

EXPERIENCES FROM THE LIFE OF
SOPHIA LOUISA RAPPELLE HUNTER NELSON

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I was born August 18, 1867, in a one room log house at Corn Creek, Millard County, Utah, the first child of Ammon Llewellyn and Anna Sophia Larson Rappeltye. Other children born to this marriage were:

Elizabeth Samantha, born July 10, 1870
Laura Frances, born January 6, 1872
Ammon Tuntis, born September 23, 1873
Edwin Alphens, born September 12, 1875
Bertha LaRena, born December 12, 1877
Mary Elmer, born September 6, 1879
John Aaron, born November 6, 1881
Emma Ann, born March 23, 1884
Lillian, born April 9, 1886

When my father and mother were married, the people gave them a frying pan, two tin cups, two plates, two knives and forks. My father wasn't noted as a carpenter, but he sawed up some poles, nailed them together, wove rope back and forth both ways, and this they used for springs for a bed.

My grandfather Tuntis Rappeltye was one of the first pioneers. He came to Utah in 1847 and drove one of Brigham Young's teams. He worked with him three years and made several trips for emigrants before he could bring his own family to Utah. All my grandparents were pioneers, as were also my parents.

My mother and her parents, Mads and Elizabeth Larson, were born in Denmark. They joined the Church and came to Utah in 1856. Mother had a sister 5 and she was 7. The family came on a sailing vessel and were 13 weeks on the ocean. A brother was born during the voyage, but he and the 5-year old sister both died and were buried at sea. When Mother and her parents arrived in Iowa, they constructed a hand cart and crossed the plains. Their flour allotment was a pint a day. Grandfather was a large man; it was not enough to sustain him and his strength gave out. Then Grandmother, a small woman, had to pull the cart and mother walked barefoot across the plains. A lady in Beaver who was in the same handcart company said she bathed my mother's bleeding feet many times.

My parents were kind, generous, loving, warm-hearted people. Mother often had parties for her children. At one of them, while we were playing games in the parlor, neighbor boys stole the three cakes from the table. Mother, being resourceful, made ice cream for sale, but usually ended up giving it to her children and grandchildren in large servings. Everyone loved mother or "Aunt Sophia" as they lovingly called her.

We lived on the main road. Many of the travelers would stop their teams and ask if they could spend the night with us. Father would say "Drive in;" he never refused. One woman from Beaver with a sick son stayed a week. In later years when my son Jack was in Beaver for an operation she invited us to stay with her. We never lose anything by helping each other. My parents didn't have much but always shared what they had, and I think they will have many treasures in heaven.

Brigham Young advised the settlers to be close to the water, so in 1868 my family moved three miles south of Corn Creek. They called it Upper Corn Creek. Now it is Kanosh, named for an Indian Chief. He was a very good Indian. Brigham Young and some of the apostles came down to look after the Indians to help keep peace. My father-in-law, William Hunter, used to interpret the language for them. He was quite a friend to them. Also, my father pulled their teeth for them. The Indians used to beg all the time. When they became more friendly they would work for the people. Chief Kanosh married the squaw that Brigham Young reared. Another tribe of Indians had beat her severely. Some people found her lying in the field. They took her to Brigham Young, and he kept her until she was grown. She was then just a baby. The Chief and his bride lived in a log house in town by the Tithing house.

About 1870 my family moved to Blackrock Springs - approximately 30 miles west of Kanosh. At this time father took care of the church cattle on shares. We had a one-room milk house built over the stream. There were shelves around the wall on which the pans of milk were placed in order for the cream to form. When the milk was skimmed, they usually fed it to the pigs, but when there were no pigs to feed, they would empty it in the stream. My sister Libby and I would follow it down stream. We also had a cheese house which was the center of entertainment. Often wagonloads of people would come to have fun. They brought their music and danced. Father would clear out the cheese house for dancing. They surely had fun.

When I was four my mother put a corn cob behind my ear and put a needle through it and a wheat straw through the hole until it was healed. I wore earrings at the age of four. She also taught me to knit at four. We used to knit a string about an inch wide and long enough to tie around our legs. These were our garters.

We moved back to Kanosh about 1873 into a one-room adobe house, dirt roof and a slope in the north. We had two beds. Four of us children slept in one - two at the head and two at the foot. Father, mother and baby slept in the other. We couldn't bend our knees, so my feet would stick out. When it rained we would put pans on the bed to keep the mud off.

