

Monday, November, 11-- 1968

This history or maybe story since some historical dates were not available- of Mrs. Mary Davis Reid Biddlecome, has been compiled and written by Naomi A. Jensen -from material furnished by Mrs. Millie Biddlecome of Green River, Utah and Mrs. Maggie Anderson Biddlecome (Deceased), Castle Dale, Utah and a few notes from D.U.P. Historian, Mrs. Margaret Keller, also deceased ;

This was accomplished after much research on the part of Mrs. Jensen- ; some of the material has been published in the D.U.P. Emery County, history book, under the title" Early Doctors, Dentist and Midwives.

You will find in the following pages, Mrs. Biddlecome, indeed played an important roll in our early "Castle Valley" Emery county history.

*Naomi A. Jensen,
D.U.P. Historian,
Camp Dale, Castle Dale, Utah
Box 313, 84513.*

MARY DAVIS REID BIDDLECOME.

Mary Davis Biddlecome, wife of George Biddlecome was one of our very early midwives. Mrs. Biddlecome was born April 1st; - 1845 in Minneshier, Wales and never learned to read or write the English language. She was converted to the Mormon Faith and came to this country when she was sixteen years old.

To get the money to come on she did laundry work for a foundry which was close to her home. She had no wash board or machine, rubbed the clothes between her hands, and they were really dirty. All wore white in the foundry and the rust seemed to bother her more than anything. She would use so much lye that her hands were pretty sore sometimes. She received twenty-five cents a day for her work and saved her money untill she had enough to come to America. She had a brother already living here, and he sent her money to come to Utah but it seemed to have been lost so the church paid her way West. She came with a group of other people and drove an ox team all the way to Utah. She married John Reid, one of the guards or scouts on the trip, on the way. They had no sugar for a wedding cake, but the band made a wedding cake with molasses and they danced about all night.

She moved with Mr. Reid to Deep Creek, located on the Nevada-Utah line, and lived there quiet awhile. It was a small settlement, and of course like all the small settlements, they were more like one big family. When the gardens would come on the first one who had new peas, potatoes, etc; they made a picnic of it and all gathered there and had a time. As Mrs. Biddlecome was noted as the earliest and best gardner wherever she settled she usually held an early picnic party.

At this particular time she had but one baby, about two years old, Mr. Reid would tease the baby until he would have a fit of temper and then would get spanked for it, The community had gathered at their place this Sunday and were celebrating the first mess of green peas in the valley. She had warned Mr. Reid the next time he teased the baby until he cried than spanked hem, she was going to take over the cituation, but he thought he could get by with it with all the company there and he tried it. When he spanked the baby, as it reached that stage, she took over and they sure had a lively time. When the air cleared and the dust settled, the company had all gone home, and she had a pair of black eyes. But she said, "I got a bite while he was getting the pie, his eyes were blacked too.

Mr. Reid died at Deep Creek, She had three boys and a girl by Mr. Reid. The girl died in infancy.

She married George Biddlecome at Deep Creek. Mr. Biddlecome was born at Nauvoo, Hancock county, Illinois, January 1st; -- 1844. His father had joined the church before, and ran away from a mob that wanted to kill him because he was a mormon. He went to his sisters home and she turned him out in a storm.

He was cut down with a corn knife in his own cornfield before George was born.

When George was eight years old, his mother died, so he not only suffered the hardships of the other saints, but he was an orphan as well.

When he was quiet young, Brigham Young sent him among the Indians to learn their language. While with them he learned that the Indians were not always to blame for the things they did.

He married Mary Davis Reid, about 1873, and together they must have arrived in Castle Valley about 1878. They lived first at the junction of Cotton Wood and Straight canyon, now owned by the Peacock brothers and from there they moved to Wilsonville, seven miles below Castle Dale.

