A statement pertaining to the life in the Johnson mansion was made by Sarah Melissa Holman Johnson who was noted for far and wide for her healing ways with the sick and was much in demand as a nurse throughout Utah. She wrote: "I want to express my sentiments in relation to plural marriage. In it I find happiness, joy, peace, love and beauty.... Six wives of us, Melissa B., Mary Ann Hale, Harriett Holman, Sarah, Susan and myself have raised our families under the same roof, having separate rooms. Children of six mothers raised in the same doorway, most of them grown to young manhood and womanhood, are devotedly fond of each other as brothers and sisters, all of them intelligent and full of the spirit of the Gospel. We can have a dance, singing choir, theater or any social entertainment independent of any outside our own family!"

Mrs. Pomeroy also mentions a tribute once paid her father: A prominent government official from Washington visiting the Temple Normal when she was a student, said to her when she was introduced to him after the program in his honor, "And your father is Benjamin Franklin Johnson? Mr. Johnson is a walking encyclopaedia. Never in my life have I met one better informed. He can talk intelligently on any subject, from the soil to the stars. Young lady, you should be proud of your heritage."

GEORGE WASHINGTON

I was born in Pompref, Chautauqua Co., New York, on the 19th of Feb. 1829, son of Ezekiel Johnson and Julia Hills Johnson. They raised a family of sixteen children, nine sons and seven daughters. My mother was a devoted Presbyterian and raised her family in strict observance to the principles laid down in the Bible. She died at Council Bluffs, Iowa, a firm believer in the doctrines taught by Joseph Smith. She was loved and respected by all who knew her. During the winter of 1831 my brother, Joel, and a young man by the name of Almon W. Bushett, came from Ohio and brought with them the Book of Mormon. Other Elders soon followed, and the result was that my mother and some of her children were baptized...

A little previous to this time my oldest sister, Nancy, was thrown from a horse and broke her hip bone so near the joint that all the doctors nearby decided it could not be set, and told her she would never have the use of that limb again or be able to walk without crutches. When family and friends came to pray and perform miracles, many people said, when Nancy is healed and throws away her crutches we will believe.

In the Spring of 1833, we moved to Kirtland, Ohio where the Saints were then gathering. Here we became acquainted with the Prophet Joseph and all the authorities of the Church, and here we witnessed the falling of the stars or meteors, on the night of the 18th of November 1833. Friday, Aug. 2nd, 1833, in a revelation, the Lord commanded that a house be built to Him in the land of Zion by the blood of His people, and my father's family was called by the Prophet to make and burn the brick to build the Temple, and in digging the basement a ledge of building stone would be found. This proved true and the Temple was built of stone, and the brick was sold to buy nails, glass and other finishings. Here I, with many others, attended the Hebrew School in the Temple.

On the 9th of April, 1836, I was baptized by Samuel Bent and confirmed by Joseph Smith, Sr. For several years my sister, Nancy, who had never walked a step without her crutches, was healed by the laying on of hands and never used her crutches afterwards. After a tedious illness, we buried four of our family, one of whom, Seth, accompanied the Prophet Joseph from Missouri in what was known as Zion's Camp. Their names were Nancy, Seth, David and Susan. Here we passed through all the hardships, trials and preparations resulting in the expulsion of the Saints from Kirtland, Ohio.

In July 1838, we started for Missouri in what is known as the Kirtland Camp, consisting of all the poor still remaining at Kirtland, and all who were able and willing to help them. Our company consisted of 515, nearly all in poor circumstances, with sixty wagons. Our trip was very hard and trying one, we were often without food, and there was much sickness in the camp. At Dayton, Ohio, we stopped for awhile to work on the National Turnpike and give the sick a chance to recover. While here, my mother and my brother, Joel Hills Johnson, and other kindred who lived in that city came to our aid. During our stay here threats were made that we should not pass through Mansfield alive, but when we were ready we started in close procession, the women driving teams and the men walking along side. On nearing the town, we were met by two horsemen who rode down on each side of our columns, seeming to be counting our wagons, and forces as they passed along. After satisfying themselves they returned to the town where a large crowd had collected, firing cannons and beating drums and seemed to be much excited, but we passed through and were not molested. We afterward learned that the horsemen had given the crowd assembled a very exaggerated account of our numbers and armament. In Springfield, Illinois, a council was held and it was decided to leave the sick here for the present. My brothers, Joel, Joseph, and the rest of the family, except Benjamin, were detained to remain with them to take care of the sick.

