

Vernard Huntsman's History



Figure 1: Elmer Ames and Augusta Ann Huntsman. Vernard Huntsman (top right)

Like Nephi of old, I was born of goodly parents in Annabelle, Utah, about 3 1/2 miles east of Richfield, on 20

November, 1898. About the only things I can remember there are Mother gave me a Birthday Party on my fifth birthday and

I was given two five cent pieces and a handkerchief, and I guess some other things. I can also remember Mr. Clay's pottery shop Where he made pottery out of clay or mud.

Father went to work at Sunnyside and in the spring he sent for us to come down and visit with him. While we were there, our home burned to the ground and nothing was saved. Father took sick with appendicitis and was sent to Salt Lake City and Mother and her family of five lived with relatives. I remember while staying with them of seeing the large passenger trains coming through all lit up. It was a beautiful sight. Mother was informed that Dad was very sick and after weeks mother got a telegram from her sisters who were in Salt Lake City. All it



Figure 2: Old Woodville Hall

said was, 'going to Idaho, come at once'. Mother thought Dad had died and that they were taking her with them to Idaho. We got to the train and went to Salt Lake City and when we pulled into Salt Lake City depot, imagine Mother's surprise when she saw Dad on the

platform. He had just gotten out of the hospital.

They had visited with Dad and had talked him into going with them. We had no home, no money, no nothing, so Dad thought this was the only thing left to do. They were going to Idaho with teams and wagons. It took us twelve days to go from Salt Lake City to Idaho Falls, Idaho, and Dad had to walk most of the way because of his operation. It hurt him to ride in the wagon. About all I remember about the trip was crossing the railroad tracks and hearing others read the sign which said 'Look out for the cars.' That was the sign at each crossing. We arrived in Idaho Falls on the 31st day of May 1904.

Dad [Elmer Ames Huntsman] got a job from his nephew, but was too weak to do much. His Nephew's name was Louis Nebeker, and he had a farm east of Shelley by the Butte. We lived there in a tent all summer and part of the winter. We moved over to Woodville on the 17th of January. Dad bought a small farm [40 acres], but it didn't have a house on it, so dad rented an old house and we lived in it. I have heard Mother tell how the cold blew up through the cracks of the floor and she had to put quilts on the floor to keep from freezing. Dad was able to buy a small two-room house east of Shelley and got help and moved it across the ice on the Snake river and put it on the farm, and that is where we lived. Zalia and Lenard were born in the old shack. I remember when we moved to Woodville, we crossed the bridge west of Shelley and came up the river, I was afraid we would fall in as the road was narrow and was

right on the river bank.

When we moved to Woodville we had part of a sack of flour and five or six pounds of bacon and Dad had a hard time trying to keep us alive. Did you ever eat



Figure 3: Vernard and Grace Huntsman & Victor and Edna Kotter on the first Woodville Bridge

potato soup made out of water and potatoes with a little milk in it? We never ate whole milk. All of the cream was taken out of it so Mother could buy a few things with the cream money.

We held our Church and went to school I the building which is now (1969) Ern Balmforth's home. It used to sit on the canal bank east of our farm. In 1903 the ward started to build a church house. The foundation and floor were completed by the 4th of July and we held a

celebration on it. I remember I had 10 cents to spend and I bought an orange and a bottle of pop with it. This building was completed in 1906, and used for church until 1920 and for a dance hall until 1950, this was the old Woodville Hall. This is the building that is now the apartment house in Woodville.

The only way we could get to Shelley was to either go to Idaho Falls or down west of Shelley, as that was the only bridge across the river. Sometimes we would ford the river down where Norman Balmforth now lives. This was very dangerous, and it is a wonder someone didn't get drowned.

They decided to build a bridge across the river south of the Woodville townsite. I remember watching them work on it. It is now torn down. My Dad and Grace's father [James Albert Montague] played an important part in building the bridge. We had to work hard, but did have some time for play. Our play consisted of making big fires out of the sagebrush, playing Run Sheep Run.. And later on we would go to different homes and have oyster suppers and play games. We remember when the first electric lights were invented, when the first automobiles were made and how they used to scare the horses. I remember working in the beet fields and we would hear a car coming down the old dirt road. We would all run to the side of the road to watch it pass. I remember the first movies that were made. Dad would promise to take us to the circus if we would work hard. We would go to the circus and see the big parade and other things that were free, but didn't have the

money to go into the main event. Our Bishop, J. J. Hammer, was up there and he took Oreta and me into a sideshow and we saw our first picture show . [silent pictures]. I can still remember the show.

