TAKEN FROM A TAPE MADE BY CLAUD BAKER ABOUT THE
EARLY HISTORY OF BICKNELL, UTAH AND ITS SETTLERS
(1980)

I'd better attempt to make a recording, something you have been asking me to do for a long time. Sometimes I get the feeling that maybe time might be running out and I had better get these things done. I was reading where President Kimball has a card on his desk that simply says "Do It" and so tonight while my wife is out to club and I'm here alone, I don't have much excuse and so I have decided that I will attempt to make some kind of a recording.

I thought maybe you would like, you would want something about the history of our town and the people who once lived here. I was reading a church publication about the pagents that are being held by the church and one is entitled "Lest We Forget". This has given me a trend of thought. Much of our history has never been written and that perhaps to give an account of some of the people who lived here and where they lived and something about their lives, might be very interesting to you.

Then I thought what a glorious time I have been privileged to live in when so much, so many things have been accomplished. In fact I might say me and my generation, perhaps, has lived to see more changes for the betterment, more improvements than any generation in the history of the world. That may seem rather farfetched and maybe a little exaggerated, but as we sat through things and were active in the world, we more or less in the team and buggy or horse and buggy days, ox cart days and things like that, and I have lived from that until now to see the jet age and so I am sure that as we look back over history we find that when I was a young person here, when first born into the world, the only lighting that we had was a candle or kerosene lamp. Our fastest transportation and communication was with a good horse. Going back through history, that is pretty much the same as it was then and so from that time until now we have gone from perhaps traveling at the rate of a few miles and hour to faster than the speed of sound. When I was young to go to Richfield some 60 miles and return with a load required from 5 to 6 days, while now we drive to Richfield and back in a few hours, and we think nothing of going to Provo and shopping and returning the same day, and even to Salt Lake City. And to go back to when I was born that would have required perhaps 20 to 30 days to have done those things.

If we stop to think, it is just 100 years now since the electric light bulb was invented by Edison, so you see that was just 13 years before I was born and I am sure that they made much development on the electric light. I think I was some 13, 16 years old before I ever saw an electric light.

Things have changed and I remember seeing the first car, the first automobile that came into the valley. And I saw the first telephone that was installed and I remember up at Will Brinkerhoff's store when the men worked and put the wires in and connected up with the old box telephone that was on the wall and as they cranked on the telephone and someone answered on the other end it was about as spectacular as when they flew to the moon.

And so much has happened and not only that, I have lived to see and know many of the first settlers that came to this valley. For your information I might tell you about some of these people, where they lived, where they settled and somewhat a little of their lives.

Starting over on the west side of the valley what is now the narrows was Gus Keele's family. I can't remember much about the Keeles other than he was a musician; he carried a violin and played for most of the dances and entertainments that we had. It seems that in my mind I can see him as he would ride into town on a little bay horse with a violin under his arm. I don't remember his wife at all.

And then the place that is now the old spring ditch pond, Levi Brinkerhoff and his wife Liza Brinkerhoff lived there. They lived there for sometime and then they sold their home and moved into Bicknell town and bought a large home from some people by the name of Peterson and then they ran what we called in those days a hotel. It was quite a nice home with several bedrooms and Uncle Lee had a feed yard and took care of traveler's horses. People coming through would stop and I suppose they had a bed for 50¢ and meals perhaps for 25¢ and ate with the family and Uncle Lee fed the horses for 25¢ a horse or 50¢ a team, or span as it was called then. And Aunt Liza Brinkerhoff was a nurse and midwife. I can see her yet, a large sturdy woman that always wore a long black dress, it seemed, and a light tie apron over her shoulders and a bonnet and I seem to see her as she walked down the street always carrying a satchel or handbag as she went out to visit the sick. It seems that after she had visited a family or returned the next day perhaps after they had had a new baby and she was very helpful among the sick and was quite a large woman. She married Levi Brinkerhoff and was the mother of

Will Brinkerhoff, Ben Brinkerhoff, Cameron Brinkerhoff and some of the folks you may remember.

Then farther down and across the sand wash over by Uncle Jess's field and near the spring ditch was the Jerry Stringham farm. I don't remember Jerry Stringham but I do remember his boys Dave & Tom. My folks lived there for a number of years while they were building the home in town and I farmed the farm for them.

Then across the road in the field that is now Ralph Laces' was the George Stringham farm. George Stringham was quite an outstanding man in his time. He was a bishop for a while, he ran quite a large farm and a bunch of cattle and also ran a store in Bicknell. It seems like I can see him now as he commuted back and forth up the lane with a nice team of grey horses on a large white top buggy. His wife died when I was very young and then he married again, Mary Stringham they called her and they had two boys.

Then farther south in the Brinkerhoff home was George Brinkerhoff and he had two wives, Viola and Stella. I think as the story goes he married Viola, and Stella was not in good health and Viola wanted him to marry Stella so she could help to care for her and they lived there in two houses side by side. Viola did most of the heavy work and they each raised a family. The Brinkerhoff's after the boys got old enough to go to school some of them went off to learn to make cheese and they came back and ran for a number of years a creamery. They bought the milk from people in the valley and made cheese.

