



JAMES ALBERT STRATTON AND EMILY AMANDA GARDNER
1844 - 1921 1849 – 1911

Top Row (L to R): James Albert Stratton and Emily Amanda Gardner

Bottom Left (L to R and Top to Bottom)

Sons -- Charles Able, Franklin George, Robert Bird, Powell Johnson, James Albert Jr., William Henry. (All sons are shown.)

Bottom Right (L to R and Top to Bottom):

Daughters -- Minnie Ann, Marie Alice, Mary Louise, Persis (with doll) and son William Henry. (Daughters not shown: Emily Melissa, Harriet and Elizabeth).

James Albert Stratton and Emily Amanda Gardner
1844-1921 1849-1911

Son of Oliver and Harriet Brown Stratton, James Albert was born on the 14th of January 1844, in Hancock County, Illinois.

James Albert crossed the plains as a young boy of four years of age. Being the oldest child and a boy in a pioneer family, much responsibility was given to him during his youth. The Stratton family arrived in Salt Lake Valley in the fall of 1849, where they lived until 1851. They then moved to Draper, Salt Lake County, Utah where he and his brothers tended the sheep his father owned along the Jordan River.

When he was fifteen years old he drove an ox team for the Walker Brothers from Salt Lake to San Bernardino, California. On their way back they ran out of provisions. They had a barrel of sugar in the front of the wagon which the men lived on for a few days.

When James was seventeen he moved to Southern Utah with his father's family, in answer to a call from President Brigham Young. They located in Virgin and raised cotton and molasses cane. Most of the people had a few head of sheep. These furnished wool for clothes. The sheep were sheared with blades, and then the wool was washed and spun into thread, which was woven into cloth. When the children wanted an extra-nice dress, some of the threads would be dipped into dye made from steeping roots of various kinds. These colored threads were wound on sticks or shuttles ready to be woven by hand, and many times by the light of a home-made candle or a torch held by one of the children. Socks and stockings were knitted from these threads. Minnie Ann, daughter of James and Emily, said that she was sixteen years old before she had a pair of stockings that were not home-made.

In 1863 James, with 3 others, was called by the Church to go to the Missouri River after emigrants. This call was the same as being called on a mission. They received no pay. He drove an oxen team from Virgin to the Missouri River and back. He was an expert at driving oxen. The Virgin Ward fitted them out with enough clothes and provisions to last them until they reached the Missouri River. Then the Church provided for the return trip. He walked, driving the oxen; many nights his feet bled. He would cheer up the spirits of the immigrants by playing his juice harp and then doing a step dance for them on the board of his wagon. Some of the prominent settlers from England were in his company. It took about seven months to complete this journey. Altogether during his lifetime, he crossed the plains 7 times; once as a boy and he made 3 trips to bring immigrants to the valley.

A man by the name of McIntire was herding sheep. The sheep belonged to a Mr. Whitmore who lived in St. George. Early one morning in late fall, Whitmore left his home to take supplies of food and clothing to his herder at Pipe Springs. Days went by and Whitmore did not return. His wife became worried and fearing that something was wrong, she reported his absence to the officers. A posse of men was sent to find out what had become of McIntire and Whitmore. The posse sent out scouts to look for tracks or smoke signs. The ground was covered with snow. They found tracks of two Indians following a steer. Later they caught the two Indians. Jim, one of the Indians, had lived with the white people and could talk English. He denied that he knew

anything about the missing white men. After rather severe persuasion, the memory of the rest of the outlaw Indians became better and the next morning Jim led the posse to the Indian camp. The other Indian was left behind under guard. Jim led them far into the Pipe Springs Valley, along a ledge by the side of a deep gulch. When they reached the ledge, Jim began to yell "Hello!" The white men drew their guns on him and bade him to be quiet or they would kill him. He led them farther under the ledge to where the Indians were camped. The Indians were decked out in the clothes of McIntire and Whitmore. It was very evident that the missing men had been killed. The Indians, six to eight in number, were now forced to lead the way to where the bodies were, naked and lying in the snow. They had been ruthlessly murdered. A fight ensued and the Indians were killed. They returned to camp with the dead white men. The Indian that had been left behind told them it was the Navajos who had killed the men and had taken the sheep across the Colorado River, and his party had only stolen the clothes off the dead bodies. It was decided not to kill this Indian but to take him to town with them.

At this time it was very cold and the ground was covered with ice and snow. To punish the captive Indian, the white men made him walk.

After they had gone some distance it was noticed that the Indian's tracks were covered with blood and that his feet were badly lacerated. Finally James could stand it no longer and took the Indian up on his horse behind him against the anger of the rest of the men, and allowed him to ride the remainder of the way.

James Albert Stratton married Emily Henrietta Amanda Gardner, another early pioneer into Salt Lake City and Virgin. On July 3 1864, in Virgin, George B. Gardner, the bride's father, performed the ceremony.

In 1866 a company was called by the Utah Militia in the southern part of the state. Sixty-five men were mustered, completely equipped. They were dispatched to explore the southern lands surrounding the Colorado River to discover trails used as means of escape by marauding Indians, who persistently plundered camps of the settlers. James Andrus was the captain of this company and James Albert was one of the men.

They went out by way of Pipe Springs and back around by Parawan. One day Captain Andrus with seven men and fourteen horses began the trip homeward. They were going up a rocky ledge and before anyone knew what had happened they heard a piercing shriek and Elijah Everett, the soldier at the lead, dropped to the ground with an arrow through his chest. Fearing a massacre, the men began a hasty retreat, not knowing the fate of the soldier. When they went back for Everett's body, they captured the two Indians who had caused all the trouble. They buried Everett's body and with all their hardness, each man was shedding tears as they lowered the body into the earth with only a blanket around it and a hat over his face. James was out several times with this company, and for his services he was later given a medal by the Government as an Indian War Veteran and a small monthly payment.

