

ORRIN PORTER ROCKWELL AND THE BENNIONS

What follows are excerpts from two books about Orrin Porter Rockwell, one of the most famous and controversial of the Mormon Pioneers. Both books are found in the special collections section of the Salt Lake City Library. As one incident is covered in both books, you can reflect on the perils of writing history! First are excerpts from Orrin Porter Rockwell: Man of God, Son of Thunder, by Harold Schindler, published in 1966 by the University of Utah Press. He was a long-time reporter for the Salt Lake Tribune. His copious footnotes include references to John Bennion's Journal.

Page 224: When Rockwell walked into his home on the afternoon of his return [1855, as Rockwell returns to Salt Lake from a trip to San Francisco], he had a visitor; John Bennion was waiting to ask his permission to build a cabin and graze a herd of cattle in Rush Valley. Rockwell's control over the valley extended to grazing rights, but Bennion was told to see Bill Hickman on the matter of building a cabin in the valley.

Pages 313-315: It was now January 14 [1862]. John Bennion, an old friend of Rockwell's and a comrade-in-arms from the days of the Utah Expedition, tied his mare, Brown Sal by name, to a fence post in West Jordan, then entered the home of his bishop

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1990 Reunion Plans Set

By Robert G. Bennion, President, Bennion Family Association

It is a pleasure to tell you of the plans for the next Bennion Family Reunion. The date is Saturday August 18, 1990 at 3:00 p.m. The Taylorsville Stake House at 1399 West 4800 South in Salt Lake City will be the gathering place.

The starting time is a little earlier than in past years so that the "Grandfather Groups" can meet, organize, and renew ties to other members of their Grandfather Group. Grandfather Groups refer to the descendants of each of the 37 children of Samuel and John who had posterity. We will try to reserve 37 separate locations at the Stake Center for these groups to meet! This would be an excellent opportunity to meet with your closer cousins and share information and plans to work on family lines other than just the Bennion line, which is the focus of the larger Bennion Family Association. If you think your Grandfather Group will be large, please let us know in advance and we'll reserve an appropriate space for you. The first hour of the reunion

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ORRIN PORTER ROCKWELL & THE BENNIONS (cont.)

to settle tithing. When he came out shortly after midnight the horse was gone and Bennion was forced to walk four miles home. His son, Sam [*Samuel Roberts Bennion, aged 19 at the time*], hearing of the theft, was furious; Brown Sal had the reputation of being one of the finest horses in Zion. Rounding up some of his father's friends for a posse, young Sam, Orson Cutler, and John Irving began tracking the culprits while Sam Bateman went for Rockwell. In Draperville, a settlement south of West Jordan, the five men learned Huntington and Smith, accompanied by Clawson, had been seen in the vicinity and were heading west. [*Lot Huntington, John P. Smith, and Moroni Clawson were suspected of various other crimes and active warrants were already out for their arrest.*]

Ahead of the posse by a full day, the three suspects, oblivious of the manhunters sniffing at their heels, rode leisurely toward Faust Mail Station, a small outpost twenty-two miles west of Camp Floyd. Huntington, after spotting a large herd of cattle being driven by a friend, Howard R. Egan, son of the pioneer scout, had ridden out alone to eat dinner in the Egan camp. Before bidding his school chum adios, Huntington suggested the two parties team up at Faust and ride the trail together as far as Ruby Valley, Egan's destination.

By now Rockwell's posse had reached Camp Floyd, where they learned from the Overland Stage agent that the three fugitives had passed through several hours before. Accepting an offer to use a stage coach for the remainder of the chase, the weary riders struck the trail for Faust's, pulling into the secluded station about four o'clock in the morning. Carefully moving the coach out of sight, the four men took positions around the crude log structure and waited for Rockwell's signal. They shivered in the snow and bitter cold until ten in the morning when the station door opened noisily, and the figure of H.J. Faust, station owner, emerged. From his place of concealment Rockwell beckoned to the startled innkeeper, and was told the three hunted men were at that moment eating

breakfast.

"Go back in and tell them to come out with their hands up," Rockwell ordered.

