

Hiram Sanford Stevens

1832-1893

My Dearest Children:

Because your mother and I are so committed to family and genealogical research, you were raised hearing all kinds of stories, good and bad, about your ancestors. Your Aunt Megs held a big Hughes/Santa Cruz reunion in Tucson last year which was fantastic. I really enjoyed seeing our extended family. I got to see my cousins, children of your Grandma Stratton's sister, Betty. I hadn't seen Pepper, Jim and Bruce for over 2 decades. I had written, earlier, a nice life history on our Treat line in Kansas and for the reunion I wrote a little history on our Hughes/Santa Cruz lines. I sent each of you children a hard copy and a CD copy with all of the pictures of your ancestors. As expected, such reunions also sometimes open up old wounds which never healed, even after 120 years. When we visited the graveyards in Tucson, Benj and Kimball asked why Atanacia Santa Cruz Hughes (your 3g grandma) and her sister Petra Santa Cruz Stevens were buried separately from their husbands. And, during the course of the morning at the cemeteries, I heard three people mention to their children that they still had a problem with Hiram (Petra's husband). Hiram Sanford Stevens, your 3g uncle by marriage, is an enigma. Some of our families have held him in very high esteem. Other of our families are absolutely convinced that he was an adulterer and a murderer and will not utter his name except in contempt or derision. You know me, I'm your father. I'm a scientist. I look only for cold, hard facts and do not form personal opinions. I also feel very strongly that we should look kindly upon our deceased family members no matter what they did or said. They are not here to defend themselves, so we should not slander them. I have told you, over the years while you were growing up, the stories about Hiram, both good and bad, that have been passed down in our family over the generations.

When I got back home from Tucson after Megs' reunion, I discussed the situation about Hiram, with your mother. Her cousin, Janyce Lane (a Tenney) and Jim Miller, her husband, are serving a full-time genealogy mission in Arizona. Their headquarters is the L.D.S. Genealogical Library in Mesa. Your mother called her, and Janyce used her position and availability to old records to identify and secure for us 2 microfilms on many of the legal dealings of Hiram during his lifetime in Tucson and Pima County. Last week your mother and I went down to our library here, on Neil Road, and looked at those 2 microfilms. The facts about Hiram are all there. The dates, the dollar amounts, even his official, hand-written Last Will and Testament are all recorded there. Between these actual legal records and the printed documents I have in my possession, which I got from my Grandma Black and my Aunt Liz, I believe that I now have the complete, accurate story.

Here are the facts. Hiram Sanford Stevens was born 20 March 1832 in Weston, Windsor County, Vt. When he was 19 years old, he enlisted in Company I, First United States Dragoons, and was sent to New Mexico and Tucson. He fought battles against the Apaches in 1852 and 1854 and distinguished himself with bravery. After his discharge in 1856 he moved to Tucson and there fell in love with Petra (Santa Cruz; Atanacia's only sister). Guadalupe Santa Cruz was raising her two nieces, Atanacia and Petra's parents having perished with disease and plague at an early age. Hiram loved

Petra, but Guadalupe would not allow their marriage because he was white and because he was not Catholic. Hiram learned and embraced Catholicism and was baptized into the Catholic Church at Tucson. Guadalupe then relented and wholeheartedly supported the marriage of Petra to Hiram. Guadalupe was land-rich but money-poor. She held title to some very valuable property her Santa Cruz family had received 2 generations before from Spain, in Spanish Land Grants, but she and her nieces had to do laundry, cooking and house cleaning in order to eat. Hiram knew that with Guadalupe's ties to the old residents of Tucson, that marrying Petra would also be a good thing for his career. In those days it was very difficult for the anglo males to break into the old Spanish/Mexican economy. (This is also probably one reason why Sam later married Atanacia.) Petra and Atanacia were extremely close. They were sisters; and they were very close to their Aunt Guadalupe.

When Petra married Hiram, he was young, very handsome, and very enterprising. Petra was 16 years old when she married Hiram, an appropriate age for that time and local area. Hiram and Petra had a wonderful, young life together. They were not able to have children, so Hiram completely immersed himself in his businesses and like Atanacia said, "Everything he touched turned to gold!" He and Petra moved back to his home state of Vermont for a while, but Petra was not happy. She did not speak English and missed Atanacia and Guadalupe. Also, his business success there was not good, so they returned to Tucson. Because they could not have children, Hiram was completely focused on making money and Petra loved her husband so much, that she was completely focused on making him happy.

