

BIOGRAPHY OF PARLEY PRATT SABIN

Composed by his daughter, Irene M. Merrill



Parley Pratt Sabin was born of good parents, October 20, 1848, in Clinton County, Iowa. He was the son of David Sabin and Elizabeth Darwart Sabin. Parley was the eighth child in a family of eleven. He came to Utah with his parents and brothers and sisters in 1850. Parley's father was an inventor.

Parley helped his father in his nail factory when he was a boy of about 13 years old. His father received a silver medal for making the best cut nails in Utah. Parley also worked in his father's gun shop. When Parley was 18 years old he enlisted in the Black Hawk War which was a war between the whites and Indians. While a very young man he had his leg broken in his father's molasses mill which caused his right leg to be shorter than the left leg and caused him to walk with a limp the rest of his life.

He married Eliza Jane Bates who was a sickly girl and did not live long after their marriage. In May 1874, he married Gecoza Otava Sims. A little girl was born to them by the name of Octava Carolin who died while yet a small baby. The 6th of August 1876 another girl was born by the name of Pearl Elizabeth. The 27th of September a boy was born by the name of Parley John. The 7th of October a girl was born by the name of Florette Mabel. All were born in Payson, Utah.

Parley hauled lumber more than 80 miles to be used in building the St. George Temple; also did other work in helping to build the St. George Temple.

Parley was called by President John Taylor to bring his family to Arizona and help to build up Mormon settlements down here. His brother-in-law John Sims and family, his mother-in-law, and husband were in the company that left Payson in 1881. On the way down his father-in-law, Brother Killian, took very sick and they left him at one of his daughters home in the northern part of Arizona. The rest of the group came on intending to go back and get him when he was well enough to travel, but he died shortly after they left him. When they arrived on the Gila at a place called Curtersville after Parley's brother-in-law, Monroe Curtis, Parley was disgusted at what he found and said, "So this is the Garden of Eden, huh?" The name Eden stuck and the place was no more called Curtisville, but Eden and when a Post Office was placed there it was called the Eden Post Office. It was a very forbidding place. The ground was filled with alkali. The water was brackish. Insects, flies, and mosquitoes filled the air.

Many of the people were sick with malaria (chills and fever) they called it. Parley had never studied medicine, but he had learned some about it by watching and listening to others so he mixed up a medicine that he had seen used with success other places. It was a terrible tasting dose

and they gave it the name of kill or cure. I don't think it ever killed anyone, but it did cure those who had the courage to drink it. Some thought the remedy was worse than the disease. Father Parley was often sent for when there was sickness in a family and with some of the (old wife) remedies he had learned from his mother and others he would often cure very sick people so they give him the name of Doctor Sabin.

Four years after they arrived in Eden on the 23 of May 1885 another girl was born, Irene Mae. When the baby was just 10 months old Gecoza died of pneumonia, leaving Parley with four little children – the oldest not yet 10 years old and the youngest, a little sickly baby. Grandmother Sims came and lived with the family, although she was badly crippled with arthritis.

About two years later he married a young widow named Sarah Cecelia Smith who had a little girl, Alice. They were married in the St. George Temple and Alice was sealed to him.

Many of the men in the Gila Valley started freighting to help make a living as it was very hard to live on what they could make on their small farms, so Parley bought horses, wagons, and fitted himself with two freight teams and hired Mr. Truman Tryan to drive one while he drove the other. He hauled one from Tombstone to Wilcox where it was loaded on the train and shipped to a smelter and he would haul groceries and dry goods back to Tombstone.

It was a two-day journey each way and he was seldom home. Sarah his wife became very ill with pneumonia while he was away. When she was well enough to travel, he moved the family to a small village called Wilgus. It was on Turkey Creek at the foot of the Chiricahuca Mountains. Sarah's parents, brothers, and sisters also a married sister, Mary Plum, and family moved with them.

There, Parley and Sarah's first child was born – a sweet little boy named Walter Leroy.

While living there, Parley could be home every other night. The place was more healthful than Eden, but there were many drawbacks. There was no school for the children to go to and no church to attend and there was great danger of the Indians. When the Apache renegade Indians would get on the warpath they would leave the reservation and go for the Chiricahuca Mountains, as it was a good hiding place. They would steal and rob the ranchers and sometimes kill them.

Parley had been home one night and left the next day to go take his load to Wilcox. On the way back with a load of groceries and dry goods they stopped at a ranch and he was told the Indians were on the warpath. They had killed a rancher about 20 miles from Turkey Creek and were headed for Turkey Creek. Parley had a good faithful saddle horse along, so he put the saddle on him and told Mr. Tryan and a boy that was with them to bring the load and he started out for home as fast as his horse could travel. Mr. Tryan told him it was foolish for him to go, he would probably over take the Indians and they would kill him if he was alone. But Parley said if there was danger, his place was with his family.