Several minutes ticked off after Faust closed the door behind him. Then, as Rockwell was contemplating the wisdom of rushing the cabin, Lot Huntington appeared, a heavy cap and ball pistol clenched in his fist. Tall and handsome, the young outlaw moved with a confident swagger. Without bothering to look around, Huntington made straight for the stable and Brown Sal. A warning shout to surrender was ignored. Scrambling from his hiding place, Rockwell shook the numbing cold from his body and ran to the side of the corral adjoining the stable in time to see Huntington pull himself onto the unsaddled stolen mare. Rockwell barked a final warning. Huntington started to squeeze the trigger of his .44 at the instant Rockwell cut loose with a blast from his Colt. The wanted man stiffened convulsively as eight balls tore into his stomach [*footnote includes: "Significantly, Rockwell fired once and discharged eight buckshot"*]; he slid from the horse and crashed down on a corral rail, one leg catching a post. Twenty-seven year old Lot Huntington dangled grotesquely from the cedar rungs and bled to death.

At the first sound of shooting, Clawson and Smith surrendered without a fight. Huntington's body was placed in the stagecoach, and after stopping at Camp Floyd to telegraph ahead, the posse headed home with its prisoners. A few miles out they intercepted the Egan cattle drive, and Rockwell, recognizing Egan's son, sang out, "Everything all right?" The boy, puzzled at the sight of an unscheduled stagecoach full of heavily armed passengers, answered, "Yeah, so far."

"Good. You be careful and keep a good watch on those cattle."

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Only later did young Egan learn that Huntington had planned to rustle his herd and drive it to California.

Four policemen were waiting for the stage when it pulled into Townsend's corral about five o'clock that morning. It was a tired Rockwell who alighted, turned Clawson and Smith over to the law, then led his winded team to the stable. Hardly had he begun to strip the harnesses from the animals than gunfire exploded down the street in the direction the officers had taken with the two captives. Rockwell pulled his revolver and ran toward the sound. He came upon the policeman standing over the lifeless bodies of the prisoners. "Tried to escape," one of the constables explained matter-of-factly.

When word circulated the city of Huntington's death and the subsequent demise of this two cronies, some of the community's citizens exchanged knowing glances. Bill Hickman looked for several minutes upon the body of Huntington, the man who had shot and nearly crippled him four years earlier, then studied the other two corpses. He shrugged off the tale that Clawson and Smith had been killed while escaping. It was "nonsense," he said. "They were both powder-burnt, and one of them was shot in the face. How could that be, and they running?"

...

Rockwell, Bateman, Irving, and Cutler made their respective ways home; young Sam Bennion jubilantly rode Brown Sal into her stall; and John Bennion, after critically inspecting his recovered mare, that night jotted in his journal: "...Samuel R. got home Friday morning about 9 o'clock with the mare saddle and bridle neck strap and chain were missing I brought the sheep down."

[The following excerpts are from Porter Rockwell, the Mormon Frontier Marshall, Body Guard of Joseph Smith, by Nicholas Van Alfen, and published in 1967 by the LDS Institute of Religion in Ogden, Utah, and condensed from the author's master's thesis at BYU. No footnotes are included.]

Page 72: Rockwell was very successful as a rancher and stockman. He used good foresight in selecting a location for his ranch in Skull Valley. In the early sixties Rockwell, John Bennion and fifteen other men explored the south end of Rush and Skull Valleys for the purpose of livestock raising. Porter chose Government Creek in the extreme south end of Skull Valley and there established a notable ranch.

Page 73a: Israel Bennion, who lived at Vernon, Utah, a son of John mentioned above, tells how he as a boy at roundup time camped with the Rockwell outfit. Israel Bennion stated that Port was a good neighbor, a picturesque and stately rider. "Them was bully days; there was grass, fat cattle and fine horses," he said. Having heard stories, his folks at home were a little leery of that neighbor; but Israel thought he was just fine, despite his high, squeaky voice and his long hair done up neatly at the back of his head. John Bennion use to say that aside from his fondness for whiskey, "Old Port is, was, and always will be loyal to the Kingdom."