In the Spring of 1839, we again started westward to gather with the Saints, but when we arrived within twenty miles of Commerce, later Nauvoo, it was thought best to remain there.
saw the fire when I did not look larger than a man’s hand at that time of night, he must have been watching for it and all of these facts do away with the Agnew story that he went from Appanoose on horseback and with a false key went to the door and set the fire. There are some living now who can corroborate these statements.

I again started westward to follow my kindred and friends. On arriving at Kanawha, Iowa, I found some of them there and concluded to stop there until another season, and by urgent request of many of my friends I commenced to practice medicine. This proved to be the great cholera year and consequently a season of great distress and suffering, and my calls were so numerous that for months I could get but little time to take off my clothes to sleep. This was also the great year of Emigration to the mines in California. On the 13th of June, 1851, I started with my family and many others on that unexplored route, and the hardships and sufferings endured were more than can be described on paper. We traveled many days over a sandy desert almost without food or water for man or beast. But after a journey of week’s duration, we arrived at the Platte River. In crossing the bottom for several miles, we passed through a herd of buffalo, which extended as far as the eye could reach each way, and as we traveled they parted to let us pass.

About ten miles before we reached the Platte River my son, Miles Edgar, was born on the 31st of July, 1851. On that night we had the hardest storm I ever remember in my life. The lightning and rain. The sun shone bright in the morning and we continued our journey under more favorable circumstances the rest of the way. We reached Salt Lake City about the 31st of Oct. We remained in Salt Lake City several days visiting where I married Eveline Burdick, and then moved to Summit Creek, Utah Co., where my brother, Benjamin, was about to establish a colony. . . . I had built several houses here which were torn down and moved into the fort. I was postmaster until the fall of 1853 when I was called to assist in the building up of Iron County and learn the Piegan language, where I went in the fall of 1853.

Here I, and my nephew, Nephi Johnson, compiled and published the Piegan Dialect, and in the winter of 1855, I went to Salt Lake City and got it printed. On returning we were snowbound in the mountains and suffered much with cold and hunger, being four days without food. I remained in Iron County two years, most of the time among the Indians and exploring the mountains. I was then called back to Summit Creek in 1855 to assist in rebuilding the place. This proved to be the great grasshopper year, or year of famine, and as I raised nothing during the summer I concluded to return to Iron County in 1856 to spend the winter. In the spring 1857 I returned to Summit Creek.
now Santagaun, taking with me flour enough to last my family and some others through the summer. During the summer of 1857 I was appointed counselor to Bishop James S. Holmes and ordained a High Priest under the hands of Bishop Blackburn of Povo. I was also appointed clerk of the branch and postmaster, which positions I held until the fall of 1859 when I was called to make a settlement at the Uinta Springs in Sanpete County. In the summer of 1859, I got the land surveyed and laid out the town of Fountain Green and prepared to build up the place, and built the first cabin. In the fall settlers began to come in and I was appointed Bishop and also Post Master. Everything went on well for a while, but domestic difficulties arose, and part of my family left in 1860, then I returned to Santagaun where I remained until 1863 when I moved to Spring Lake where my brother Joseph had settled. I again fitted up a home for what remained of my family. In the spring of 1864, I started for the Eastern Country to bring back an ox train of goods, taking my oldest son, Amos, with me, also Moroni Degraw. At Council Bluffs I met with a few of my old friends and acquaintances of thirteen years ago. We remained here about one month, fitting up to return. I bought, and loaded three ox teams, three yoke of oxen to the team, with merchandise for Utah, and about the middle of July we started on our return trip.

The first part of our journey was through storms and snows, we arrived in Salt Lake City about the last of November, having lost most of our stock and leaving part of our load on the trail and suffering everything but death. When we arrived home I was completely worn out and sick. I was confined to my bed most of the next winter, but recovered my usual health in the spring. The next summer I sold most of my property at Spring Lake with intention of going south in the fall when the company would start. I sent my stock ahead by my brother, and I went to Spanish Fork to fit up for the trip and remained there through the summer. In the fall of 1865, I fitted up teams preparatory to starting and returned to Spring Lake to finish my outfit and wait for company. While here an accident happened to my family which hindered me till in the winter.

