

History of William Archibald Murray
son of Jesse Archibald and Robert Wood Murray

1853 – 1926

William Archibald Murray was the son of Robert William Murray and Jessie Archibald and the grandson of David Murray and Elizabeth Wood.



Robert William and Jessie were married about 1841 in Bonnyrig Scotland. The Murrays were miners by trade. It was in Bonnyrig that the missionaries found and converted them. They and their two small sons were baptized members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 14 July 1884. They began immediately to make plans to immigrate to America and join the saints there.

David Hamilton Kerr and his wife Agnes Archibald Kerr, a sister to Jessie, had also joined the Church and planned to accompany them. Before they were ready to leave they became enthused over all the reports of land and opportunities in New Zealand so they bought passage there instead of to America but before sailing date their ship was declared unseaworthy so they were allowed to change their passports to America on a sailing vessel. After eleven weeks on the sea they landed in New Orleans 1 Jan 1852.

From New Orleans they sailed up the Mississippi River to St. Louis. It was while here that William was born 28 May 1853.

While in St. Louis they worked in the coalmines. They later moved to Pennsylvania and worked in the coalmines there. The wages were better and they were able to save some money, but they seemed to forget why they have come to America. Agnes and Jessie's brother from Scotland came to visit them. He was most unhappy over their indifference and persuaded them to use their money to go to Utah instead of buying a farm in Penn. as they were planning to do.

Arriving back in St Louis they traveled by steamboat to Florence Nebraska. They left there 20 June 1861 in the Job Pingree Co. and arrived in Salt Lake City, 10 September 1861.

It had been a long and tedious Journey for William who at the age of eight years had walked the greater part of the way as had most of the women and children. His mother gave birth to a son, Thomas while traveling in Nebraska. After a few days she was walking again along the side of the wagon. Upon arriving in Salt Lake they learned that some relative of theirs, James Archibald and John Hendry, were located in Wellsville, Utah so decided to visit them.

They arrived in Wellsville 15 September 1861. For four years they lived in the fort built to protect them from the Indians. They were given houses side by side with a strip of land twenty-four feet wide for growing vegetables.

William was baptized 3 October 1861. In 1870 the town of Wellsville was laid out with wide streets and ten-acre blocks. They had won the confidence of the Indians and people were allowed to build homes outside of the fort. William took an active part in helping to build homes, a meeting house and school house. He found little time for schooling himself. When he did go during the winter months he was large for his age and grade and was often called upon by the teacher, who was a cripple, to help him discipline the older boys.

At the age of 17 he began driving a freight outfit from the railroad station in Corrine to the mining towns in Montana. The wagons they used were large ones with big wheels. They often hitched two wagons together and used as many as six teams of horses or mules to pull them. Guide lines came from the lead teams thru the harness of the following ones back to the driver. For one man to manage and drive that many horses and wagons took real ability and training especially over so much untamed country and rough roads. It was necessary to always carry a gun and ammunition in case some Indians needed to be scared away and to obtain meat for the trip.

At the age of twenty-one he married Sarah Jane Parker 16 March 1874. They were married in The Endowment House in Salt Lake City by Daniel H. Wells. Sarah's mother was in poor health so they moved in with her parents. Sarah stayed with them while he freighted, until after their second child, Sarah, was born. They then moved to their own home located at 94 South on second West which was later given to Sarah as part of her estate from her parents and on which they built a new home in 1914 where they spent the last years of their lives and where Amanda lived until her health failed and she could no longer live alone.

William freighted until the Indians stole all his horse and mules from their over night camp in Montana. Dejected and discouraged he returned home to tell Sarah that they were ruined. As she comforted him I wonder if secretly she was not relieved that those days of dangerous separation were over.

When David was born Amanda Bailey came to work in the home. She was a beautiful girl and efficient housekeeper. These were the days of polygamy. William courted her and Sarah gave her consent for him to take her to be his second wife, though she said it was her greatest cross to share her husband with another woman. They were married in the Logan Temple 2 February 1887 at Logan, Utah.

By this time polygamy was becoming most unpopular with the law so it was necessary for Amanda to live on the underground as it was known then or in hiding until after the manifesto in 1890. Many people took these plural wives in and cared for them like a daughter to protect them and their husbands from being arrested and sent to jail. Amanda spent time with the A. M. Wilson's in Hyrum and with the Goodliff's in Snowville Utah. She had two children during this time. Later Sarah was moved into town and Amada lived on the farm, but they all worked together for whatever was needed for it was a big farm and by now a big family.

On 17 July 1892 Amanda's baby died. The rest of the children grew in good health to maturity.

In 1905 William was called on a mission to England. While he was gone David took over the management of the farm. At the end of the two years he returned to find everything being managed efficiently and the farm producing more than it had ever done. This success was not due to one alone, the whole family had worked hard together and were all glad to have the mission ended. The next fall David left the farm to continue his education at the Brigham Young College at Logan. He returned home in the summer helping his father on the farm.