Pages 100-108: Glynn Bennion [*born in 1892, son of Israel, who was the eldest son of John Bennion and Esther Ann Birch. Israel was 18 years younger than Sam, who was the eldest son of John Bennion and Esther Wainwright.*] told a story about one of his pioneer relatives which involved Rockwell and Lot Huntington. A young man named Sam Bennion, age twenty, had recently returned home with Lot Smith's company of scouts

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and who had been engaged in guarding the overland stage through the Rockies at the time of the Civil War. Sam owned a beautiful, well-bred mare named Brown Sal. This mare had won fame for her intelligence and gameness among Lot Smith's men.

Young Bennion arrived home in time to take part in the annual Mormon event, both social and religious, of settling tithing at the meetinghouse. This event, a gay occasion at the West Jordan church house, always took place around New Year's day. The many people coming and going had made a maze of tracks in every direction in the snow. Sam proudly rode his mare up to the hitching post and entered the church. When he came out some time later, his mare was gone. He made excited efforts to trail the animal, but in that maze of tracks it was futile.

True to the natural tendency of the people of that area when in need of help of this kind, Sam's thoughts turned to Porter Rockwell. He struck out for home a few miles away, got another horse and in the early hours of the morning arrived in Salt Lake City. It was four a.m. when he got Porter out of bed, and the old scout was soon in the saddle. There was no night too cold to freeze his ardor for such a task or help a neighbor. With his croney Sam Bateman and a few others, he set out for Jordan.

This wizzard [*sic*] of the tracks gave real evidence of his genius. For some time he studied the many tracks leading in all directions. Porter learned the peculiar structure of the mare's feet and soon he discovered that she had been led in a circuitous route to misdirect pursuers. Old Port was not fooled, he led his posse along a road leading across the flats to the town of Harriman in the southeastern part of the valley.

No one at Fort Harriman had seen the horse thieves with Brown Sal, and some of the men began to think they were on a wild goose chase. However, Porter was undaunted. The fact that no one had seen the mare convinced him that it had come through there in the night. As it left the fort, the posse was again confronted with a large number of

horse tracks. But Port was soon following signs that others could not see. They went southward toward the hills separating arid Rush Valley from Cedar Valley. As the tracks grew fewer in number, Sal's tracks stood out more clearly, and it was evident the posse was going in the right direction.

When the tracks became more and more clear, it was apparent that there were two men on foot with Brown Sal. Rockwell concluded that the outlaws were heading for the western desert, so he sent Sam Bateman back to Harriman for a team and buckboard, with instructions to follow the overland route from the Jordan Narrows to Camp Floyd. It was quite plain that the thieves, three in number, were taking turns riding.

Rockwell, with his men, rode through the hills into Cedar Valley, feeling sure that they would soon overtake the bandits. However, the pursuers were very puzzled as to why anyone should start going in that direction with one stolen horse among the three of them and also display such pains to cover up the trail.

All that day and into the night the posse followed without sleep. Presently, the trail entered the overland stage road, but the men were dismayed to find that a herd of cattle had passed that way, obliterating signs of the mare's hoofs. Porter assigned men to each side of the road to watch for the outlaw tracks leaving the road. This process was so slow in the dark that Sam Bateman overtook them in the buckboard.

The posse arrived at Camp Floyd about midnight. They did not stop to make inquiries but rode on through the settlement to check if the fugitives had gone on beyond it. Port discovered that they had and that they were following the overland stage route. Porter correctly calculated that the bandits

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intended to stay with the overland route and that they were probably spending the night at Faust's Station twenty miles away. Wanting to surprise the outlaws by daybreak, the posse pushed their mounts to the limit.

After suffering from cold and hunger, the posse reached Faust's Station just before dawn. Porter stationed his men around the buildings. He then sent Sam Bateman into the stable to see if the mare was there. He returned with the report that she was.

