



James Albert McKee, Sr.

James



Ruth Chase McKee

McKee

History of James Albert McKee, Sr.

Compiled by gr. granddaughter, Bernice M. Payne

James Albert McKee is the son of James McKee and Matilda Sweat McKee. He was born on the 27th of December, 1854 in Palmyra, (present day Spanish Fork), Utah.

James's father and mother were married in Council Bluff, Iowa in 1852, on their way across the plains.

The saints had been in Utah for several years by the time James and Matilda McKee arrived in 1853. There were several settlements that were already started. The company arrived on the 17th of Sept. so they didn't have much time to get ready for winter. They went straight-way to Palmyra to start their lives in Utah.



James Albert was the first child of their family. Then a sister came along almost 2 years later. She was named Sarah Jane. David Daniel McKee was born in a little over two more years. They were all born in the Palmyra area. James was only about 6 ½ years old

when his father died. Leaving his mother with 3 small children. She was only 28 years old. Matilda had a sister-in-law, Letty McKee Stevens living in Holden with her husband and family. It is probably for this reason that the McKee family sold their farm in Palmyra and went to Holden. She is listed on the 1870 census as being Holden with her 3 children.

When James was 17 ½ years old, he traveled with his mother to Salt Lake City where he took out his own endowments at the Endowment House. He then served as proxy for his father to be sealed to his mother, on the same day, 5 June 1871.

It was in Holden that James Albert met and courted his girlfriend, Ruth Chase, daughter of John Darwin and Almira Higgins Chase. Ruth's family were also Mormon pioneers, coming to Utah in 1847, originally from Vermont.

James and Ruth were married in Nephi, Juab County, Utah on the 17th of Jan. 1878. Her father, John Darwin Chase married them in the old family home in Nephi. They made their home in Holden for the next two years.

James was in the process of buying a farm in Holden, when their first child, a girl was born on the 15th of April, 1880.

In about 1878 Brigham Young called for people to colonize the Castle Valley, over the mountain from Sanpete County. Several men had gone to the Valley in 1879 to check things out. They came back the following spring with a favorable report.



Photo courtesy of the Internet

Wanting to get some prime farm ground before it was all homesteaded by others, James sold his farm for a team of horses, a wagon and a set of harnesses. His Uncle Hugh McKee, had also decided to go, so the two families set out for Huntington in Emery County.

Upon arrival in this new area, they farmed where they could get irrigation water. When the Huntington Canal was completed, they bought a 40 acre farm on the flats, southwest of the town site. Uncle Hugh's farm bordered his on the northeast. They make ditches and diverted the water from the canal and after much back-breaking work the farm blossomed like a rose.



Their home on the farm was a 2-room log cabin with a dirt roof. *In a log home similar to this one, the McKee family raised their 9 children. All the children except the oldest girl, were born in their two-room log cabin with a dirt roof.*

(Photo courtesy of the Internet)

It was a large job for both parents and children to grow all the food they needed and store it. They grew a large garden as well as took care of the usual farm animals such as pigs, chickens, milk cows. They also raised their own fruit such as apples, pears, plums and currants. At currant picking time, all the children shared in the task. They picked some 500 quarts which were sold to the townspeople for 5 cents a quart. Such hard work for such a small price.

A lot of things were hard, but we had no other choice than to just make the best of things and keep going. The loss of children is one of those things. We had two children that only stayed with us for a short time. Our 7th child, a girl we named Mariam Chloe McKee was born on the 27th of May 1894 and died the following year, September 4th, 1895. We were so glad to get another little girl the following spring on the 27th of March, 1896, but she was also called back to heaven about 4 ½ years later.

One of the middle children, Alma Dorus (Uncle Mac as he was loving referred to by his nieces and nephews.) relates: “As I look back now to the years of my childhood, I oftimes wonder how my parents managed in rearing such a large family in the little log cabin on the farm. But, as little as we had, we were on a par with others in our community. All had nothing but the bare necessities of life. What we did not have we did not miss so we grew up in ignorance of a more abundant life and were happy.”

“I think what we lacked in material things were made up in abundance of nature and god’s great out-of-doors.”

“We kids went barefoot a great deal of the time to save what shoes we had for Sundays and special occasions. Our clothes for the main part were made over from those outgrown by our older brothers and sisters. I vividly recall the great thrill I had, at the age of 13 years, with the first suit of clothes I had that were bought at the store. These came by mail order from Sears & Roebuck.”

“One of my fondest memories of the little log cabin was the large fireplace in the front room before which we spent many happy winter evenings roasting or parching corn, eating apples and before the light of which we studied our lessons sprawled out on the floor “Lincoln fashion”.