At age 38, Hiram had made so much money, that he declared himself "financially retired". In the 1870 census only 2 other men showed greater financial worth than Hiram. He made money the old fashioned way, he worked hard for it. And, he knew how to manipulate the system. He was threatened with arrest by the Post Commander for giving whiskey to soldiers when he opened a trading post near their army base, but he got their business. He had a large ranch and sold beef to the Army and to the government for the Indians. He was successful in mining and ranching cattle and sheep in 3 different states. He made large loans at 2% per month; a very high interest rate for that time and locale. Hiram took an active and conspicuous role in Tucson and Arizona politics and in fact, the first Arizona legislature sessions were held in one of his homes.

In 1874 he was elected to his first term as Arizona Territory's delegate to Congress in Washington, D.C. Petra used to tell the story (which I have documented) that Hiram was elected because he knew the power of the professional gamblers in Arizona. He gave the men of the green cloth \$25,000 to bet on his being elected (that was a very large amount of money in those days; in comparison, a very nice house and property were worth about \$1,000). They bet the money on Hiram and then worked hard to get him elected, so it worked.

He had a large cowboy, handle bar, moustache and dressed western, picture. Petra dressed in the finest clothes and adorned herself with very expensive jewelry. They held political parties at their home in Tucson that often lasted into the wee hours of the morning. Although the Representatives from the Territories did not have the power that Representatives from the States did, in Washington, D.C., I have the records showing that Hiram became a very powerful Congressman. He worked hard and secured some major legislation and money for Arizona. He wasn't a great orator, but he knew how to work the political system, and he did so very effectively. He was re-elected in 1876. Because Tucson was the hub of Arizona politics at that time, there is no doubt

that Hiram and Petra were considered one of the most powerful and influential couples in Arizona during the prime of their lives. In 1878 Hiram lost his third bid for a seat in Congress and Hiram and Petra returned to Tucson.

In September, 1879, at age 47, Hiram had returned to Washington, D.C. He continued an illicit relationship with a young, single woman, he had known while in Congress, Miss Clara L. Knight. She became pregnant and bore a daughter, Clara Jane Knight Stevens, on 22 June 1880. Although Hiram never legally admitted to being the father of the child, both he and the mother wanted the girl to bear the Stevens name, so on all of the official documents, she is "Clara Jane Stevens". Hiram eventually returned to Tucson and continued his life with Petra; that is where his strongest financial base was. Understandably, Petra would not allow the mistress or her baby to ever come to Tucson. To his credit, Hiram never abandoned the mother or his daughter. He continued to send them financial support and he eventually obtained legal guardianship of the baby. That is why Petra could invite Guadalupe, Juanna, Victoria and other members of her extended family to come and live with them in Tucson, for extended periods of time, without Hiram disapproving. Hiram purchased property in both Washington, D.C. (a house and property for them) and in Tucson, for his mistress and daughter, and had a bank account in Tucson, in the name of his daughter, to which the mother had access (through the telegraph and mail). Petra was especially wounded over the whole event. She was aware of his unfaithfulness when they lived in Washington, D.C., but he was always discreet. Now, however, it was obvious to both her and Hiram that she was the one who was infertile. As Sam and Atanacia and her Bojorquez families had numerous children and grandchildren over the years, Petra's tender heart was stabbed very deeply. She always wanted to be a mother and to be loved and cared for by the father of her children; a relationship she saw in her extended families all around her. When her cousin, Victoria lost her life in childbirth, Petra accepted the child, Eliza Jane Ruelas, and raised her as her own. The baby gave her great comfort. Petra had helped raise Victoria and she loved Victoria and then Eliza with all her heart.

These events, and others, alienated Atanacia from Hiram. She loved her sister, and hated to see her treated this way by her husband. It finally all came to a head when Hiram went into business with 2 associates (I have their names, they were not members of our family) and opened a brothel in Tucson. Of course prostitution was illegal in the Arizona Territory, but every town and city had their red-light district. Hiram opened the brothel in a building which was on property that had originally belonged to the Santa Cruz family from a Spanish Land Grant. Atanacia immediately got some heavy pressure from the community and church leaders to get Hiram to close it down. That was the end of the line for Atanacia. She insisted that Sam (Hughes, her husband and one of Hiram's business partners in other businesses) pressure Hiram until he closed down the brothel. Hiram financially removed himself from the business and his partners moved the brothel to another piece of property, not associated with the family. Petra was devastated that her husband would be involved in such an enterprise. The original property was eventually sold. It became inhabited by a large group of indigent Chinese people and finally the building was raised.