At the age of six I went to school in a one-room adobe house. My teacher was Susan Black. We had to sit on the floor as there were no benches. The next teacher was my Grandfather Rappleye's third wife, Nancy. She taught in a log house. There were no seats there either. Later the town built an all purpose adobe house where we went to school. We had three teachers. Mr. William Dameron was one of them. To punish the children he brought an arm full of willows every morning. Later a leather halter strap and a pistol. He would punish by having them stand with books in their hands, arms straight out, or sit on the floor with feet upon the bench. Emily Crane was my fourth teacher. The fifth was Benjamin Goddard. He was a good teacher. All the studies up until this time were reading, spelling and writing on slates with pencils. We were punished if we drew on the slates, but we did. He punished by twisting their ears. If we saw the teacher coming we would erase it.

Soon after this they built a new brick school and employed a lady teacher - Emma Nield. At times they would call me to help teach. I, being the oldest in the family, often had to stay home and help mother wash and take care of the

children. I would cry because I didn't like to miss school, while my younger sister cried because she had to go. The highest class took the 6th reader. This was the class I was in when I quite to be married, so all I had was reading, writing and arithmetic.

During the summer I helped my father in the field. I also gleaned the heads of grain that the reapers left on the ground, put them in a bag, took them home and put them on a wagon cover and threshed them out with a flail -- two sticks tied together with a string. When the wind blew we would winnow the chaff from the grain by holding it up in the air and letting it fall. That is the way we made our spending money. The Relief Society sisters did the same thing. I would take my mother's place, as she had a family of children to look after. They would store their grain. Sometimes the farmers would rent it for seed or flour and give back a peck on the bushel. That paid for shrinkage and kept the grain new.

While father was working away from home on the railroad before it got into Salt Lake, I had to go on the public square and chop sage brush to burn. These were hard times. Mother would get some bacon and fry a slice to make gravy. Families would ask one another to come and have bread and gravy.

We had to fight rabbits. They would mow the grain just like a machine. So the young folks would get on their horses and round them up into a corral made out of lumber. It was a V shape and the people finished the corral out by standing close together. Then they killed the rabbits. It was pitiful; they cried like babies. We also had to fight the crickets. We would haul straw and fill the ravines, and we would drive the crickets in and burn them. We had so many squirrels and gophers they gave a bounty on them - I think a cent a head,

My father hauled wood for our schooling and living. He and others would haul wood for widows, dances, schools, meetings and for wives of missionaries. I remember going to the dances and taking care of the baby while my folks danced. In later years father was manager of the dances and I mopped and cleaned the hall. Mother cooked a big chicken supper for the fiddlers at midnight. For all this we received one dollar. All the dancers went home for supper at midnight and returned and sometimes danced until daylight. They would sing, "We won't go home until morning." Boots were fancy for dancing. If some of them didn't have money to rattle in their pockets they would borrow 50 cents to put with nails. They had rag dances and weight dances. The men drew tickets but didn't like it if they got a large girl. They had to pay the amount of her weight. They only had one round during the night. A round was a waltz or schottish. They all wanted that so badly. I never learned until my sons were old enough to teach me. My husband didn't care much for dancing; we stayed home with our children.

For the Fourth of July father would get up at three in the morning and take us serenading. We followed the band. We had tin pans and anything to make a noise. There was one wagon between us where they were shooting guns. Later father drove the band wagon. When the wagon stopped at places to play, people would bring cake, pie or anything they had. My husband Will played the big drum in the band.

We put our corn in shocks. On a moonlight night we would go shuck it and fill our bed ticks. We liked it better than straw. In the evening we would take a tub and spade and shell corn to make meal for mush and bread, also grate whole potatoes to make starch. After we got shingled roofs we caught rain water in tubs and barrels for washing clothes and used hard wood ashes to soften the water and clear it.

When I was 13 my father hauled freight for the store. He took two wagons. I drove one of the teams. My brother Tune who was six went with us. It took us a week to get to Salt Lake. It was in June - very hot weather and we got so thirsty. Dad told us to think of vinegar and that would make the water come to our mouths. We camped on Emigration Square just across the street from the Temple. A streetcar then was one coach with a span of mules hitched to it. Dad bought oranges because we had never seen or tasted them. The peaches looked better to me, but he said we could get those at home.

My father and grandfather Mads Larson made molasses for the town. I helped plant the cane and strip the leaves with a wooden sword. I also fed the mill. The mill was a machine with three rollers and a log sweep on top. A horse was fastened to that and he went round and round. I put the sugar cane between the rollers and the juice went into a barrel. Father put the juice into a boiler about 4' by 8' with a fire under it. He would skim the scum off until it became molasses. The last skimmings he would save in a can and the children would bring their buckets and get some to make candy, or he would save it to make vinegar. When the molasses was done he would wash a load of clingstone peaches, put them in the boiler and make preserves. He would make two 20-gallon barrels for our family. We didn't have sugar in those days.