“Our farm home was one mile from the school house and this distance we youngsters walked through sunshine, rain, mud or snow and our school days were happy ones. Here we went from first through ninth grades.”

“Our log cabin was comfortable as far as it went. It was clean and tidy as far as it was possible for it to be so.”

“In the summer time we boys spread our quilts on the straw on the barnyard shed and there thrilled at the sight of God’s handiwork as we slept under the stars. This too is a pleasant memory as I look back through the years to the days that used to be. Many nights as we lay under the stars, we were lulled to sleep by the croaking of the bullfrogs, the hoot of the night owl and the howl of the coyote. At other times we were rudely sent to shelter by the sudden break of a thunder storm. As the coolness of approaching winter drove us from our great outdoor bedroom, we retreated to a little adobe grainery in the barnyard where we made our beds, and this being heated by a small stove, we were quite comfortable until the spring when we could return to our starlit bedroom in the shed.”

“These were happy days in spite of our meager supply of worldly good and, as I now relive them in memory, I think we were richer than most children of today, especially those who grow up in the city and never know the wonders of God’s great out-of-doors. To awake with the call of the thrush as the first faint light of dawn streaks over the hills and to watch Old Sol raise his head over the mountain peak in all his flaming glory gives one the serene feeling that God is near and that you are at peace with heaven and earth. This feeling never comes to one in the hustle and bustle of city life.”

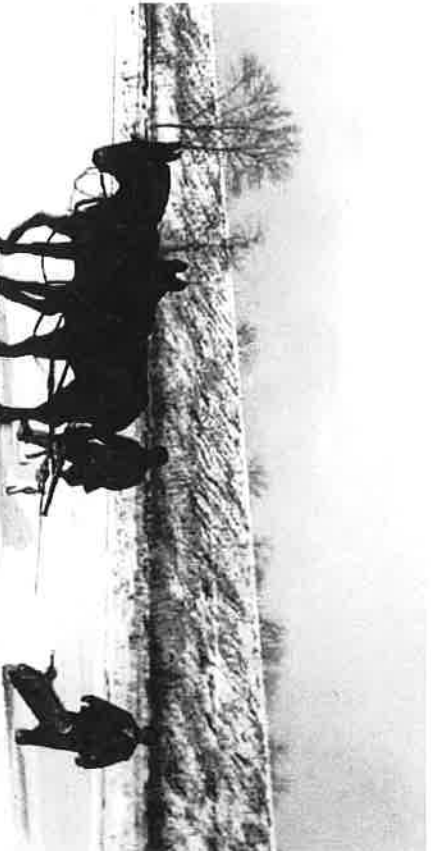
“In that time of long ago in the weeks of anticipation and preparation at the approach of Thanksgiving and Christmas were as glorious as the days themselves. In our little cabin on Christmas Eve there was little sleep for either us excited children or our parents. Dad and mom, of course, must find excuses to remain up until we were all asleep in order to admit old Santa when he came calling’ and by the time they were settled for a little sleep for the night, we kids would begin calling to inquire if it was time to get out of bed to see if Santa had arrived with the meager supply of toys and goodies which we had requested in our letters to him. Our letters were always posted by sending them up the old fireplace chimney and we were sure that Santa always received them because, in some mysterious manner, he usually left what we had asked him for. Our stockings were always hung around the fireplace. We would awake to find them stuffed full. An apple or orange in the toe, candy and nuts, a small toy such as a mouth organ, a top or small doll for the girls.”

“The Fourth of July was a great day for us kids. At the first break of dawn we were up and on our way to gather all the neighborhood kids and our celebration was continuous until the night and our exhaustion drove us back

home and into our beds. We were grateful if we had as much as 25 or 50 cents to spend on this day, but we were very extravagant if we spent it all in one day. A 5 cent package of fire crackers, a box of popcorn, a glass of pink lemonade and we had had a glorious blowout and there was always the children's dance in the afternoon at which the old country fiddler had a hard time to be heard above the shouting and yelling of the little roughnecks who thought they were dancing.”

“Well, in spite of all this we kept on growing and as the years went by we seemed to be weighted down more and more with the cares and worries of a growing and realistic world.”

James says, in 1905 we left the farm and moved into town where I bought a lot on Main Street, between 1st and 2nd north on the east side of the street. We built a large frame house, in which Ruth and our daughter, Almira operated a confectionery and millinery store for the next few years. The ice cream we sold was home made but of excellent quality. For several years this was frozen in a 5-gallon hand-cranked freezer. This was a hard job to crank that much ice cream. Especially during town celebrations such as the 4th and 24th of July. As business grew this job grew more wearisome. As a freezer of ice cream was frozen it was emptied into other containers and packed in salt and ice. This business opened up a new winter job. The ice had to be harvested and stored for summer use.



