

Impressions and Memories of my Father
James Hyrum Baird
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It was my misfortune to have but eight short years of my life influenced by my father's wonderful character and personality. And as these were of course my youngest years there were but few incidents, which remain with me and these, consequently, were of a childish nature.

My earliest recollections of him were days added up on days of sitting in the big arm chair directing the affairs of his family, and the care of the farm and stock from his seat of invalidism. His great swollen hands were often busy waving a twig of 2 poplar trees to frighten flies from his face and body. It was often my duty to procure this twig leaving just a leaf or two at the top.

I can see him walking about on his crutches slowly going about the two houses or the big farmyard--an impressive figure with his great frame and white beard.

Often the grown boys would lift him carefully in the black buggy and he would ride about the farm or around the community visiting and carrying on the business. On these trips one of us younger children always accompanied him to run his errands, or to get the whip or rein if it should drop. At one time I went with him to Layton and was told to go in the bank and say that Mr. Baird was outside and would like to speak to Mr. _____. To my five years of experience this was an awesome place. Every one was so busy and seemed so important that I felt it to be an act of boldness to ask them to do what other people did not do--to go outside to carry on their business. I started back when I thought of facing father with disobedience, which he seldom dared to do in our family. So I gathered more courage, stepped to one of the windows and delivered the message. To my surprise the man seemed glad to come out. He greeted father as if he were the president of the bank, or some great titled man. Men always showed great admiration and respect for him.

Even in his crippled years he was often to be seen in church seated in a big armchair between the rows of benches and the rostrum. And if people did not get to greet him before church started they always did afterwards. For even though he had reason to be sour and pessimistic people seemed to draw cheer and strength from him.

Some of my fondest memories of my father are of story telling time; that time between supper and bed-time when he held me on his lap in front of the flickering fire with the dim coal-oil lamp burning on one corner of the room and he told stories--all true stories, of the jokes and pranks he had played on others, of his early life and hardships crossing the plains. Of all the anecdotes he told I am sorry I was too small to remember any more than two "pictures" of him. One is of a small barefoot boy taking part in front of the Sunday school again after not having any clothes to wear. Being barefoot or hatless was nothing, the new overalls was enough

to make him rejoice. The other is that of a party of men crossing the plains in those early days, searching for water as they went. Their tongues were swollen and some were faint. At last they found a little puddle of stagnant water so full of bugs and living matter it was almost thick. There were "black bugs and red bugs, big bugs and little bugs." Some of the men said they would die before they would drink that but father knew he could not finish the journey without moisture in his body so he lay down, shut his eyes and strained the water through his teeth as he drank.

At one time when I was five or six years old he gave me a "little sermon" that characterized his life and character. I had spent the day with Abner herding sheep down in the lower salt grass pasture. It was just at the time the song "Red Wing" was popular and on everybody's lips. There were myriads of red-winged grasshoppers in the pasture. I had to show the other young ones how many "Red Wings" I had. I ran jubilantly to show papa first of all. "See papa, I can sing "Red Wings" now and really have some Red Wings." "Where did you get them?" "Off from the grasshoppers." "Were they hurting you?" "No, 'course not." "Then did you have a right to hurt them-to kill them? You can't make grasshopper, so shouldn't kill it. Only God can make living things any more unless it is necessary."

He was never a man to go out in God's great country and kill just for the fun of killing as so many sportsmen do today. He loved to spend his time in the great outdoors and was fond of the mountains, especially of the pine trees and running streams.

One more bit of praise would I add to my father's life. I have never heard any swearing of foul language fall from his lips. And so, consistently did he live and teach that example that he trained his large family of sons in the same respect.

He was a father not to be feared although he was regarded as the ruler of head of our household. His word, given as a suggestion or as a command was regarded as law. No one dared disobey or question it. And he ruled among his large family as the patriarchs of old, commanding respect, love and obedience from all.

I am proud to say "I am the daughter of James Hyrum Baird."