Our neighbor, George Roberts, had the first post office. He also sold matches and a few other articles. Matches were 25 cents a box. Before that time we banked the fire in a fire place with ashes. If it should happen to go out, we would have to wait until morning to see smoke in our neighbor's chimney. Then we would go and get coals to start our fire. Some evenings if neighbors came in, we would clean a place in the fireplace, cut a squash in two, clean the seeds out, turn it bottom side up and lay potatoes around it, bank it with ashes and coals, and then we would have a feast.

We also had fruit cutting bees. After gathering apples and peaches, we would ask a crowd of young folks over. Some of them would run the apples through the peeler, others cut the cores out or took the pits out of the peaches. Others would spread them out on scaffolds or on the roofs of their homes. We also had corn husking bees. These were our fall sports. In the winter we would have molasses candy pulling, corn popping and bob sleigh riding.

James Paxton had the first organ which he played at the dances. All the young folks would go to his home and sing. Mother's family got an organ. I loved music; I always wanted to play but never had the chance. I took one lesson, but I didn't have an organ to practice on, so didn't take any more lessons. Mother bought an American Lyre from Hunters, so I played for Will Hunter, my boy friend. My sister, Mary, was only a year old but she could hum all the tunes I played. People could hardly believe it.

Throughout my life there has been illness. It is only mentioned in this history in the hope that others may take courage from it. I feel that my trials have been blessings in disguise. When these experiences happened I thought it the worst part of my life but now I consider it the most important.

Mother told me I had the mumps when a baby and they fell on me. She poulticed me with beans. She was afraid I wouldn't live.

During my childhood I had pain in my left side. I took bottles of pain-killers. Doctors were rare in those days, but one came one day. Father asked him about the pain in my side. He said my liver was grown to my side and for him to romp with me. That hurt. When about 11 years old, I went to the Water Cross springs three miles up the canyon with my Aunt Libble Larson. We were the same age. Coming home the horse trotted all the way. It hurt me so badly I begged her to stop and said I would jump off, but she wouldn't stop. I have thought since that was what helped me, for I got better.

At 13 when I was picking plums, something got in my right eye and nearly blinded me. After that I had the measles and that weakened my other eye. I have worn glasses since and am so glad I am not blind.

One time in Ferron Ernest, my son, was helping me build a chicken coop. He needed something, so I went to get it. On the way I stepped on a nail in a board and it went through my foot. Ernest had a hard time removing it and finally had to hammer the board away from my foot with an ax. When he finally got it out, I soaked my foot in coaloil. It bothered me for years.

On the day Ernest and Edna Larson were married, I had a skillet of boiling lard in the oven. As I took it out, the handle slipped, and it spilled on my leg.

When I was 14 my sister Libble wanted to take the team and go to Rock Corral to gather an herb we used for medicine. I told mother I felt I should go as the children might have an accident. So I went. As we were within a block of home the single tree came off the double tree and hit one of the horse's legs. He kicked and ran. This frightened the other horse, and as we went to cross the creek the tongue broke. My brother Thune and I were in the spring seat of a double bed wagon. It threw us out and the wheels ran over us. We all were frightened but not seriously hurt.

I said I wouldn't get married until I was 20, but I missed it four years. I was married December 21, 1883, to William Freeman Hunter. We hadn't planned to be married at this time, but some of our friends were going to St. George to be married and persuaded us to go with them. We only had three days to get ready. I made a bag full of biscuits and crackers. Will's grandmother Freeman, 70 years old, and sister Betsy went with us. The roads were rough and rocky. We were a week getting there and were gone a full three weeks. As it was December, it was very cold; in fact it was so cold our bread was icy; we couldn't cut it. We traveled in a covered wagon, which we also used for sleeping. We had trouble with balky horses.

We worked in the St. George Temple a week and Grandma was sealed to her husband. We were married on Friday, December 21, 1883. We lived with Will's folks and mine until we could build a house.