We used to have rabbit drives and would kill [jack] rabbits by the thousands. We would drive them into a wire fence pen, then kill them with clubs. Later, when we could afford to use Guns, we would choose up sides and shoot the rabbits, and that way we would count them. The losing side would pay for the oyster suppers.

At the age of twelve, I started herding cows out on the desert. I would come down to the townsite and start gathering cows and would take our cows with them. I charged one dollar a month. We would see coyotes about every day, and would see rattlesnakes every day and would actually tease them with sticks and watch them strike. There were wild bulls roaming the range and we would watch them fight each other.



Figure 4: School picture of Vernard Huntsman taken 1906

One time, Delos, my younger brother and I were chasing a cottontail rabbit. It ran into a bunch of rocks. I got a stick to hit it, and Delos got another stick to poke in the hole. I was to hit it as it came out and Dee had to lay down on his stomach and couldn't see what

he was doing. Instead of a rabbit coming out, pretty soon a large snake crawled out right over Dee's shoulder. As soon as I

saw it, I yelled at Dee and we both took off. It happened to be a very large blow snake which was harmless, but it could just as well have been a rattler, which is very poisonous. We figured the rattlesnakes were very dangerous and we would kill them. We used to run them into a large bunch of sagebrush and then set fire to it and watch them sizzle.

One thing I would like to mention is the experience I had in a music way. My folks were too poor to give us music lessons, and I always had a desire to learn music. I worked in the beet fields for thirteen years, and never did go to High School or College, but I was determined to learn a little about music and I have a true story to tell that I well match with any ones. I took a little old team, went out to the Lavas, and hauled cedar wood, brought it in and sawed it into chunks, hauled it to Idaho Falls, and traded it for music lessons. When we were first married, about all we had to live on was what I got from playing for dances. I played in the largest and best band that was in the valley.. That was when we were paid and we would play for Rodeos and Fairs. One time we entertained the best band in the U. S. John Phillips Sousa and his band came to Idaho Falls, and our band gave them a dinner and party after their concert. I would go to Idaho Falls and practice in the band, and this night I caught a ride, and I knew the boys from Shelley would bring me home. Well, they did. But when we got to the old river bridge, they had torn all the old planks off and were preparing to replank the bridge.. The boys from Shelley dumped me off, and as I looked across the bridge,

all that was on the bridge was a 2 + 12 plank. I either had to walk down to the bridge west of Shelley or walk back to Idaho Falls, or else crawl across this plank. This was in the spring and the Snake River was a roaring river. The water reached almost to the plank. I was too cold to stay there for the night, so I got down on my knees with my trumpet in one hand and crawled across the plank.

I was sure glad to get on the other side. When I played in the band we used to have fancy uniforms. I remember when we marched I really had to stretch out as my legs were short and those slide trombone players that led the band had long legs.

Grace's family [James Albert Montague] came to Woodville the year before we came, and of course we were very close to them and our parents were always together. Dad bought a new buggy and my cousin, Ervin Jones, and I took it and got our girlfriends, Pearl Edwards and Grace Montague. The horse ran away and tipped us all in the canal and he sure smashed up the buggy. The first five years of our married life we moved eight different times, we started out farming, but I always wanted to be in the store business. We raised spuds and I had to hire help to harvest them/ If I had sold the spuds when I harvested them , it would have taken all of the money to pay the help; so I talked the help into waiting a while for their money, and I went to work scraping with my team and made enough to pay the help. I put the spuds in the cellar and as they were so cheap, I almost forgot about them. The next spring the price of spuds came up and I

went up on the farm to check on them. A coyote had dug a large hole through the straw and as I opened the door it looked like all the spuds were frozen and were all rotten. I climbed and crawled to the back of the cellar and found they weren't so bad. I picked about fifteen sacks of frozen spuds off the top and the rest of them had kept just perfect. I sold the spuds, got \$535.00 for them and that is what I used to start in the store business. We bought a three room house on time and used one room for a store. I was the only merchant in the valley who was hauling his groceries from the wholesale house in Idaho Falls with a team and wagon. Our first day's sale came to \$10.10. Later I bought an old Model T Ford with no top on it, and used it to haul my groceries out. We were in this store for three years, then decided to build



Figure 5: Vern's Cash Store and home in Woodville.

a small store where the store is now located. We built two rooms behind to live in. While working on this store building, I got a job weighing beets which were stacked just across the road. I



