

A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE EGIN BENCH WINEGAR'S

Stephen Winegar (a 49-year-old farmer & carpenter) came to the Egin Bench in July, 1879 looking for open space for himself, his wife (Lois) and his growing (& grown) family to farm. Although born in New York, he had spent nearly thirty years in the Salt Lake Valley where he had assisted in the building of the LDS tabernacle in Salt Lake. His forefathers had come to America from Germany much, much earlier in 1710. Lois Smith Winegar had been born in Ontario, Canada but had been orphaned at the age of seven during an epidemic in Nauvoo, Illinois which killed her father, mother, 3 brothers, and 1 sister. (Her baby sister survived the epidemic but died a year later.) She came west with Brigham Young's family (her employer) after having been cared for by the Joseph Smith family.

Stephen was 20 and she was 16 when they married in 1850 in SLC. Their children were almost grown when they settled on the bench. A married 29-year-old daughter (Louisa) stayed behind in Utah, George was 25, Gideon was 22, John Samuel was 20, Leonard Wesley was 18, Elnora Jane was 14, Thomas had died at the age of 9 three years earlier, and the youngest, Willis Leroy, was 10 years old.

Stephen Winegar's home was the first on the actual Egin Bench. It served as the first post office and also housed branch meetings of the LDS Church. Lois served as a midwife in the vicinity and her sons worked as guides for the "dudes" who wanted to pack into Yellowstone Park or do some hunting and fishing. Farming was difficult on the bench before the completion of the canals.

Sixteen years after coming to the Bench, Gideon Winegar (age 38) married Mary Helen Mason (age 26) in 1895. She had come to the bench with her father, James Horby Mason (& his two families), in May, 1884. Mary's dad was a school teacher with considerable musical and theatrical talent. Gid helped haul telephone poles from Island Park for the telephone line from St. Anthony to Brighton that same year he was married.

Gid and Mary built a home and they brought pines and cedars from the forest for their front yard as seedlings. Water was faithfully carried from the river bottoms for their sustenance. Gid also floated good pine timber down from the forest for his home rather than using the more plentiful cottonwood and quaking asp found in the river bottoms near home.

Over the next five years, Gid and Mary had four children. However, in February, 1903 an epidemic hit the area and three of these children (Thomas Orlando--age 6, Frank Gideon--age 3, and Helen Marie--age 16 months) died within three weeks of each other. Gid's father, Stephen, also died during this time at the age of 73. Only one daughter, Jean who was 4, survived the epidemic.

Stephen James was then born in 1904 and he was followed by Alvin Wesley in 1906, and finally Elnora Millie was born in 1909 when Mary Helen was 40 and Gideon 52. All three children were named in honor of close family members. Things went smoother for the couple for the next few years. Gideon farmed and also spent much of his time as a guide with his pack-horse outfit. He also assisted his brother, John, with wild hay on homesteaded land near the nowadays girls camp (near Rock Creek just off the Cave Falls). Then in April of 1916, Jean (the only child who survived the earlier epidemic) died at the age of 18. Grandmother

Two years later (in 1918) when Al was just twelve years old, Gideon died following a tragic accident where he was buried beneath a load of pea-straw in his barn. Mary Helen continued to care for her family alone during the next several years. She also cared for her own blind mother. Her mother died three years after Gid and her father died in 1926. All were buried in the Parker Cemetery.

Stephen later served a mission for the LDS Church but never married. Al and Nora both married in 1931. Mary Helen Mason Winegar died in April, 1932 at the age of 63, just a short time before her first living grandchild, Vern Winegar, was born. Nora (Keefe) and her husband, Ray, eventually moved to California, where they raised two daughters. Nora's first daughter had died shortly after birth just two weeks after Mary died.

Shortly after Mary Helen's death, Al and his wife, Selma Edith Erickson, moved into the Winegar family home. Selma and Al lived together in this home for over 36 years. During this time eight children were born to them: Vern--1932, Don--1933, Lee--1935, June--1937, Max--1939, Wayne--1941, Shirley--1944, and Alan--1946.

According to Selma, the fruit cellar on the current house was "a small house out under the sugar maple tree when we were married. We fixed this small, one-room house up to live in" until Mary died. Later, when the kitchen and bathroom were added to the main house, the small house was moved over by the main house and made into the fruit cellar.

Al worked for 27 years with Lobnitz Brothers, a land-leveling business. He leveled land throughout Southeastern Idaho. He also served on the Heman School Board. After the children were raised, Selma and Al enjoyed travelling from coast to coast (Canada, Alaska, New York, Florida, California). They also enjoyed taking drives to admire the land-leveling work Al had been involved with (Ricks College, Quail Lake, Newdale, Wilford, Ashton, Roberts, Rigby). Al was very proud of his work.

Al Winegar died at the age of 62 in 1968 and his sister--Nora--died in 1970. All of these Winegars were also buried in the Parker Cemetery. Steve, who wished to be buried in his long-time home of Florida, was the last of his Winegar generation and died in 1972.

The house originally constructed by Gideon and Mary Helen is still used today as a residence by Winegar descendants. This house served as the birthplace for Alvin Wesley, his brothers and sisters, and all of his own sons & daughters. The original home of Stephen Winegar is currently an outbuilding on Vern's farm as is Selma's former childhood home.

Although there were several sons who came to Idaho with Stephen & Lois Winegar, Gideon's descendants are the only original Winegars who have remained permanently on the Egin Bench. Their daughter, Elnora Jane, married into another early family, the Broadhursts, and descendants may still be present through those lines.

Twenty-eight grandchildren were added to the Winegar posterity between 1955 and 1975. At last count, there were fifty four great-grandchildren--most of whom still live in Southeast