The first streak of dawn was beginning to appear when the men became aware of someone leaving the cabin. Porter recognized the man as H.J. Faust, called "Doc." He was an ex-pony express rider and a noted frontiersman. Rockwell motioned for him to come over and inquired about the men inside the cabin. Faust told Port that Lot Huntington was one of them and that there were two others. They were eating breakfast and had told Faust that they were heading for California. Faust was asked to go back to the cabin and tell the outlaws to come out. Porter knew Huntington to be a fearless and dangerous man and, therefore, was not surprised [*sic*] when the gangsters did not appear with their arms raised. Finally, the door opened and Lot stepped out, pistol in hand, his shifty eyes scrutinizing every corner of the outbuildings. He made directly for the stable, and when he was about to enter it Porter ordered him to surrender, but Huntington ignored it.

After a moment, Huntington appeared leading the mare, carefully keeping her between himself and the posse. In this fashion he led the horse to the corral gate, and carefully began lowering the bars. Porter, who was behind a cedar post, kept warning Lot that he had better give himself up. Lot told Porter where he would send him if he or anyone else got in his way. Each man had a healthy respect for the

other's aim. For a few moments it looked as if no one was going to bar the outlaw leaving the corral. Porter could have blasted Huntington when he stepped out of the cabin, but he was not a wanton killer and hoped that killing would not be necessary.

Huntington jerked a little too hard at the last bar of the corral gate, and the end of the pole rebounded, striking the mare in the flank. Plunging away from it, the horse momentarily exposed the outlaw to a shot. In that instant Lot Huntington fell dead across the bars with a hole in his chest.

The other two men, who had far less nerve, surrendered. They were ordered into the buckboard with the dead man, and the return journey was immediately begun, with Sam Bennion riding Brown Sal.

BENNION FAMILY HISTORY PROJECTS: UPDATE

Listed below are all the known family history projects in progress within the Bennion Family Association. Most of them need additional helpers to keep the work moving forward. Your excuse of "I don't know where to start" is no longer valid—just contact the coordinator listed below and pitch in!!

1. History of the John Bennion Family

This is a book that will be published by our Family History Coordinator Ruth Winder Rogers, 1941 N. 360 East, Provo, UT 84604 (801) 377-9888. The actual publication date will be largely determined by the health of Ruth and her husband, but we are optimistic for a release by reunion time. Ruth would still be interested in any material you may have on John and/or any of his three wives, as this book intends to capture all known information about them. It will also include a transcription of John's recently re-discovered Muddy River Mission journal, which has never been published.

2. History of Samuel Bennion and his Family

This book will be written by Helen Sharp Madsen, 3376 Lee Ann St., Salt Lake City, UT 84119 (801) 968-7848. Helen is still in the infor-
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BENNION FAMILY HISTORY PROJECTS: UPDATE (cont.)

mation-gathering stage, and no publication date is yet available. If you have any information pertaining to Samuel and/or his three wives, please get in touch with Helen.

3. Update of Bennion Family Volume 2

The book Bennion Family Volume 2, published in about 1963 and now out of print, contain a listing of all descendants of Samuel and John Bennion up to that date, organized by family. Those of us fortunate to have one of the copies know how valuable it is as a reference tool. Steven E. Bennion, our Computer Coordinator, is trying to take advantage of computer technology and update that book. It appears to be a never-ending task as we Bennions continue to proliferate! We therefore have a perpetual task, headed by Steve, to track as completely as possible all Bennion families. If you would like to help on your particular portion of the tree, or at least verify that the computer knows what you know, contact Steve at 1355 Dover, Salt Lake City, UT 84108 (801) 582-1300.

4. Verifying the accuracy of all Bennion pedigree charts and family group sheets.

Helen Madsen (address and phone listed above) is spearheading the effort to double-check all original sources and making as absolutely as certain as possible the accuracy of our records. As incredible as it may seem, even Bennions have been known to make mistakes! Even without mistakes, records often contradict each other and judgment calls must be made. As family history research is increasingly computerized, accuracy is increasingly important, or else mistakes will proliferate. This activity is also a necessary prerequisite to entering our family data into the central LDS church computers. Another benefit of this effort will be the elimination of duplicate temple work for our ancestors.

5. Entering Bennion genealogy records into the LDS Personal Ancestral File personal computer software.

Once Helen & Co. have verified all information, Steve Bennion supervises its entry into the PAF software. However, people willing to do the data

entry are needed. Steve's address and phone number are listed earlier in this article. This project will make it possible for us to share rapidly all pedigree charts and family group sheets, eliminating efforts to retrace what has already been done when someone new catches the family history bug!

