

Warren's Family Folklore



As a child I experienced the making of folklore as I joined my grandparents family on many Friday evenings in the large kitchen of their welcome home on Reynoldsville hill on the Murray-Holladay Road. I observed Brad Dimock's truism: *"Memories evolve over the years, events gain and lose emphasis; hindsight carries its own distortion, and attitudes fall prey to the power of suggestion."* (1) This human anomaly was well at work as favorite tales of past feats and follies were told over and over again. Often the atmosphere became festive with laughter as new twists and unique insights were added to old story lines. It was much fun to witness our Reynolds family folklore evolve.

As time passed, frequent family reunions brought together young and old from far and near. Stories were again told and a few history minded folks labored to prepare typescripts of life sketches that they copied and distributed. These old typescripts paint a picture of the family's past. Today, a careful study of these documents in bulk bring the stark realization that the family lacked anyone with a strong desire to record a lot of detail and facts -- never-mind stating the source of their information. Thus, other than some general word pictures of key events and peculiar behaviors we have been left without the kind of detail given in many of the noted pioneer histories and diaries.

Somehow along the way, family history was sometimes recorded as though later readers would never question, do research, or compare chronologies. Today, many errors

are being repeated, and others wrongfully embellished, because "tradition dies a slow death." For the record, Warren and his family did not go to live in Detroit. He did not part ways with his brother Asa and walk miles and miles to find refuge with a Mr. Gauge. He did not daily play as a child in the "Sacred Grove." And, he was not living in Nauvoo with his wife, Edna when Joseph and Hyrum Smith were martyred. The oft repeated story that he and Edna were given a yoke of oxen and a wagon by a Mr. Gauge when he left Michigan is absent a source and does not compute with Warren's own handwritten record that has just recently been found. Also, the assertion of Warren's and Edna's supposed baptism in the Mississippi River cannot be substantiated by Church records.

Today, we know the exact location on Hickory Ridge Road in Oakland County where Betsy and her children lived with her son Asa after leaving Avon; today, we know that Mr. David Gage lived on agricultural land near Asa's property and that Edna lived with her parents nearby -- and that the Merrell family were Mormon converts since 1837; today, we know that Warren was living in his mother's household at age 17 when the census taker visited; today, we know that after Asa's first wife died, he then married Mary Poly Gage, confirming a close relationship existed between the Reynolds and Gage families; today, we know that Warren and Edna, the Hosea Merrell family, and Warren's brother William traveled to Nauvoo in February, 1846 with a large group of Michigan converts under the leadership of Elder Mephibosheth Serrine to join the Mormon exodus; and today, we know in Warren's own words from his 1853 letter to his brother, Asa. (2)

"I was left in Nauvoo with but one horse and wagon & had my wagon robbed at Farmington and I was turned out - as the huskers would say to eat root little pig or die, but I have had plenty to eat & to ware & I am out of the reach of mobbers & mobocrats & devlish men who seek to destroy the kingdom of God and take the preasthood from the earth."

There is nothing better than a first hand account to establish the truth of a matter!

1. Brad Dimock in "The Very Hard Way," Fretwater Press, Flagstaff, Arizona, 2007, page 91.
2. This letter was written to Asa Reynolds in Rose, Oakland, MI by his younger brother, Warren F. Reynolds living in South Cottonwood, Salt Lake, Utah on 24th June, 1853. Original held by Dan Mahaney and copied by Robert C. Mahaney on 30 July, 1994. Copy sent by mail to Robert N. Reynolds July 27, 2009. Transcribed into Segoe script with original spelling preserved and footnotes added by great grandson Robert N. Reynolds August 3, 2009. The letter was addressed to: Rose Postal, Oakland Co. Michigan, Asa Reynolds, Esq.

By great-grandson Robert N. Reynolds