Parley was riding home as fast as he could, not sparing horseflesh, poor old Bill gave completely out. So Parley got off and led him to the closest ranch. When he got there he intended to get a fresh horse, but he found the ranch deserted and there were no horses. So he left Bill there and taking his saddle on his back walked to the next ranch, about three miles, and found it deserted and the buildings burned to the ground – they were still smoking so he knew he wasn't far

behind the Indians. He left his saddle there and walked the rest of the way. You can imagine his feelings not knowing how he would find his home and family.

When he reached his home he found that the Indians had been there only a few hours before and as they were after fresh horses and could not catch the one gray mare father had left home they had left and gone to ranches up the creek. Sara and the children had surely had a terrible scare, but the two faithful dogs had kept the Indians away from the house.

The Apache Indians are superstitious about killing a dog. I have heard that they believe in reincarnation and that if you have been wicked and displeased the Great Spirit when you die, you will return to earth in the body of a dog and if they kill a dog they may be killing one of their ancestors. So a dog is one of the best protections against the Apache's and we had two good savage dogs.

Sarah said the thing she was most afraid of was that the Indians would throw fire branches and set the house on fire, but the soldiers from Fort Thomas were close on their track and when the Indians found they couldn't catch our horse they had no time to waste.

Next day Parley went back to get his horse and saddle and found that the people at the ranches had heard of the Indians and got in their wagons and left, so had escaped from being killed, but one rancher found his buildings burned down and the other one found a strange horse in his corral and cared for it until the owner came for it, which was Parley

A few days later they, Parley and Sarah, were on their way to the San Pedro river and to a little town on its banks called St. David. St. David, it was in the month of June, 1890. They had thought of moving there so we children could go to school and the church activities. So after father got home, about 4:00 PM, he and Sarah talked the rest of the night and decided as soon as the empty wagons came home they would load up and leave for St. David. Parley tried to talk Sara's people into leaving, but they decided to stay, thinking that there would never be any more Indian raids, and there never were.

At first Parley rented a small two-room house from Mr. Rubin Bingham. While living there, little Walter died, August 30, 1890. Parley bought a 300-acre ranch from Philemon C. Merrill and his two sons, Thomas and Seth Adelbert (Dell), and moved the family on it. While living there, two boys were born; Joseph Henry, 28 April 1891, and David Hiram, 31 December 1894. While there we had a five-room house which was something then, as most people lived in one and two rooms – a few had more. Parley moved Thomas Merrill's house which was made of lumber and was two rooms, and added it to Philemon's house which was three adobe rooms and was also porched on three sides with an underground cellar under one porch.

Parley was a blacksmith – he had a shop and did the entire blacksmith work in the town. The San Pedro River was very hard to keep a dam in and there were many san washes through which the canal from the dam had to run through, so when a heavy storm came it would either wash out the dam or places in the ditch and just about the time the crops were needing water there was no water. Parley became very discouraged. So when the McRae boys struck artesian water about six miles down the river, Parley filed on 160 acres at a place called Marquis (later St. David). Parley, like his father, was of an inventive nature. He built himself a machine to dig wells with and started digging artesian wells first for himself and then for other people.

Parley sold his farm to a Mr. John Doudle and moved his family to Marquis afterwards called St. David. Four children were born while living there: Sara Cecilia, 10 July 1896; Wallace Dewey, 21 December 1898; Theresa Constance, 21 July 1901; William Roger, 18 February 1904.

Parley helped to move a schoolhouse from upper St. David to lower St. David as they were called. He also helped to build a house that was used for church activities and all amusements.

Parley, like his father, was a machinist and a very good one. Parley's brother-in-law, Brannock Riggs, had a sawmill in the Chiricahuca Mountains. One day the boiler got so hot it blew up and blew the machinery all to pieces. Brannock sent for Parley to come and see what he could do about it. Although Parley had never worked in a saw mill he was able to put it together and it ran smoothly. While Parley was over there, about two months, he was able to get his brother-in-law, who was not a Mormon, interested in investigating the gospel. He later joined the Church and was a faithful Latter-day Saint the rest of his life.

Parley was also a surveyor, who surveyed land and also ditches. At one time when he had surveyed for a canal some of the men refused to work on it saying the water would never run down it as it looked to them like it was up hill. Parley told them if it didn't run down the canal he would pay them the going wage for their labor; when the canal was finished the water ran down it very nicely. One man, Mr. Elijah Clifford, stood and watched it and then said, "Daggon if Parley Sabin can't do anything he puts his hand to do even to make water run up hill."