From the first she was a Doctor. She took care of all confinement cases from Wilsonville to the head of Ferron canyon. One can safely say she assisted with the birth of between 450 or 500 babies. When the first white child was born on Cotton Wood Creek, Irwin Leruy Curtis, December 12, -- 1879, son of Mr. and Mrs. Erastus Curtis, the boy's uncle Uriah Curtis, then a boy of 18 years, went with team of oxen and wagon ten miles below Wilsonville to the home of Mrs. Biddlecome. As there was scarcely no road at all and it was almost to dark to see what road there was, Mr. Curtis followed the creek bottom most of the ten miles distance, driving the oxen in the water. When he finished his twenty mile journey the oxen had a solid cake of ice frozen around them. Likewise he and Mrs. Biddlecome seemed half frozen--- but mother and baby under Mrs. Biddlecome care did very nicely.

She also brought into the world the first two babies born in Molen, Pearl Larsen, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John L. Larsen and Mable Wayman, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Wayman. The first white child born in Castle Valley was Emily Cook, daughter of James H. and Emily Alder Cook, born November 30, --- 1878, at Ferron, Mrs. Biddlecome was the attending midwife.

There were no doctors and very little medicine at this time, so she knew the different plants and what each was good for and used the different herbs to doctor with. Some were grown in her garden and some were native wild plants, such as sage brush, peach tree leaves, Raspberry leaves, rhubarb, honey, catnip, potash, alum, golden seal; from the bark of the slippery elm tree she made a salve for sores. Juniper berries, cedar bough berries and many others; one of the most unique remedies recorded was the intrals of a dead chicken. The intrals taken from the chicken while yet warm were used to draw out inflammation of different kinds.

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When her 7th child was born, she almost lost her life, and lost her hearing at that time, but it did not prevent her from diagnosing a case when it was brought to her. She was an outstanding Doctor at that time. When Mrs. Biddlecome's later children were born she had no other midwife than her husband, who served as Doctor, midwife and nurse under her direction.

Mrs. Biddlecome would receive two dollars and a half for a confinement case, (when she got it, if they were able to pay) if she just went and took care of the woman and baby, going back for ten days. If she went and stayed at the place, doing all the work for the entire family she would receive \$5.00. If they were unable to pay and needed something she could spare, she did it any way for nothing, likely taking food and what ever they needed that she had to them.

During all the years that Mrs. Biddlecome practiced as physician and midwife, we have but three deaths recorded; Mrs. Christine Johansen, wife of Louis Johansen died in childbirth with her first baby in Castle Dale about 1881 and was buried in Mrs. Orange Seely's temple apron in Castle Dale cemetery. Mrs. Johansen was a daughter of Christian Nielsen and Anna Andersen Nielsen. Mrs. Biddlecome assisted Mr. and Mrs. William Higby of Wilsonville, now a ghost town, with the care of their children who died of diphtheria, Maud Higby, 15, and William Higby a three month old baby. Although Wilsonville has been a ghost town for many years these two graves along with two or three others unknown graves remain there to this day. This little lone cemetery in recent years was fenced by Sam Aikens as an act of charity.

Mrs. Biddlecome was the mother of 12 sons and daughters, Alex, George, Will and a little girl by Mr. Reid. Nathan, Jove, Mary Jane, Ann, Olive, Mac, Rachel and Sarah by Mr. Biddlecome.

In 1905 the Biddlecome's had a little place at the head of Ferron Creek, Mr. Biddlecome stayed up there and usually had one of the younger girls with him and Mrs. Biddlecome stayed in Ferron. He made the trip back and forth with team and wagon and in 1906 he and his daughter Rachel were drowned while crossing Ferron Creek.

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Through out Mrs. Biddlecome's life she was the wage earner for her large family. In addition to being an outstanding Doctor and midwife she was a noted gardner and dairyman and she sewed for people and made numerous quilts for sale. They would go to a new place and build them up a home, when they got it well under way, so they would not have to work so hard and have a little more to do with and things a little easier, Mr. Biddlecome would trade Mr. Biddlecome would trade every thing off for a little, a very little and they would go to a new place and start over. He was always trading and always got the worst of it so it seemed. He traded their best work horse for a fiddle one time but that proved to be the best trade he ever did make for he would play for the dances and make a dollar once in awhile and a dollar in those days was real money. One night playing for a dance one of the fellows said, "looks like that fiddle of yours has seen some hard times?" "Yes" said he "the kids got it yesterday and drug it through the ditch".

Mrs. Biddlecome died at the age of 75 ,November 1920 at the home of Mrs. Millie Biddlecome, Green River, Utah.

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