William Freeman Hunter was born January 23, 1865 in Hamilton Fort, Iron County, Utah. His father, William Dee Hunter, came from Scotland, and his mother, Emma Freeman, from England. They moved to Cedar City. In 1866 they were part of a group to settle Berrysville. Being behind the company they went to Stanford and on account of Indians they returned and settled in Corn Creek where they lived in a willow tent. In 1868 they moved to Kanosh where they farmed for a living. At this time every one lived in dugouts and tents. William Dee built a house and had a store. He helped also to transport emigrants to Utah. It was during one of these trips he met his wife. William Dee was a great singer. Their children were William Freeman, John Thomas, Betsy, Dee and Maria.

I was 17 years of age when my first baby came. In those days it was a disgrace to have a man doctor, but they had to get one to save my life. When he came, he pronounced the baby dead after a hard 24-hour labor. However, this child, Edward, lived and was one of 8 boys to bless our home:

William Edward, 3 Oct. 1884
Jack Ammon, 26 Oct. 1886
George A., 20 Oct. 1888
Ernest, 6 Aug. 1890
Parley, 25 Nov. 1892 (Died age 14 of a heart ailment)
Lorin Tumb, 4 Nov. 1897
Merl Franklin, 15 December 1903
Albert LaVere, 4 March 1905

At the age of 21 my teeth were giving me trouble. There were few dentists in the area. A traveling dentist came through and said he would remove them for me and make me a new set. As there were no anesthetics, this proved to be very painful. It took all day. The dentist was a cripple. He walked bent over, so I had to lie on the floor while he extracted them one by one. My children were very upset at these proceedings and cried. My gums were so tender for some time afterward I could hardly chew. A year later the dentist returned with a set of teeth. The cost for the extraction and new plate was \$20.00.

My husband, Will, worked on the railroad tracks. The boss and his wife went on the hand car to the station to get on the train. They were going to leave their two girls with me. We went along for a ride. I sat on the front with my feet hanging down. The one girl said, "Mrs. Hunter's coat is in the wheel." I set my foot down to run around and it threw me off. The wheel ran over my leg and crushed the bone in two places. George, my baby, was on my lap, and the accident threw him under the car. However, it didn't hurt him. After that I had to push a chair around to do my work for quite awhile.

My sister Libbie, her husband Alonzo Roberts, and Will and I went to Fish Creek Mountains to make shingles. Will's sister Maria and boy friend came to tell us they were going to get married. They asked my mother and me to go with them higher up the mountain to see the saw mill. My sister had gone home. She was going to have her second baby and I my fourth. On the way to the Saw Mill the women walked behind the buggy. George, the baby, was in the buggy with the driver. As we got near the top the horses came loose from the buggy and went on. The buggy came back and tipped over. My baby, George, was under it. I thought he might be dead, but he wasn't hurt. Mother grabbed a limb on the hill. Maria ran down the road. The driver ran after her. The tongue just missed me as I slipped to the edge of the dugway. It gave me such a shock my baby Ernest came at eight months with only my mother to attend me during the birth. Three weeks later I hemorrhaged and was very weak. Our hired girl couldn't stay, so my brother took her home. My brother Thine asked whom I wanted him to get. I said, "Anybody," but I thought if Laura my sister didn't come I would die. Laura came. She took the baby and was going to change him. Just as she started I could feel myself dying. I said, "Oh Laura!" She gave the baby to my brother-in-law, Alonzo Roberts, and laid her hands on my head and prayed to the Lord to restore me. The children were crying so Will took them outside. He thought it would annoy me. I thought every breath was the last. As she prayed I felt my strength returning. Faith and prayer restored my life.

Will was Justice of the Peace for many years. He also taught Sunday School, did lots of writing for other people and helped in the Church whenever possible. He and two other men were working in a mine they had found. These men taught the Mormons and Will partook of their spirit, which caused trouble between us. If people could always agree how happy they would be. I said I couldn't stand a divorce, but it had to come. That was the worst part of my life. The happiest was living with my children. I prayed for him and told my children to also. We all have faults -- we need to help each other. In 1941 Will had a stroke. They took him to the hospital in Provo, He died February 9, 1941, and was buried in Kanosh, Utah.

January 17, 1917 I married Hyrum Nelson in the Salt Lake Temple. We came to Ferron to live. Hyrum had 4 children, 2 grandchildren age 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ and 7 and with my two (Merl and Albert) there were 10 in all. At this time I was 50. We didn't have water and electric lights then -- only coal oil lights and flat irons and no washers. We milked lots of cows and made butter to sell, and pigs, chickens and raised a garden. Hyrum died August 20, 1949.

