those 23 years can only be known by those who have walked the same path.

In peaceful slumber she went to greet those who had gone before on March 26 , 1937,
just three months short of her 75th birthday.

We the members of her family give thanks for our heritage and hold in sacred memory
our association together.

Written by James A. Criddle for the
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