Some of my family had emptied a bucket of hot ashes in the yard. While playing around, my five-year-old daughter fell in and was badly burned, and it was not safe to take her out in the cold, so I concluded to wait till spring and go over to Fountain Green to spend the balance of the winter. The winter of 1866 and 1867 was so severe that much stock died of starvation and among them I lost five head of horses from my team, and all my harnessed stock but one cow. In the spring of 1867 I found myself in very poor health and finally decided to go over to Willow Creek in Juab county, and try to get a team and go south as soon as I could. I hired a man to haul me over and I got a city lot and commenced building, thinking of selling out for a team, but no such chance came. I built a house, set out an orchard, and made what improvements I could. The town had just been surveyed and called Mona, and my improvements were the first on the plot. During the summer of 1867 I was appointed postmaster at Mona, and I soon built an office and started the seed business and furnished garden seeds to all the southern settlements selling on commission.

In the summer of 1870, it was thought best to have a reunion of the Johnson family and an invitation was circulated throughout the territory for all to meet at St. George that fall and spend the winter there. About the 1st of October I fitted up two teams and wagons and started, taking with me my wife and family. During the winter of 1870-71 we went to Kanab, and a little stream twelve miles above which we called Jacob Brook. Here we made arrangements for colonizing the Johnson family, but we did not succeed. On returning to St. George I found that two of my horses got drowned in a large spring. It was now about time for our returning to our northern homes, so I fitted up one team and we were soon on our way. Soon the Nebo Mine excitement broke out, and I commenced keeping boarders and later making trunks, which occupation I followed until 1883 when a difficulty broke out in my family which terminated in all leaving me for New Mexico, except my youngest boy. We remained at Mona to settle up business until the 1st of January 1884 when we took the cars for Castle Valley. Here at Huntington, with the help I was called to go South to assist in opening up new sections of the country and make new settlements. I sold my property at Spring Lake with intention of going south in the fall when the company would start. I sent my stock ahead by my brother, and I went to Spanish Fork to fit up for the trip and remained there through the summer. In the fall of 1865, I fitted up teams preparatory to starting and returned to Spring Lake to finish my outfit and wait for company. While here an accident happened to my family which hindered me till in the winter.
tracing out the Dutton and Degraw families, all traces of which had been lost for over fifty years. We remained here nearly two weeks when we parted company, and then went to Fountain Green and spent two or three days very pleasantly with my children. We arrived home on the 32nd of July. I spent my time then. We arrived home on the 32nd of July. I spent my time there. We arrived home on the 32nd of July. I spent my time there.

En route, the two families experienced a terrifying experience, when in passing robbers with a supposedly empty gun, William's son, Elmer, shot Almera's daughter, Della, in the back of the head. Although the child screamed wildly and blood flowed profusely, it was discovered to their relief the bullet had lacked sufficient powder to do any real damage. Only the skin had been grazed. On reaching Salt Lake City, William purchased a house and lot consisting of one and one-fourth acres from Elder Israel Ivins, on the location near the Union Pacific depot.

The following year, 1862, he was called with others to trace the long trail to the states in the Capt. Miller Company, to aid in bringing in more emigrant Saints. Returning home he was met at Fort Bridger by his son, W. D. Jr., and his brother, George W., who were transporting a load of fruits and vegetables. In April, 1862, accompanied by his son, W. D. Jr., he made a second trip to the states, this time in the John Murdock train. The trip was made in 53 days, one of the quickest times on record in an oxteam train. They renewed acquaintance with friends in Council Bluffs and Florence, and after an absence of four months, returned in September with the Capt. Alvirdine Company to again take up life in Utah.

On October 16, 1863, Jane and William suffered their first severe loss when their little daughter, Mary, succumbed to whooping cough. In the early spring of 1866, the Black Hat War became violent, and a call went out for more volunteer troops. William enlisted, but his son, W. D. J.r., 16, and large for his age, volunteered to go in his stead and after considerable persuasion, gained consent, leaving for Moroni, Sanpete County, Utah, June 5th, serving three months. A mission was next required of William, the call coming at the October Conference of 1869.

William operated stores throughout the greater part of his life. He made trunks, household furniture and harnesses which he sold along with medicine and drugs, mostly manufactured by himself. Jewelry and bakery goods were also handled in the store, and a small dairy was run in conjunction with it, two of William
and Jane’s daughters having the responsibility of milking and making the cheese. Pies and cakes came from Jane’s kitchen.