In November 1918, I had to go to the hospital to be operated on for appendicitis and other things. In 1929 a buck sheep with horns bumped me in the left hip and cracked it knocking all the combs out of my hair. In 1934 while I was painting the house, I fell off the scaffold and broke the same hip. The X-ray showed it had been cracked before. The nurse took me in the basement to take an X-ray and she kept me there so long I got pneumonia. The doctors said there was little hope that I would recover. They sent for my children, who stayed several weeks until I was out of danger.

When I was 74 Ernest's wife died and left 5 children -- 4 boys and a girl. The baby was one year ten months. I took the responsibility of caring for these children until other arrangements were made.

My children have been good to me. When we didn't have the wagon, the boys would take me in the wheelbarrow or the little red wagon. They did lots of the work. They said, "Now Mother, don't you tell anybody; don't you brag on us." Up to this time I have to be careful what I say. A mother and daughter were arguing because someone had accused their boys of wrongdoing. The mother said, "I will ask Louisa Hunter's boys. They will tell the truth." My children have honored me all the time, never caused me any serious trouble. I was sick one day and Jack was rubbing me. George ran outside. I asked why and he said, "I went out by the house and prayed." If ever they lost anything they always asked the Lord to help them find it. It is through their faith and works and the faith of a lot of others that I have lived. I appreciate my life and all that has been done for me. One time my brothers Tune and Ed made a chair of their arms and carried me 1/4 of a mile to have dinner with my mother. My sister Lillie carried a chair for me to sit on while they rested. My sisters all worked for me when my babies were born and never made any charge. My mother took me in her home and cared for me, and my father, a faithful man, would come and administer to me. Faith and prayer took the place of doctors care. My sister Lillie and Lew Peterson have been a second mother and father to me the last 41 years. I am also grateful to my children and others too numerous to mention -- if they could only realize how grateful I am.

The children had their moments, though. I remember asking them to chop some wood for me before dinner one day. They continued to play, even though they said they would do it. When they filed in for dinner, to their surprise there laid the axe on the dinner table instead of the usual meal.

We have had many anxious moments too in the lives of the children. It isn't possible to include them in this history, but I will relate one as an example. My son Lorn when a baby fell head first into a barrel of rain water. We were not aware of this until Grandmother Hunter came to the house as a result of an urging or prompting she had received which was so strong she went through the house looking for the baby. When we found him he was nearly drowned. We worked feverishly and prayed and soon he began to breathe. It took a long time for him to get well, but we were thankful the Lord had spared his life.

Throughout my life I have tried to keep working in the Church. At the age of ten I used to recite in Sunday School. At the age of 12 I was in the choir. Benjamin Goddard was the leader. At 14, I was secretary in the Sunday School, and also taught a class in Sunday School. They called on different classes to give the program. If any were absent they called my class. We had questions and answers from the Bible. I had them come to my home to learn them. I was teacher in MIA and Secretary of the Relief Society. I was head teacher in Relief Society in Ferron, block teacher about 50 years, taught in Sunday School and Primary. In Ferron I was also on the Genealogy Committee. I worked parts of two winters in the St. George Temple with Hyrum, my second husband.

In my childhood, when the apostles came to preach to us the boys and girls would get on their horses and people would go in their wagons and buggies several miles to meet them. At church they would shake hands with everybody. One evening my father introduced me to Brigham Young. He shook hands and talked to me; I thought that was wonderful. He wore a long overcoat with a cape that came below his hips. In those days they had to dress warmly and have hot bricks and rocks wrapped in gunny sacks to keep their feet warm while traveling.

I am happy for my experiences. When I read about President Wilford Woodruff - the times he met death and lived - so it has been with me. After Ernest was born, I was so thankful for my life that I sang the Lord's Prayer and We Thank Thee Oh God for a Prophet to Him when I was alone and still do. Now I am alone most of the time. I am happy for His presence, our best friend. My life has been spared through the faith of my children, relatives and friends. Doctors gave me up 24 years ago. There was a man telling some people in the old folk's home in Castle Dale how my sons got together in a room at the hospital and prayed for me, and he was so touched the tears rolled down his cheeks.

I am thankful I haven't had it the easy way. I learned to do many things, made many quilts, rugs, carpets, made our clothing, knit our stockings, crocheted, made caps, hats, did carding and spinning, did our fruit and squash, cured our meat by putting it in brine, made pickles, raised all we ate, churned our butter in a dash churn, made my soap and vinegar, scrubbed on a washboard to do the washing. We had wood to burn and every time we changed irons we had to clean the smoke off with a coal oil rag. We heated the irons on the top of the stove.

I have lived to see the progression from the ox team to the airplane and to see the beginning of the atomic age. I wonder what my posterity will see in the same length of time.