After the water in the ponds had frozen to a depth of 18 to 24 inches, we had to scrape the snow off in order to start harvesting the ice.

(photo courtesy of the Internet)



We used a crosscut ice saw and cut blocks 18 inches wide and 24 inches long and stacked in a horse-drawn sled and took them to the ice house where it was buried in sawdust for insulation. In this way we would store 40 to 50 tons of ice for our use during the summer.

One of our

children, Archie Montell developed juvenile diabetes and it had such debilitating symptoms that he passed away on 21st of April, 1907. He was 18 years old.

As some of the children left to start lives of their own, we used extra rooms for a hotel. We lived in part of the house, had the millinery and confectionary in the front.

State Board of Health: File No. 93

STATE OF UTAH-DEATH CERTIFICATE.

THIS CERTIFICATE MUST BE COMPLETED BY THE NEXT OF KIN OR CITY, OR ON BEHALF OF THE DECEASED, BEFORE IT IS VALID. IT MUST BE COMPLETED WITHIN FIFTY DAYS AFTER THE DEATH, UNLESS IT IS EXTENDED BY THE BOARD OF HEALTH.

Full Name of Deceased (Include age and sex): Archie Montell McKee
Sex: Male
Age: 18 years, 2 months, 5 days

Place of Death: Hamblington
County of: Canyon
City, Town or Village of: Hamblington

Street and No. or Lot or Tract: 100-6-1
Other place of residence of deceased: _____

Sex: Male
Age: 18 years, 2 months, 5 days

DATE OF BIRTH: Feb. 17th 1889

DECEASED, AND PHYSICAL PARTICULARS

Usual Residence: _____
Place of Birth: Spain, O. McKee
Parents: James A. McKee
Age of Deceased at Birth: 21 years, 10 months, 20 days
Education: Wash. Sch.
Marital Status: Single
Occupation: Wash. Sch.
History of Disease: None
History of Treatment: None

Physician's Name (If known): _____
Address: _____

Physician's Signature: _____

Witnesses: James A. McKee (Name) Hamblington (Address)
James A. McKee (Name) Hamblington (Address)

Place of Burial: Hamblington
Date of Burial: May 24th 1907

Underwriter: Archie McKee
Address: Hamblington

Physician's Signature: _____
Signature of City, Town or Village Officer: James A. McKee
Signature of Witness: James A. McKee

DATE OF DEATH: May 22nd 1907
TIME OF DEATH: 1:30 pm

CAUSE OF DEATH: Acute myocardial infarction

DETAILS: Heart enlarged, no other

DATE OF DEATH: May 22nd 1907

NAME OF PHYSICIAN: James A. McKee

ADDRESS: Hamblington

DATE OF DEATH: May 22nd 1907

NAME OF CITY, TOWN OR VILLAGE OFFICER: _____

ADDRESS: _____

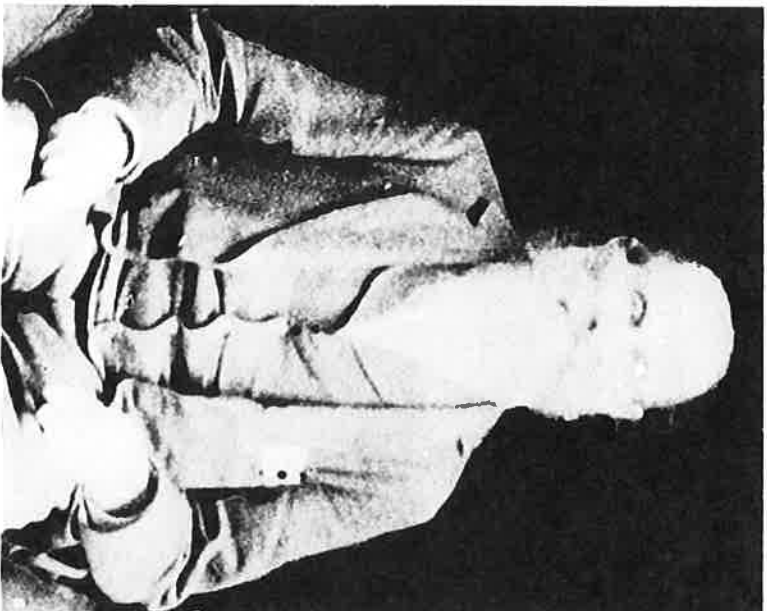
DATE OF DEATH: May 22nd 1907

NAME OF WITNESS: _____

ADDRESS: _____

In 1913 our youngest child, David Vardean died of a ruptured appendix. He was a good boy and was just 14 years old. All these children we have lost. Four of our nine. What does a family do if they do not have the gospel in their lives?