Then just south of that was the Willard Brinkerhoff farm down across over the fance south of the Dee Brinkerhoff place. Willard Brinkerhoff, George Brinkerhoff and Lee Brinkerhoff were brothers and they came here from down around Orderville. Willard Brinkerhoff was sort of an old bach before he got married and someone asked him why he didn't get married and he said if he got a good wife it would pay him for waiting and if he got a bad wife he wouldn't have so long to live with her. Willard Brinkerhoff's wife was a sister to George Durfey, a daughter of Alma Durfey. Then I remember they later moved to Teasdale and ran a hotel and a store and George Durfey lived on the farm for a number of years and then in later years their boy Ernest lived there and broodered some chickens and the brooder heater overheated and set the house afire and burned down the house.

Then we go east of there to what we speak of as the Barn Forty now

Elwood Morrell's field. Next to ours was where Billy Meeks lived. Billy Meeks was a large man. His wife, Aunt Sarah as she was called, was kind of a small woman but it was said she was Relief Society president in Thurber Ward for forty years. Uncle Billy was quite an outstanding man. They had lots of cattle, a big farm and it was said that when he was Bishop for many years he when he attended church on Sunday he would put on a white shirt and then wore the white shirt all week. My parents told me that along in his older years when he rather quit doing much of the hard work and was just around the yard and the boys took over, he went to the yard one day and found that they had tied up a wild mule to break in and to get ready to work. So Uncle Billy to be helpful and so on and have a little entertainment himself went down to the ditch bank and cut him a long green bushy willow and he would stroke the mule over and the mule kicked and rared to entertain Uncle Billy and he had a good time, but they said when he went to the house that night he had two green mule tracks on the back of his white shirt.

Across the fence North of Uncle Billy's house was where my grandfather Baker lived. I'll mention again that I remember when Billy Meek's house burned on Christmas morning when I was very small. Uncle Billy got up and made a coal fire in the stove and went to do the chores on Christmas morning and the house burned.

My grandfather lived just over the fence from Billy Meek's and my grandmother died before I was born and grandfather lived there with the boys for a time and then he moved up in with my father and mother; he and two of the boys Fred and Phil. Mart and Al lived with Uncle Tom and Aun Donnie (Fredonia) Baker.

Then farther over was the Willard Snow home. Willard Snow and his wife Melissa, we always called her Aunt Lis. Willard Snow was a kindly generous man. Everybody loved and liked him. I remember him as a Sunday School teacher, how he could entertain his boys and girls in class. Sunday school teaching then wasn't as it is now. We didn't have supplements and prepared lessons. They taught the Book of Mormon and the Bible. Brother Snow could make the prophets of the Book of Mormon come to life. Well, he was just a kindly good man. I remember my Grandfather Mangum telling when he came into the valley that passing by Brother Snow's along in the evening, his horse was tired and he had traveled a long ways and he needed a feed of

hay and so he stopped at Brother Snow's to see if he could feed his horses and Brother Snow said, "Well, I only have three feeds of hay left for my own horses but then you bring your horses in and feed them and I'll just have to turn my horses out one night earlier anyway."

Well then, just east of Brother Snow's place is the Taft Ranch and of course you as a family know much about the Tafts. I can remember Seth Taft, my wife's father, he died when I was about nine years old. He was elected representative from Wayne County and went to the State Legislature in Salt Lake City. On a vacation and excursion at Bingham Canyon he fell from a flat car and was killed. And so, of course, Grandmother Taft had the family to rear and I think she had a rather hard life. She spent much of her time with the sick and helping people who were in need.

Then a bit farther down to the ranch called the Harward place down near the River Bridge was where Jack Smith lived. Jack's wife's name was Sariah. She was Alma Durfey's daughter. They had a large family. Some fifteen children, I believe. At that time we had two Jack Smith's in our town. One was called Red Jack and one was Black Jack. Black Jack was the one who lived there by the River Bridge. He was Aunt Artie Taft's father.

Then across the river over where Dunk Taylor lives was the John Chidester home and John Chidester's wife was named Hulda and Hulda was a sister to my Grandmother Mangum. John Chidester was kind of a pleasant happy man, always whistling as he drove his team up and down the road.

Then we go farther to where Rulon Ellett lives, that was the Forsyth home. Bob or Robert Forsyth was LaVern's grandfather.

Then farther up where the Fish Hatchery is is where the Bullard people lived. I don't know so much about the old Gentleman Bullard. But I have heard so many stories about how she was a nurse and a midwife, sort of an angel of mercy. She went wherever she was needed to help with the sick. She went on horse-back, in the wagon, cold or in the middle of the night or any time she was needed. She was always ready to go and she was quite famous in our part of the country as a midwife and nurse that would help.

Then farther up the road we come to the Mangum place which when I was young was Chris Johnson's. Chris Johnson was Uncle Harve Mangum's (Clifford Mangum's father) wife's father. He had no wife as far back as I can remember. He later moved in with Uncle Harve and Aunt Melindy and lived with them until he died.

