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Family histories from the DUP (Daughters of the Utah Pioneers)

History of George Franklin Burnham

Born October 26th, 1839

In Montelona, Illinois,

Arrival in Utah, 1848 (came with Daniel Wood)

Written by Sarah Burnham Dustin

To-Toah Camp, Farmington, New Mexico

County of San Juan

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STORY OF GEORGE FRANKLIN BURNHAM

Red in the TOTAH Camp of THE DAUGHTERS OF
THE UTAH PIONEERS,

in Farmington, New Mexico by his daughter, Sarah
B. Dustin

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STORY OF GEORGE FRANKLIN BURNHAM

by

Sarah B. Dustin

The Burnham's are of the best Puritan stock, coming to America in 1620. They were land proprietors in England and there the sur-name of Bumham originated, but they gave up everything and migrated to America for the same reason that two-

hundred years later their decendants moved out into the trackless desert of the west.

George Franklin Bumham, son of James Lewis Bumham and Mary Ann Huntly, was bom October 26th, 1839,in Montelona Illinoise. He was living with his parents in Nauvoo at the time the Prophet Joseph Smith was shot

and killed by a mob. His father, James Lewis Burnham, died in Nauvoo just one year after the Prophet's death, October 8th, 1845, of a lung infection he had contracted while filling a mission. George's mother and her four small children, three boys and one girl, were left utterly alone in this city of persecution and sorrow. Thye were left homeless and without means of support. Mary Ann's relatives in the East offered to send her means to return to them if she would renounce her unpopular religion, but she was faithful to her belief and would not tum back. Full of courage and faith, she gathered her children about her and faced bravely the condition of poverty that was hers. The saints in Nauvoo were kind to the widow but theirs was a like path of suffering and sorrow at that time.

Mary Ann Burnham, was very desirous of gathering with her people to Utah in search of peace and freedom to worship God according to her belief, but she was without means of transportation. Always resorceful and courageous she made arrangements for her two younger sons, Wallace and George, age eight and ten years, to accompany a man by the name of Wood to Salt Lake City thinking she would follow soon. The two small boys were to drive loose stock to pay for their

board while traveling. George and Wallace walked all the way

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across the great desert and plains. When crossing the streams of water they would grab hold of the animal's tail and hold on for dear life until they reached the opposite bank. Then they walked in their wet clothing until they dried on their backs. At night, though hungry and footsore, they must gather brush and buffalo chips to cook their supper. Mr Wood was kind to the boys but all pioneers must meet the hardships of that long trackless trip into an unknown country.

When the company reached Salt Lake City, Utah they had no mother to greet them and no home and lived as best they could. In 1852, their mother and her little girl reached the Salt Lake Valley and was united with her sons after a separation of five long years.

The mother and her family settled in Bountiful, Utah Cache Valley, here George grew to manhood, and made several trips east to help bring the poor and suffering

saints to Utah. He made the trips by ox teams and though the travel was slow and hard yet in comparison with his first trip as a boy it was comfort indeed, and the thanksgiving of his loyal heart was voiced in song cheering his companion travelers. He had a fine baritone voice and he always claimed he injured it on these long trips, as the voice was the only means of guiding the ox teams.

His first wife was Sarah Smith, a daughter of Amanda Smith, who's courage and faith at Hauns Mill, at the time of the massacre when her husband was killed and her young son badly injured, has come down the years in history. And on June 26th, 1871, he married a second wife, Betsey Barnett, of Richmond.

In 1884, George Burnham was called to take his

families and help settle New Mexico, He located in what is now known as Fruitland, San Juan County, where his brother, Luther C. Burnham was presiding as Bishop of the small Burnham ward. George was called to organize a choir, All the singing practices were held in his home and as there were no musical instruments in the place he used his tuning fork for pitching the songs and taught the music by the Do-So-Fa-Me- method. The tuning fork is in the possession of his son Roy, of Farmington, New Mexico at the present time. Strange as it may seem, knowing the frontier life

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that George lived he had acquired a good education in music and along with his fine voice he read music like a book. He was noted for his vocal singing and played in the band in Cache Valley, Most programs were not complete without either a solo by George or a duet with his wife Betsey, who had also inherited musical ability from her father. July 4th celebrations were made richer by "THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER," rendered as a solo by George Burnham.

The pioneering in Fruitland, New Mexico was hard and dangerous as the Navajo Indians greatly outnumbered the white settlers, but he accepted these new hardships as he had met such hardships since early boyhood. He was calm and honest in his dealing with the Indians. They came daily to his home to accept the hospitality of himself and wife Betsey, often at night they slept in his

home wrapped in their robes with their feet to the fire in the great fire-place.

George Franklin Burnham was a natural son of the soil, he took great joy in wresting a living for his families from mother earth. It was as if the very fertility of the soil took root in his soul. He loved to bring under control both land and water. So after years of pioneering in Fruitland when farming became moderately easy, he moved to Jackson, a new farming district on the La Plata river. In New

Mexico In 1893, he was called to be the Presiding Elder of the small Branch of the church. Here again this new country gave challenge to his strong powerful body. There was much to be done in building ditches, clearing land of the brush, building fences, and in establishing himself and his family in a new home.

The Branch grew and prospered and a school was made possible for the children of the farmers located along the river. But it soon became evident that there must be some way to hold the flood water of the spring in storage for use later in the summer when it became scarce. The farmers banded together to build a reservoir for this purpose. But it proved to be a hard and difficult task. George Bumham and his sons Ben and Roy labored diligently, sometimes going short of feed for themselves and their horses. During the next few years men became discouraged and drifted away to find greener pastures. But George F. was

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not a quitter. He had great faith in the future of this farming district, and was living there at the time of his accidental death near Mancos, Colorado, September 15th 1901. He was hauling timber with wagon and team trying to get means to tide his families over until his farm was brought under control, and fell from the wagon. Just what caused the accident no one knew as he was alone at the time.

His death was a great shock to his family as he was just 62 years old and hale and hearty. He was buried in Mancos, Colorado by the side of his son, Ben, who had met death in July of the same year from a gunshot wound during a strike by Union workers in the Telluride mines. Ben was not a member of the Union and was

shot from ambush one morning as he left his cabin. He died the next day in a hospital in Telluride Colorado. The death of this son was by far the greatest sorrow George F. Bumham had ever known.

George F. Bumham was one of the strong and fearless souls that made up the early pioneers. Because of his quiet, unassuming character many of his good works

died with him, unsung and unappreciated by most people. He was not given to speech never spoke unless he had something to contribute to a conversation, indeed we may say that he followed the admonition of holy scripture, "Let your communications, be yea, nay, for whosoever say more than these cometh of evil." He was loyal to the church all the days of his life and filled every office he was placed in, to the best of his ability. He never spoke evil of a living soul, if he could not contribute something good of each person he did not speak. When he was thrown upon the mercies of the world as a child he learned to live within himself, and his continued pioneering left a mark of silence on his life.

He left a numerous posterity. He was the father of eighteen children, and now has many grandchildren and great grandchildren who know very little about their

grandfather, George Franklin Burnham . This sketch was written that through this short story they might come to appreciate his strength of character and goodness. His contribution to pioneering the West was great, his life was hard and comfortless, as we count comforts of today. He justly earned his living by the sweat of his brow, and strength of his body which he kept pure and clean.