During his life time, James tried to live the gospel. He served as a member of the 81st Quorum of Seventies; a High Priest; President of priests; teacher and deacons quorums from 1883 to 1887. He also received his Patriarchal Blessing from Patriarch John Smith in Holden, Utah on March 7th, 1881.



Utah—Every item of information should be carefully supplied. AGE should be stated EXACTLY. PHYSICIAN shall state CAUSE OF DEATH in plain terms, so that it may be properly classified. Exact statement of OCCUPATION is very important. See instructions on back of certificate.

PLACE OF DEATH		STATE OF UTAH—DEATH CERTIFICATE 200	
County <i>Sanjuy</i>		State of Health File No. <i>60</i>	
Township <i>Huntington</i>		No. <i>51</i> Ward <i>1</i>	
Village of <i>David Vardean McKee</i>		Date of Death <i>September 3, 1913</i>	
City <i>Sanjuy</i>		Age <i>14</i> Sex <i>M</i>	
FULL NAME <i>David Vardean McKee</i>			
PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS			
1. RACE <i>White</i>	2. SEX <i>Male</i>	3. COLOR <i>White</i>	4. HAIR <i>Blue</i>
5. BIRTH DATE <i>June 14, 1899</i>	6. BIRTH PLACE <i>Utah</i>	7. MARRIAGE DATE <i>None</i>	8. MARRIAGE PLACE <i>None</i>
9. OCCUPATION <i>school boy</i>			
10. PRESENT ADDRESS <i>Huntington Utah</i>			
11. PRESENT EMPLOYER <i>James B. McKee</i>			
12. PRESENT OCCUPATION <i>school boy</i>			
13. PRESENT RESIDENCE <i>Sanjuy Utah</i>			
14. THE PLACE IN WHICH HE DIED OR WHERE HE WAS FOUND <i>Sanjuy Utah</i>			
15. NAME OF PHYSICIAN <i>Ruth Chase</i>			
16. NAME OF HOSPITAL <i>None</i>			
17. NAME OF NURSE <i>None</i>			
18. NAME OF MINISTER <i>None</i>			
19. NAME OF CHURCH <i>None</i>			
20. NAME OF FUNERAL HOME <i>None</i>			
21. NAME OF BURIAL PLACE <i>None</i>			
22. NAME OF CEMETERY <i>None</i>			
23. NAME OF INTERMENT PLACE <i>None</i>			
24. NAME OF PLACE OF DEATH <i>None</i>			
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Ruth's father, John Darwin Chase was left a widower, his dear wife dying about 27 years before he did. So he came to Huntington to make his home with the McKee family. He developed a cancer on the side of his neck and he wanted James to take him to "Rabbit Valley" to a faith doctor. It was a two to three day trip by team and buggy. Father Chase had fasted and prayed for three days. While James was hitching up the team to the buggy, Grandpa Chase called to him and said, "We don't need to go. I felt the cancer leave." As far as is recalled, it never bothered him again. He passed away on 21st of July, 1902

Our first daughter Almira, besides helping with the family business, also became a school teacher. She taught many grades and most of the children raised in Huntington. She lived a good long life and served many. She never married.

Epidemics of all the terrible diseases were common in these early days. In the fall of 1886 a Diphtheria epidemic broke out and spread over nearly the entire territory, leaving a trail of death in its wake. But it was in 1921 that Diphtheria devastated the McKee family as it took mother, Ruth. In June of that year, their middle boy Alma Dorus was married. Just 3 short months later, Ruth contracted Diphtheria and passed away on September 24th, 1921.

A business, The Nixon Hall was located just south of their home in town. It caught fire and when it burned down it took the McKee family home and business with it. (the year of this tragedy is not known)

After Ruth's death, James went to live with his second daughter, Laura Matida and her husband in Logan, Utah. He lived there the rest of his life. He passed away on November 5th, 1933 in Logan, Cache, Utah. He was 78.

James and Ruth are buried in the Huntington Utah Cemetery. The four children they lost are also buried there in the family plot.





Years later, Almira died, in September, 1956. She is buried in Huntington



James Albert Jr. and his family are also buried in Huntington, in their own family plots and daughter, Goldie Euzell is buried in Payson.