Then up in the Red Canyon was old man Alma Durfey and his wife Melissa, I believe. He was quite a contraversial old gentleman. He had a pug nose with a scar on the side of his nose and it was said that the old chicken coop did this when he fell off and someone said they should have torn the old chicken coop down before it ruined the whole family. But Alma lived there for a few years when I was young. I am sure there were others but perhaps time will not permit to tell all these things.

After the town moved from the old town to where it is now, the land was pretty much left vacant and it wasn't long till mother nature took over and it grew up into large rabbit brush and covered up the old foundations and places where the buildings had once been. Then Uncle Arthur Meeks got possession of the land and then I bought it from him. And as I worked the land and plowed and moved the brush I would find these old foundations of the homes fascinating to me and I always felt I would like to know who had lived there and something about their lives. And as I plowed the ground and plowed up pieces of dishes and broken pottery and things that had been used by those early people and old shoes it would be fascinating and I would always feel that if they could tell their story it would be an interesting thing. I wanted to know who had lived in those places, but I had waited so long that most of the men and people who lived there had all passed away and gone. One day I thought of my Mother and Aunt Donnie Baker who had lived there as young women and teenage girls and I thought surely they could tell me some of the things I would like to know about the place and so I asked them and they felt they could, so I got them in the car and drove them down to a place in the field where I knew that the school house was and stopped and as they got out and looked around they were lost. They hadn't been there for 60 or 70 years and there were no houses no landmarks. Grass had grown up over the foundations of the old buildings and they were not able to do much, but I finally convinced them that right where we were was where the school house once stood; and as they thought about it and started to reminisce they began to talk about things that had happened there in the school house and as they talked I stood by and listened to the many things they had to say.

They laughted about the funny things and talked about the serious things that had happened there and it was really an interesting experience. It almost seemed that they had gone back until they were teenagers again. Then after a time my mother turned to me and said, "here in the old school house is

where your father and I were married." She spoke as if perhaps the school house still stood there. Then she said after the wedding they went across over there and pointed to the west, to Tommy Rees's place and had dinner. And where she pointed was a foundation and old horse stall and a few things that showed there had been a home there one time. So I knew that was where Tommy Rees had lived. Then she said, "After the dinner we went up to Brother Stringham's store," and pointed off to the north and where she pointed I knew there had been a building there so I knew that was where Brother Stringham's store was and then she said to the east was Mansfield's store and just south of that was where Parn Keele lived. Maybe you remember along the lane, Sandy Lane, you remember the old cellar, wrecked cellar, and foundation that was there that I suppose was Peter Mansfield's store or it was the tithing yard. I have heard some of the older people talking about sand drifting over the fence at the tithing yard and making a high sand drift. Well, there is a little sand drift there and I have often thought it was the sand drift at the tithing office yard.

Well, right close to the school house was where the old school house stood. Evidently when they first came there, when there were fewer settlers, they built a school house. Of course they always had the school house and the church house and it took care of all their needs. It was a place for recreation, a place for meetings at school and all these things.

I remember one thing that they told that was very interesting to me was the time they set Santy Claus on fire in the school house. It seems some of the bigger boys gave matches to the smaller boys and told them that on Christmas Eve when Santa Claus came in his red suit and trimmings to strike a match and set fire to the cotton on his suit. I believe Harve Mangum was the boy that struck the match and set fire to the cotton on Santy Claus. Of course, the cotton caught fire and Santa Claus kind of went up in smoke. They put out the fire and pulled off the suit and I guess pretty much spoiled the Christmas Eve program, but here it was 60 or 70 years later and my Mother and Aunt Donnie thought it was quite funny.

Well, it was quite an experiencing day. I listened to them as they related the things that had happened there. I got more information, perhaps, than I really expected that I would.

Then they told that a little west of there where I plowed into an old

foundation that that was where Jont Hunt lived. Then you remember up in the field near the Barn 40 a little cottonwood tree that used to grow there, that was where Mrs. Thomas lived.

Well, I've thought a few times as they say, if we could just turn back the pages of time to about 1890 and stop at the school house when a dance was in progress and Gus Kerle was playing for the dance and calling the square dances and quadrilles. Or stop down by Uncle Willard Snow's and visit for a moment and have him tell some of his interesting stories and get what was happening today, it would really be an interesting experience.

They must have been a great people. They worked hard. Their clothing was rough and their hands were rough from hard labor. I don't suppose there was really any rich or any poor. I wonder sometimes if they really realized they were having hardships. I guess it was just a way of life with them. Some of them had been born on the trail on the imigrant road or on the place place here and that was about all they had known in life. They all had a log house built with their own hands and help of their neighbors. They worked together, they played together, they laughed together, and cried together. They had no one to care for their sick or help them with their dead. As I say they were a great people and lest we forget, we have a great heritage. We owe a great debt to these people who came first. They sort of left their footprints in the sands of time.

Many things now, perhaps there may be some things I have said that are not exactly 100% right. We don't remember things as we should, but I don't know of anybody here now that can correct me since I am getting to be one of the older ones that are here. So lest we forget the memory of these good people and the sacrifice they made for us, we need to remember we are now enjoying the fruits of their hard labors.

I've just about exhausted myself and I've run out of tape so I'll just say goodnight for now.