In the autumn of 1870, the Johnsons disposed of the Salt Lake property and moved to Southern Utah as President Brigham Young had called them to settle in Hays Canyon east of Kanab, Utah. The name was changed to Johnson. Here they lived until they were called to help colonize Díaz, Chihuahua, Mexico, where William built a large home. His yards and surroundings were landscaped beautifully, as he was an ardent lover of beauty; a charming park, lush greenery, fish ponds and flowers of all kinds had a part in his yard. William was ever solicitous for Jane’s comfort and welfare, providing her with numerous conveniences. In Mexico, native labor was employed and the work was merely overseen. Rather than to disturb his wife, William acceded to her wishes to refrain from sewing and did much exquisite needlework, especially in quilts. She was neat and took pride in her appearance, usually appearing gowned in becoming black taffeta with bonnet to match. William was a triflfe stout and of medium height—a mild and fine looking man, and being naturally retiring, avoided the limelight as much as possible, as also did Jane. Speaking from the stand was not in their line, yet wherever they lived, they effected an influence for good. In giving and sharing, they played more than a full part.

On one occasion in William’s travels, loaded with merchandise, he met with a rather unusual experience. A pedestrian, somewhat under medium height, with black hair and beard, was given a ride, and to William’s astonishment seemed fully acquainted with his camping plans for the night, cautioning him against them, as the Indians would give trouble there that night. As the stranger alighted, William turned to inquire of him more specifically, but found he had literally disappeared. The warning was heeded, however, much to William’s advantage, for emigrants camping at that spot that night were massacred by the Indians.

William was ordained a High Priest in Díaz, Mexico, March 27, 1894, and on December 22, 1895, under the hands of Francis M. Lyman, was ordained a Patriarch of the Church. He and Jane were the parents of twelve children: William Derby, Jr., Elmer Wood, Jennie Ann, Julia Abby, Esther Alma, Mary Maria, Abia Ezekiel, Byron Elwood, Joseph Hills, Carlos Smith, Hannah Zerina and Lodemia Viola. Three of their children, Mary Maria, Carlos Smith and Lodemia Viola died in infancy. The remaining nine married and raised families.

TRUE TO THE FAITH

William Derby Johnson, Sr.’s death took place April 13, 1890 at 72 years of age at his home in Colonia Díaz, Mexico, my brother, William Derby Sr., also had died. He too, had received ordination of Patriarch, and being some six years younger than myself, I had hoped he would, after me, be in charge of our family records, and the Temple work for our dead; his father, William, was the numerous kindred. Since 1836 he has been a member of the Church, and has passed through all its evaluations, and proved himself a friend to God and his brethren. The year 1891 we spent together at Díaz as associates in exile for our families’ sake, in which place he died, in great sacrifice, made himself a beautiful home which he was not permitted long to enjoy. Only my brother, George W., born in 1823, and myself, now remain of the sixteen children of our parents.

THEIR SISTERS

Esther Meleta Johnson LeBaron was married to David Tolley LeBaron in Hancock County, Illinois in 1844. Together, they experienced the anti-Mormon violence and expulsion in 1846. With their young children, they crossed the plains in 1852, settling at Summit Creek, Utah County. They moved to Salt Lake City, 15th Ward, and later homesteaded land on the south side of Utah Lake in Utah County. Their large family became pioneers in their own rights, helping in the development of many a number of Utah and Arizona communities. From My Life’s Review we quote: The following January my sister, Esther M. LeBaron, came from the city to spend with us her birthday anniversary, the 12th of January, 1874, which was also the centennial anniversary of our father’s birth, his marriage, and his death; as also the birthday of my son, Joseph Ezekiel, who bore his name. We spent an enjoyable and happy period together, but the clasp of hand, the embrace and the adieu of this dearest sister on leaving, was to us the last from her on earth. She sickened on her return home, lingered in weakness until March 7th, and while reclining in the arms of her son fell quietly asleep in death, as though by the thump of respose. To her family, kindred and friends it was a great bereavement; but to me she seemed almost my only real companion, the only one to comprehend my ardent nature and to give me sympathy.