Figure 6: Apartment House in Woodville

weighed the beets, worked on the store, and Mother took care of our little store and cooked for the men that were working on the new store, and took care of three little children. While taking care of the store, a neighbor stole \$20.00, which was a lot of money then. Soon after we built the store, my wife got discouraged and wanted to sell. Alvin Gifford came and offered us a 20-acre farm for it, so we traded. The farm didn't have a house on it, so I sold it to Wes for \$3,000.00. Each move we made was worse than the other, and we were sorry we traded. We were living where we live now, in a little two-room house that Grace's folks had bought, and they had to have it in February. We bought a new car and were paying \$55.00 each month. This was the blackest part of our financial life. On the 6th day of January, I went over to the store and asked Alvin how he was coming. He said, "Not so good." I said, like I was joking, "Why don't you sell it back to me? And I was really surprised when he said, "I will sell it to you." We took

inventory during the night and the next morning he turned the keys over to me. That was the 7th of January, 1927, Were we happy! That day I made the statement that if we didn't make only a dollar a day, I wouldn't complain. It was ours again and we had a place to lay our heads. We named it Vern's Cash Store. For years we celebrated on the 7th of January. We built onto the store and the home five different times.

We used to haul wood from the lavas and sell it and use it for firewood. I have counted forty sleighs coming off the hill; and each one would have a tub on the sleigh and a fire in it to keep warm. That is how Woodville got its name. It was



Figure 7: The lavas west of Woodville

sure a beautiful sight to see the fires at night. I was called by the Church to fill a mission in the Northern States. I left on the 15th of February, 1918, and returned on the 15th of March, 1920. When I left on my mission I wanted to take my trumpet with me, but when I got settled Dad was going to send it to

me. When I wrote for it, they said that all they could send was the mouthpiece because our home had burned to the



Figure 8: Old Woodville church

ground and all but the mouthpiece was burned in the fire. Oreta's first husband



Figure 9: Vern and Grace in front of new home in Woodville.

died while I was on the mission.

In 1936, I was sustained as Stake Superintendent of the YMMIA and served in this office for about six years. Then I was put in the High Council of the Shelley Stake in April of 1942, and served there for about eleven years. On December 9th 1951, I was sustained as Bishop of the Woodville Ward and served for almost five years. Then I was put in as Stake Music Director and served for ten years.

In 1949 we bought the old Church house [Community Hall] and made it into a 22 room Apartment House with 6

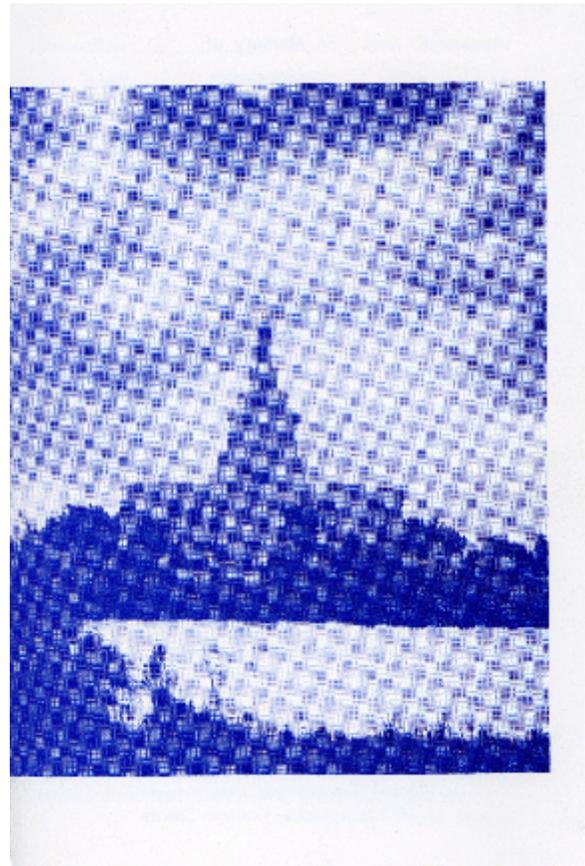


Figure 10: Idaho Falls temple

bathrooms. When we sold the store we moved there and lived there for ten years.

Grace's father died so we sold the apartment house and bought his old home, tore it down and built a new home where we now live.



Figure 11: Old Woodville church remodeled

We have gone to church in Woodville in five different buildings. The one building was built while I was Bishop. After I sold the store, I spent almost two years working on the new



Figure 12: New Woodville church

church. We were able to send four of our children on missions. We also served on a mission on the Idaho Falls Temple grounds for ten years. We have now

served as temple officiators for seven years, and I have been a temple organist for the past three years.

Vernard Huntsman was ordained an Elder in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on 17 Feb, 1918 by Joseph H. Dye.

He was ordained a High Priest on 19 April 1942 by Harold B. Lee.

He was given a Patriarchal Blessing by Joseph H. Dean.