6. Bennion Family Historical Repository

Our current President of the Bennion Family Association, Robert G. Bennion, 2661 Evergreen Ave., Salt Lake City, UT 84109 (801) 484-8308, is in the process of procuring a file cabinet into which we will put a copy of all valuable historical Bennion documents. Some Bennion documents are on file at BYU, some at the LDS Church Archives, and some at the Utah Historical Society, and some nowhere! Bob is attempting to establish a file which has a copy of everything we know of from the Samuel & John era, plus historical records of the Bennion Family Association. Some of the items he is collecting include copies of photographs, journals, and minutes of old Bennion family reunions and meetings. This file cabinet will always reside with the current BFA President.

7. Family Tree Research (pedigree charts, family groups sheets, etc.)

These efforts are divided somewhat by line:

John Bennion & Elizabeth Roberts (Samuel's & John's parents): Helen Madsen

Mary Bushell (Samuel's first wife): Helen Madsen

Rhoda Jones (Samuel's third wife): nobody!

Esther Wainwright (John's first wife): Ruth Rogers

Esther Ann Birch (John's second wife):

Kathy Pincock, 5017 Candicewood Circle, West Valley City, UT 84120, (801) 965-9780

Mary Turpin (John's third wife): Elaine Nichols, 2121 Kensington, Salt Lake City, UT 84108 (801) 581-0315

HOW TO KEEP RECEIVING THIS FABULOUS PUBLICATION!!

1989 marked the inauguration by the Bennion Family Association's Executive Committee of the quarterly Bennion Family Recorder, which has several objectives:

- 1) To keep interested family members abreast of family history projects under way;
- 2) To invite greater participation in the work (& fun) of family histories;
- 3) To share historical excerpts from our common Bennion heritage;
- 4) To disseminate fully documented computer-based pedigree charts and family group sheets, so that duplicative research and temple work is minimized.

We have decided to send the first issue of each year to all family members whose addresses are in our computer database (about 2000 addresses at present). The following three issues of each year are sent only to those who return the form on the last page of the year's first issue! The Bennion Family Recorder is absolutely free, but we don't want to burden the uninterested nor waste money on printing and postage to send the Recorder where it might not be appreciated.

So, if you want to receive the rest of the 1990 issues of the Recorder, you must return the form which is the last page of this issue! If you don't trust your brothers, sisters, cousins, parents, children, etc. to return the form, feel free to add their names and addresses to your form and we'll see to it that they receive the year's issues.

In 1989 we sent the first two issues to all addresses in our database, but the last two issues only to those who returned the form. If you would like to receive any or all of the 1989 issues, please indicate on the form in this issue. For your reference, we have listed the highlights of the 1989 issues:

Volume 1 No. 1 (March 1989)

Review of 1988 Reunion
Story of Kanosh, the adopted Indian son of John & Esther W. Bennion
Family Constitution
Family History Projects in Progress
Election of Family Officers
John & Samuel's Pedigree Chart
Family Group Sheet of John Bennion and Elizabeth Roberts

Volume 1 No. 2 (June 1989)

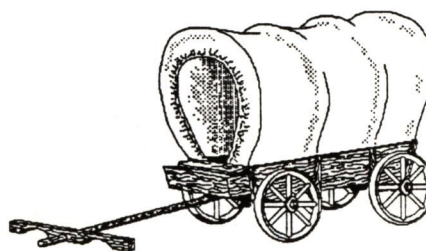
John's Muddy River Journal found (excerpts included)
John & Samuel's Obituaries
Pioneer Bennion Cemetery Tour
Family Group Sheet of William Bennion and Elizabeth Iboll
Family Group Sheet of Robert Roberts and Elizabeth Jones

Volume 1 No. 3 (October 1989)

Story of a Bennion Pioneer Petticoat
John's Two Patriarchal Blessings
Samuel's Three Patriarchal Blessings
Transcription of 1959 tape recording of interview of Mary Elizabeth Lindsay Bennion, daughter-in-law of John and granddaughter of Samuel. Includes comments from Desla S. Bennion and Cora Lindsay Bennion

Volume 1 No. 4 (December 1989)

Reproduction of all known photographs of John, Samuel, and their wives: Mary Bushell, Rhoda Jones, Esther Wainwright, Esther Ann Birch, Mary Turpin.