This brings us now, to the events associated with Hiram's demise. Petra's complete description is in the history I wrote on "Guadalupe, Petra and Victoria". Basically, Hiram tried to kill Petra with one gun and then committed suicide with another gun. We will never know if Hiram used premeditated thought when he attempted to murder Petra. The records show that as Hiram moved into his 61st year of life, which

was considered quite old for that time period, he became very ill. He suffered from a gastrointestinal disorder which was very painful and which left him continually constipated. He sought out the best medical care in San Francisco and Los Angeles, but to no avail. His pain was so great and had been present for so many years, that the coroner's inquest stated that his attempt on Petra's life and his own suicide was because he "was laboring under temporary insanity." That may be true. Petra told Atanacia a few days before the event, that Hiram's behavior was so difficult, that she was afraid of him. At the time of the attempted murder, Petra said that Hiram's eyes were "as big as saucers".

However, the following facts are also in the legal record. Hiram purchased some livestock from England and France. His well on his ranch went dry. Because he was ill and of advanced age, he couldn't save the ranch and the new cattle by himself, like he had done in previous decades. He hired a large team of Mexicans to dig the well deeper, or to find a new source of water, but to no avail. As Hiram watched his cattle die, he thought he was in financial ruin. (The records show that he wasn't really in financial ruin, but he thought he was.) He felt trapped. There were so many people dipping into his wallet every month that he felt overwhelmed with his responsibilities; his daughter and mistress in Washington, D.C. and several members of Petra's extended family in Tucson, who had all become very dependent upon his generosity. Hiram felt that he just could not face them if he lost his financial prowess. He thought he was in financial ruin and was too old to start all over again. On 6 Jan 1893, Hiram went to his attorney's office to make out a new will. "So impatient in the matter was he, that he did not await the return of Mr. Heney, but at once went to Frank Hereford, who drew up the document." I have a copy of that original will. It is very short, only one paragraph long, and leaves everything, "all finances and effects of any kind and nature, which I may legally possess at my death" to "my wife, Petra Santa Cruz Stevens". He stipulates that the Executor of the will is Petra Santa Cruz Stevens. (In the old will he had left property to both Petra and Eliza). He then begins immediate legal proceedings to sell the large hotel in Tucson, which he had in his daughter's name. Two months later, on 11 March 1893 he sells The Cosmopolitan Hotel and all of its associated properties for \$2,800. (Another record says that the hotel and all properties yielded \$3,461, which was approximately half of what he expected to get from this investment, which frustrated him.) He sends \$400 to his now, 13 year old daughter in Washington, D.C. and deposits the remainder, (\$2,400) into the daughter's bank account in Tucson. I consulted with an attorney so that I would understand the situation correctly. Because the account was only in his and Clara Jane Steven's names, if both Petra and Hiram were to die at once, the state would become the Executor. It is not likely that the state would impound the money in that account, since it was specifically designated for the "education and care" of the minor, indigent girl (his daughter in Washington, D.C.) for which Hiram had guardianship. Remember, Hiram never legally claimed to be the father. When Petra lived through the assault, Sam immediately took her down, right after the surgeon removed the bullet from her skull, even before the will was read, and had his attorney freeze the funds in that account. Hiram had attempted to put the money at the disposal of his daughter; but it apparently didn't work. (I have searched the records and I don't know how much, if any, of that money his daughter and her mother finally received. According to family history, they didn't get any of it, Sam used it to help pay off Hiram's many debts.) At the inquest, it is pointed out that Hiram used a small caliber gun in his attempt to kill Petra; the bullet bounced off of her large, Spanish, hair comb, and saved her life. It appears that he consciously reserved the large caliber gun for himself, which

suggests premeditation. So, the events went quickly. January 6, Hiram makes out a new will, specifying Petra as his only heir and as the Executor. On March 11 he sells the hotel and tries to sequester the funds in the name of his daughter in Washington, D.C. On March 21, he attempts to kill Petra and takes his own life.