The first house James built had one adobe room with a porch in front. Their first four children were born in it. Later he built a four-room brick house with a cellar under it and years later he added two more rooms. He made his own brick and helped in building this home.

The year the railroad was built to Utah they went to Salt Lake City and were sealed in the Endowment House. Two or three couples made this trip together in covered wagons drawn by oxen. The men worked on the railroad that winter and returned to Virgin the next spring.

Just a few years after James' marriage, his mother died and his father became ill. James' brother, Oliver Jr., assumed the responsibility of caring for their father, and James Albert (Uncle Ab) and Emily (Aunt Em) took the younger children into their home and cared for them until they came of age. With this start, her home was always open to the sick and needy. Aunt Em's ability as a nurse was recognized by Dr. Middleton, who lived a day's ride away. He often suggested that they call her in for advice in cases of illness, especially among small children.

Emily always gave their married family members a few choice vegetables, a little honey, and many recipes "for making something out of nothing" as she used to laughingly say. It was very difficult to make yeast for several months in the spring and early summer, so Em conjured up different methods and always made some. She always had a large table, well filled with good food. James was also a good cook, and they sometimes contested to see who could make the best bread.

While she still had six children at home, a young man whose parents had died developed a serious illness. She took him, into their home and cared for him until he recovered.

Emily's childhood was short since she married a few days after she was 15 years old. This was not uncommon in those days and she had learned much about the pioneer way of life. She came to her young husband with knowledge of most of the pioneering arts. She was a good cook, knowing how to combine foods to produce many different kinds of dishes. She not only knitted the stockings but made all the clothes for the family and even made them hats from the straw she braided.

They had bees for many years and the honey furnished the sweets for the family.

They always had a carpet loom and wove many yards of carpet. Her niece, Lucy Isom, helped her warp the loom: "But after we got started she wouldn't speak to anyone until she got the warp on and the horse ready for the beam. She had to keep count to make the stripes and yards come out right." She was expert at soap making and caring for the different fruits produced in Virgin.

James Albert Stratton and his wife, Emily Amanda Gardner Stratton, were the parents of 12 children.

The Stratton family used to dry fruit, and James would take it by wagon to Salt Lake City to trade for the things they could not purchase at home and for some cash. He had what was considered a good farm, but the Virgin river would go on the rampage every spring during flood time and each year would wash away more of the farm. James, along with other men in Virgin, decided it was time to do something about the situation, so they surveyed the area to the southwest and decided to build the Hurricane Canal Company. James worked on this from the start to the finish. To build this canal today would cost millions of dollars, but these sturdy pioneers started with picks and shovels and much determination and ultimately put water on the floor of

the Hurricane Valley. James Jepson said that father's sections were always well done. Not once was there any fault ever found with his work and there was no man he had more respect for. He also said James Albert Stratton was an honest, straightforward citizen. "We worked together on the molasses mill for thirty years and not once did we have a cross word. He was a hard worker and would always take the hardest part of any job he was on."

In 1874 Brigham Young came to Virgin and organized the United Order. James was put in as a member of the board of directors. The people worked hard to make a success of the new Order. They replaced the little log school house with a fine, two-story rock building, with a full basement beneath. The upper stories were used for classrooms and the basement was used for storing the tithing paid in kind. However, the problems associated with the United Order were overwhelming, so it was discontinued in November, 1875.

Emily was Primary President of the Virgin Ward for fifteen years. Then, she became ill and lost her eyesight. She went to St. George for medical care, but the treatment was ineffective. A few months later, discouraged and still totally blind, she sent word that she wanted to come home. She was a beloved Primary President, and now her primary workers rallied around. They called a special fast day. The Primary officers and the little children met together late in the afternoon to have a prayer meeting for Sister Stratton. It was a thrilling and inspirational meeting. In a few days when Sister Stratton returned to Virgin, they were overjoyed to hear her tell that at the time of the meeting she was near a west window and she saw the Sunset. Her sight had returned. Her vision was normal the rest of her life.

James did not move to Hurricane until after the death of his good wife in 1911. Then he lived there until his death in 1921.

James did his duty as he saw it...quietly and without any desire for reward or fame. Fittingly, two of his descendants, a son, Robert and a grandson, Charles Stratton, built the monument in honor of the Pioneers at Hurricane.

James Albert Stratton's personality was more like that of my father, Clifford Stratton, than any of our other ancestors. Indeed, as I compiled James' history, I remarked to my family how alike they were. Both were quiet, mature, hard-working, faithful to the Church, demonstrated an independent reserved nature and a quiet, overwhelming love for their families. I am grateful to have been named after these two noble men...Clifford James Stratton.

References:

1. Handwritten notes on George B. Bryant Gardner
2. "Powell Stratton" by Alice Stratton
3. "My Grandfather, History of Oliver Stratton" by Norene Stratton Payne
4. "Harriet Elizabeth Lee Stratton" by granddaughter Margaret Lee Baker
5. "James Albert Stratton" by Stella Lee Prater, great granddaughter
6. "The Mormon Stratton Story" part of the "Brown Story" by Donna Stratton
7. "Oliver and Harriet Brown Stratton"
8. "James A. Stratton" author unknown
9. "A Tribute to Aunt Em" Lucy Isom
10. Miscellaneous notes in possession of C. J. Stratton