1990 REUNION PLANS (cont.)

will be reserved for these grandfather group meetings (along with children's activities).

A large amount of printed material will be available along with photographs (some in color) of our family past. We are also planning on having a bank of computers, both IBM-compatible and MacIntosh, on hand to demonstrate LDS Personal Ancestral File software with Bennion Family data entered and available for sale on both 5 3/4 and 3 1/2 inch computer disks.

Something else new at the reunion will be a copy stand and camera to take photographs of old photos you might have that would be valuable to place in the Bennion Family Association historical repository. So bring those old photos that you love but won't part with and we'll take a picture of them!

We are most anxious to have senior members of the family join with us to discuss our early history so that their remarks could be recorded on both audio and video tape. We'll have a video camera and near-professional studios (classrooms!) reserved for these interviews. If there is anything your committee can do to aid in getting these people to attend please get in touch with me. Also if you know of anyone with stories that should be recorded help us to reach these people and preserve their memories!!

As in the past, the Bennion Family Association will supply the drinks and dessert. Bring your own picnic, but don't let a lack of one deter you from coming. There will be plenty to munch on and sharing is a famous Bennion trait.

Mark you calendar, and do come. Each additional person doubles the pleasure and love of those attending. Another mailing will go out shortly before the reunion telling in more detail of the Bennion Celebration, our commitment to our history, and dedication to the future.

TAX-EXEMPT STATUS FINALLY CONFIRMED!

By Robert G. Bennion, President, Bennion Family Association

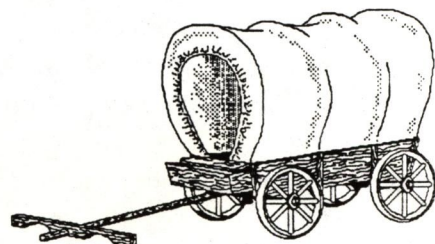
After a year and a half of effort, word has finally been received from the IRS that the Bennion Family Association (BFA) has been approved as a tax exempt organization. This status has important benefits to both BFA and each of us as individual members.

First: Any gifts, legacies, bequests made to the BFA are deductible from the individual donor's income tax. We do not charge for this Recorder or have any dues; we simply suggest that members make a contribution to the BFA.

Second: We previously started bulk mailings on the Recorder which reduced the cost of mailings from 25¢ to 16¢ per piece. Now with the tax exempt designation we will be able to mail at about 8¢ per piece. This issue's mailing will go to all 2000 members Steven Bennion has on our mailing list. A little computation shows the mailing cost reduction from \$320 to \$160, a savings we can devote to more direct work on family history.

Third: We are not now required to file any Income, FUTA, FICA, or form 990 returns. You are aware of the relief this affords us.

Should anyone wish to receive a copy of this IRS Letter Ruling #947 DO-CG, we would be happy to supply one.



ORDER FORM

	Unit Price	Qty	Total
Yes, I want to keep receiving the <u>Recorder</u> in 1990!	FREE!	_____	FREE!
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Vol. 1 No. 4 (Dec. 1989)	FREE!	_____	FREE!
Suggested Annual Family Contribution (optional, tax deductible)	\$10	_____	_____
<u>Bennion Family of Utah vol. 1</u> (reprint)	\$10	_____	_____
<u>Bennion Family of Utah vol. 2</u> (xerox with plastic binding)	\$10	_____	_____
8" x 10" color photograph of Daniel Weggland's painting of Samuel Bennion's 1862 Taylorsville home	\$10	_____	_____
	TOTAL	_____	_____

Comments (additional family names and addresses, Recorder ideas, projects, etc.
Contributions to "Bennion Bits" are strongly encouraged!)

Please return this page to: Bennion Family Association
 c/o Steve Bennion
 1355 Dover
 Salt Lake City, UT 84108

RETURN THIS PAGE OR NO MORE ISSUES IN 1990!!

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