At Hiram's demise, Petra was in shock. Sam took charge. Because he was one of Hiram's business partners, he saw to it that all of his debts were eventually paid in full. He set up an account for Eliza and went to court and made Petra her legal guardian. They set it up so that Petra received between \$370 and \$500, twice or three times each year for the care of Eliza; a stable, steady income for Petra. Eliza started out with an estate worth \$3,165 and on her 21st birthday, two months after she married Charles J. Valasco (on 21 Jan 1903) he gave her the final \$490.07 in her account. Eliza and Petra were well taken care of by Sam. Sam personally paid for most of Hiram's debt, so that Petra, personally, had about \$5,000, including some control over Hiram's ranch, after his estate was all settled, for her own living expenses. (Having gone through all of the extant, financial records, I estimate that Sam and Atanacia donated over \$7,000 during the next decade to finally settle all of Hiram's accounts and to take care of the family members Hiram was assisting at the time of his demise; a very serious financial "hit" for Sam and Atanacia and their large family.) Sam then went the extra mile, again. The court records show that Sam helped Clara L. Knight obtain legal guardianship of her daughter, Clara Jane Knight Stevens, in Washington, D.C. He determined that they were financially reasonably well off, with her parents. (Hiram had bought them a home and property earlier in Washington, so they were comfortable. Clara's parents helped with their other financial needs.) At the time of Hiram's demise there must have been some kind of financial or family crisis with the mistress and the daughter. Sam was out of town at the time, and it took him a couple of days to get back to Tucson to take care of things. When a reporter later enquired of Sam and Atanacia why Hiram committed suicide, they told him that it was primarily "because of problems in the East". Clara Jane was then 13 years of age. It has been assumed by family, but I have no records on it, that it had to do with some new, financial needs of Clara Jane. And, Hiram simply didn't have any money and no prospects of being able to get any more money than from the sale of the hotel. Sam also settled the hotel dispute. I need to clarify this point. I can't find any records on the remaining \$2,400. I don't know if Sam used it to help pay off Hiram's debts or if he left part or all of it in the account to help solve the "problems in the East". The family is pretty emotional about it, even to this day. Grandma Black said that Sam "froze the account", suggesting that the two Claras never got any of it, but from what I saw in Sam's financial records, Sam probably tried to resolve all of the problems, even though it would cost him a lot, personally. We simply don't know; the bank records no longer exist. Sam, the realist he always was, stepped in and took care of every difficult situation; for which he will always have my love and admiration.

With all of her legal affairs in order and with a reasonable income, Petra eventually recovered from the physical and emotional trauma these events caused, and moved on with her life. She never remarried, but found comfort as the mother to Eliza and as the beloved aunt to so many nieces and nephews living near her in Tucson. Atanacia's large family lived only a short distance from her front door and the main Bojorquez home was just down the street. In her own quiet way, Petra found solitude, emotional security and a serene love, in her family.

So, children, now you see why Hiram is still, even after 5 generations, an enigma in our extended family. I personally don't care whether it was premeditated or not. Your

brother, Craig was recently reading "Jesus the Christ", by James E. Talmage, in preparation for his mission. The Apostle said that he is grateful that Christ, Himself, will be the "final Judge of the quick and the dead". I leave Hiram to Him. However, I cannot walk away from the daughter. It's not her fault that all of this happened. "Illegitimate" is a cruel word for any child to try and comprehend. I want her sealed to us, as a legitimate, eternal, member of our extended family

In a way, it's kind of ironic. The two, close sisters, Petra and Atanacia, were poor, cleaning houses and doing laundry, when they met and fell in love with Hiram and Sam. After lives of great wealth, enormous power and substantial social popularity, they concluded their lives the same way. After the demise of their husbands, both women eventually became financially dependent upon their extended family and both rented out portions of their homes to borders; again washing, cooking and cleaning. They had gone full circle. And, in the end, they both chose to be buried separate from their anglo husbands.

Well, I have to go teach a lecture on cleft palate and West Nile Virus in a half hour, so I'd better sign off. Please put this with your other genealogy papers. It's not a happy story now, but when Megs seals them to us for time and all eternity, the story will have a marvelous ending!

Love, Dad

References: (A letter written on 2 Oct, 2003, by C. J. Stratton, to his children.)
Many family records, legal papers, newspaper articles, etc. in the possession of C. J. Stratton. L.D.S. microfilm #844408 and #2171019, Will Books of Pima Co., Territory of Arizona.