Almera Woodard Johnson Barton, of Westford, Vt., who became a plural wife of the Prophet Joseph Smith in Nauvoo, Ill.,
the 1st of Aug. 1843, was highly regarded by all Mormons for her appearance, character and capability; yet before a year had elapsed from the date of her marriage, Almira had become a sorrowing widow and without issue for her martyrdom of the Prophet occurred the following June 27, 1844. Born in Vermont, Almira with her parents and other members of the family, had lived in Pomeroy, Chautauqua Co., New York. She was long resided in Pomeroy, Chautauqua Co., New York. She was the youngest child and fourth daughter of Julia Hills and Ezekiel Johnson, and was born in October of 1812. Her marriage to the Prophet transpired near her 31st birthday.

On November 16, 1845, at Nauvoo, approximately one and one-half years after the Prophet's death, she was persuaded to lay aside her widow's weeds and become the wife of James Reuben Barton. Barton's letters, written to Almira, with their excellent penmanship, word dexterity and flawless spelling, indicate the writer to be an individual of considerable skill and attainment. Five children, all daughters, were born to Almira and J. Reuben, yet upon Almira's passing she was devoid of posterity. One by one, her children had been called back to the spirit world, unmarried and childless, leaving her grief-stricken and hope shattered. J. Reuben Barton's belief in God and faith were apparent of but a superficial nature, for he eventually became an apostate, causing a rift that slowly widened, until a separation between himself and Almira became inevitable.

Almira was not only a homemaker of ability and an individual of taste and attraction, but like all her parent's children, her fingers dripped service. To her nieces and nephews she was affectionately "Aunt Mera," and showing her high regard for her, her brother, Lyman Royal Sherman for eternity, and was married to Almira W. Babbitt for time. (Only mention of this last marriage.) In company with her mother, Julia Hills Johnson, and other relatives and friends, Delina left Nauvoo with her family, arriving in Council Bluffs, July 11, 1849. Here three of her children died: Mary E., age 20, Elvira, age 19, and Seth, age 15, all in the year of 1850. Her mother, Julia Hills Johnson, passed away on May 30, 1853.

In company with her son, Alby Lyman Sherman, and her daughter, Susan Julia Sherman, who later married James H. Martineau, she came to Salt Lake Valley in 1854. While crossing the plains the plains her son, Alby Lyman, married Mary Elvira Swan at the North Platte river. It had been reported that there had been a birth and a death on the trip, and it was suggested that they had a marriage, so they were married June 10, 1854. Delina died October 21, 1854 at the age of 48 years at Salt Lake City and is buried in the City Cemetery.

-Delina Diadunia, the fourth child of Ezekiel and Julia Hills Johnson, was born November 10, 1806. In 1814 the family moved to western New York where Delina met and married Lyman Royal Sherman, January 16, 1829. She and her husband accepted the message presented by the Mormon Elders. Lyman R. Sherman assisted with the laying of the cornerstone for the Kirtland Temple, and made the famous trip as a member of Zion's Camp from Ohio to Missouri in May, 1834. After his return to Kirtland, he was ordained a seventy February 28, 1835, by Joseph the Prophet and others, then became one of the first seven presidents of Seventy of the Church. He visited the Prophet Joseph Smith and other brothers at Richmond, Missouri, where they were in jail in the winter of 1838-39. At this time he was called to the apostleship, but took cold on this mission and died before receiving his ordination to the Quorum. Delina died January 27, 1839 at Far West, Missouri, leaving Delina with six small children.

About the last of March, 1839, due to the persecution, Delina left Far West to cross the river with the Saints to find a home elsewhere. Assisted by her brother Benjamin F., and her brother-in-law, Almon W. Babbitt, they crossed the river at Quincy, Illinois, where the citizens were showing great kindness to the persecuted Saints. Here Delina decided to remain with her children until it should be shown where the next gathering place of the Saints would be.

She moved to Nauvoo where she did baptisms for the dead for many of her people in the Nauvoo Temple. On the 24th of January 1846, she was sealed in the Nauvoo Temple to her husband, Lyman Royal Sherman for eternity, and was married to Almon W. Babbitt for time. (Only mention of this last marriage.) In company with her mother, Julia Hills Johnson, and other relatives and friends, Delina left Nauvoo with her family, arriving in Council Bluffs, July 11, 1849. Here three of her children died: Mary E., age 20, Elvira, age 19, and Seth, age 15, all in the year of 1850. Her mother, Julia Hills Johnson, passed away on May 30, 1853.

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-Mary Jones Brown.