Parley was always willing to do his part in donating to the Church and was always an honest tithe payer. He was once asked by the people of St. David to be their Bishop, but he begged off.

The artesian water did not prove to be successful. Just about the time Parley would get a nice orchard and vineyard growing good the well's would start decreasing and then dry up. Parley moved three times on his land digging new wells with the same results.

He filed on some land about ten miles down the river where some Mormons from Mexico had settled and helped make a dam in the river and build a ditch to water the land – the place was called Pomerine. There he built himself a nice home. He was counselor to the Branch President, Powel Cosby, he helped in building a nice chapel. He lived close by the chapel and entertained leaders of the church when they came to visit Pomerine Branch. Parley also helped in getting a school in Pomerine and in many other civic activities that needed his help.

He always kept his blacksmith shop and did such work as needed to be done as long as he was able; even after he was unable to do much work he would get up early in the morning and o down to his shop. He seemed to love that old shop although he was unable to do much more than just putter around in it.

In 1924 Parley took a trip to Payson, Utah, his old hometown. There he learned that he was entitled to a pension for the work he had done in the Blackhawk War. He did not get it while he was living, but Sarah, his widow, got it with back pay, which was a great help to her.

The Pomerine chapel was not completed and Parley was very anxious to do his share. It was very hot and he became overcome with the heat and was very sick. He took sick August 8th and four days later, August 12, 1924, he died. His children were all able to reach his bedside before he passed away. The funeral services were held in Pomerine and the internment was in St. David Cemetery. Thus ended the life of a good, noble, and useful man.

The following is a poem that was composed by Parley's daughter, Irene, on Parley's life:

In Iowa Clinton County, a husky yell was heard,
It was not a frog a croaking, or the cry of a startled bird.
But just a little boy baby, telling that he had come along.
He had left his home in heaven to join the earthly throng.

Some time he was an angel, some time a little brat,
But the Sabin family loved him, and they called him Parley Pratt.
His parents heard the Gospel, and knew that it was true;
They made the journey far out West, when Parley was but two.

It was a long hard journey, for that tired weary band.
But Parley was always ready, to lend a helping hand.
He would stand up in the wagon, and try to drive the team,
Dit up ol' Bill and Bolley, Ou dot to whim dat tweam.

Wes doing out to Outah to doin the Mormons, were
We tan do about as we pease an ou dot to take dare.
They reached the Salt Lake valley. The times were very hard –
And to add to their discomfort, the crickets came in hords.

They ate their crops and clothing, until The Father heard them pray.
And sent the seagulls from the lake which really saved the day.
Their clothes grew thin and thinner, until in their despair,
They found that little Parley hadn't a darn thing to wear.

But his mother came to the rescue and wove cloth out of string,
And made Parley a little frock which was quite the thing;
But his brothers liked to tease him and called him carpet rag,
Their clothes were all in patches so they had no room to brag.

They had shoes of untanned cowhide to cover their bare feet,
Sago's dark bread and sorghum was all they had to eat.
Of course, some of them murmured at these hard and crucial times;
But they all grew up tall and strong without any vitamins.

Their father was an inventor, He made guns and nails and kegs,
He even made a molasses mill in which Parley broke his leg.
Now Parley was a hansom guy, and soon found him a wife,
Sweet Eliza Jane whom he thought would stay with him through life.

But The father in Heaven had other plans, and soon took her away,
And left poor Parley sad and blue for many many a day.
But time passed by this handsome buy wooed and wed another,

Gecoza Sims an English lass, who in time became my mother.

Parley was always willing to obey the Church's command,
He was sent to Arizona to help settle up this land.
They landed on the Gila at a place called Curtisville,
You'll never find it on the map for it isn't Curtis still.

Parley just took one long look, and said to the folks who had come to stay,
"So this is the Garden of Eden, Huh?" and the town's called Eden to this day.
The ground was filled with alkali, Mosquitoes filled the air,
Sickness, chills and fever, was prevalent everywhere.

But Parley mixed them up a dose they called it kill or cure,
Take on swig and by gosh! You would ne'er want any more.
But just the same it cured them, They became a healthy flock,
So the people of that little town nicknamed Parley "Doc."

The Father soon called Cozy home and left Parley sad and grim,
Now he had four little kids to love and comfort him.
But time passed by this handsome guy found him another wife,
This time he married Sarah smith who stayed with him the remainder of his life.

Parley would lend a helping hand to a neighbor in his need,
He was always willing and ready to do a kindly deed.
He lived unto a ripe old age. And when his life on earth did end
The people mourned because they lost a good, kind, father, neighbor, and friend.