Work on the farm was mostly done by members of the family with one hired man and at harvest time more as needed. Each one learned how to work and take responsibility which also proved its value in their successes as they assumed responsible positions in the world's work.

On his farm he was a breeder of good cattle and horses. He could not tolerate scrub animals. He did a great deal of buying and selling and was shrews in his transactions. From the time he freighted in Montana, horses were his pride and joy. He was never happier that when driving a spirited horse or team on a nice buggy.

Shortly after William returned from his mission he bought the home of Joseph Howell, the local merchant, who had been elected to the House of Representatives in Washington D.C. This was the nicest home in Wellsville, it had thirteen rooms all nicely furnished and was perfect for the size of the Murray family at that time. In later years it was sold and the new home was built on the lot Sarah had inherited from her father. This had seven rooms, two porches and a basement.

Holiday dinners were always an occasion. They were held in town with everyone present, married and single. Even the sweethearts were invited, which may have been his opportunity to look them over, and such food: Typical would be a twenty pound turkey, baked salmon, six chickens and dressing, fried corn, mashed potatoes and gravy, fruit salad, cranberries, pickles and celery. For dessert there would be pumpkin and mince pie and plum pudding. All so delicious for they were all good cooks.

It was also after the mission was over that William became interested in Community affairs. He was on the Hyrum Stake Old Folks Committee eleven years, and helped to inaugurate an annual trip to Lagoon or Salt Air. A special train was chartered. Those who were special guests went free, but any one who paid the price could go to fill up the train. The train was always full and it was always a gay occasion. He served on the Cache County board of Education for fourteen years, and on the Board of Directors for the Cache Valley Bank and was elected to be Cache County Commissioner from the south district of the county. This office he held from 1919—1923. As part of his duty he was a member of the Cache county Library Board where he served as chairman.

On 8 January 1908 William's sister Christina passed away leaving two small children, Christina, then seven years of age came to live in the Murray home and was raised like one of the family.

As we remember him he was six feet two inches tall and walked erect until death. He weight around two hundred pounds. His hair was gray, thinning on top. He always wore a full mustache and was always well dressed. He was proud of his family and possessions and insisted that every one be well dressed and on time for their appointments. He was an excellent shopper, always paid cash for his purchases and usually got them at his own price. If any member of his family was going to buy furniture or any important item they took him along and he usually saved them money.

He believed that the father being the head of the family, should make the decisions and that they were not to be questioned nor should his authority end when his children were married. Also he was pleased and complimented when they sought his advice on business transactions.

William enjoyed sports. Baseball and horse racing and later basketball were the main events of the time. He often traveled as far as Salt Lake City to see a good game or race and was always delighted if his favorite won.

He loved to tease or play practical jokes. Every spring he would gather and boil up what he called spring tonic. It was a combination of wild grape, aspen bark, chokecherry bark and if he wanted it to taste especially awful a little sage was added. Every one had to take a tablespoonful before breakfast. His children never could decide whether it was a joke or if as he said, he really believed it had value. Zella tells of his buying Limburger cheese and giving it to her along with some other parcels to take home. In those days the odor was not encased in foil. Several times she changed seats trying to get away from it when she noticed her father and some of his friends standing in the end of the car laughing.

Family prayer was a tradition before breakfast. Everyone must be in their places whether or not the bacon and eggs were getting cold. Older members were taught to take their turns. His prayers were given in humility and with an excellent choice of words. The one I shall always remember was the morning after Robert passed away. He besought the Lord for help for the family and for Robert's young wife and child. His prayers at meetings and funerals and his administrations in cases of illness were sought after.

William and seven of his sons had filled missions. Some had gone on to school and some had served in World War I. Most of them were married and away on their own and he was no longer a young man with unlimited energy for farm work. In 1919 the farm was leased to four of the younger boys. In 1923 William formed a corporation with David as President and Parley as bookkeeper. They with Heber and Luther each assumed responsibility of certain shares of the land to try and keep it out of the hands of the receivers. Later Parley took over David's share and with Heber's illness and death his son Dean bought his. This way it was kept in the Murray name, which seemed to mean so much to William.

Although in his seventies he enjoyed good health until the last few years of his life. He was in bed only six weeks caused by a light stroke and heart condition. He died 26 November 1926. One year after his wife Sarah and was buried the day before Thanksgiving.

It would seem that his is the story of the rise and fall of an empire but that is not so. Twenty three children had been provided with love and a good home. Their needs had been cared for. They were among the best dressed and most respected of the community. From there where they had learned industry and value they have gone out into the world and their strength and influence had been and is being felt and this thing will go on and on. Those acres have served their purpose. If any individual has erred it is an individual thing but the overall picture is a good one and has cost much on the part of each one to make it so good and so rewarding.

William's life has been rugged, colorful, sometimes domineering and some times sad. Who is to say which way the scales will tip on all counts when the Master of Justice weighs them. It is for we who follow to profit from his life and try to do better if we can.

This sketch was written by a daughter-in-law. It may be copied by any of the Family who are interested but may not be changed in any way.

---Mabel S. Murray

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