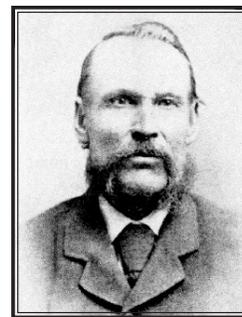


GEORGE WASHINGTON BEAN, “POORETS”

Born: 1 April 1831 Adams County, Illinois

Age: 25

Rescuer



George W. Bean’s parents first moved to Adams County, Illinois, in about 1827. They were leading prosperous and hardworking lives when the Mormons were driven from Missouri and found shelter and kindness in the residents of Quincy, Illinois. In one of George’s several journals, he tells of his family’s role in this episode:

In the Fall of 1839 the expulsion of Mormons from Missouri took place according to Governor L. W. Boggs’ Exterminating Order. The town of Quincy, and much of Adams County, became the temporary lodging place for many of the persecuted people. These homeless exiles filled every sheltered nook and corner. My father, having added to his lands and improvements, owned several houses and cabins. These shelters were for a time filled with these people. I remember especially the families of Jonathan L. Harvey, Matthew Way, Alexander Williams (who lived on Uncle Esaias Edward’s farm), and George W. Gee and his wife (who was a sister of Elias Smith as well as a cousin to the Prophet Joseph Smith). Brother Gee taught school for our District. I recollect the shock it fairly gave us when it leaked out that his wife was a cousin of ‘Jo Smith.’ What a risk of contamination we were in!

Close to this same time period, George writes of other needy people that were assisted by the nearby villagers in Mendon:

These people ... had a real abolitionist spirit. Little Mendon ... was an underground station on the route from the State of Missouri to Canada. More than once in my boyhood days I got a glimpse of runaway Negroes, peeping out from Deacon Stillman’s barn, or neighbor Fowler’s cellar. ... Sometimes the owners of the runaway slaves would be in pursuit. A man named Lovejoy was killed by exasperated Missourians pursuing a runaway slave.

Of his parents and early boyhood training, George wrote:

My early life was spent in keeping the buckets filled with fresh water from the spring for Ma, seeing the cows and horses had hay in the mangers, and keeping the cedar wood in the kitchen box and pine logs for fireplace, etc., for Pa. We had our riding ponies and Sunday buggy. We all learned to ride and drive horses. ... I endured the jibes of “Pa’s shadow” to glean information on the business of farming and cattle raising from his counseling with his men. I was all ears and eyes, and always have been when there is anything to learn. Our intelligent mother kept bad words washed from our tongues, and ended children’s quarrels by finding jobs far apart. “A soft answer turneth away wrath,” she would say. ... My parents were strictly religious, each being a member of a popular Church—father a Methodist and mother a Presbyterian; so we children associated with ministers of both denominations.

George loved his early boyhood schooling and excelled in many subjects but most particularly in spelling. He wrote:

I would often go five miles to spell down a whole school. I found by studying the root words that I could spell and define any words coming from that original word. My memory became strong by repeating to mother and schoolmates what I had learned or read. Frequently rehearsing the various subjects stored them in my mind.

Through the efforts of the Bean family to assist the Mormon exiles, they eventually became acquainted with and embraced their doctrines, were baptized and moved to Nauvoo. Here George and his father both met the Prophet Joseph Smith and labored on the Nauvoo Temple. After the martyrdom of Joseph Smith, the Saints were once again driven from their homes by mobs. This time, the Bean family was among the driven. They came to Utah, where George met his first love in 1852:

I found a girl that about suited my fancy for a wife by the name of Elizabeth Baum. Having become acquainted with the Baums, I thought it best not to live in single blessedness any longer, so I persuaded Elizabeth to pledge our fortunes together.

Three years prior to his marriage, at only 18 years of age, George met with an unfortunate and serious accident. George was asked by Lieutenant William Dayton to assist him in firing a cannon for practice. After the first successful firing, the second one exploded. Both men had their hands on the hickory ramrod bearing heavily to seat the charge when the explosion occurred.

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They were hurled thirty feet away onto the ground. Dayton was killed and George was taken up dying, terribly mangled, but still breathing, with his left hand missing. His clothes were burned, his face and eyes blackened with powder, burned so badly that he could see nothing for twenty days. His body was covered with lacerations and filled with splinters. (Some of the two hundred splinters remained in his body for up to twenty years, working to the surface at different times. These were in addition to the 200 splinters removed by the doctor and saved in one of George's mother's fruit jars.) A doctor was immediately sent for. Aaron Houghton Conover (Hout) immediately left on horseback for Salt Lake City, a distance of 50 or 60 miles. Dr. Blake, an army surgeon, returned with Hout, riding through the night and returning in just twenty hours from Hout's departure. Hout's ride ranks with the great rides of history.

Dr. Blake first sawed the bones of George's shattered left forearm, leaving a 3 ½ inch stub below the elbow. George endured without the aid of anesthesia. Each day for ten days the doctor dressed his wounds and probed for more splinters. Beef tea was all the nourishment George could take. His eyes and entire face scabbed over. Every inch of his body suffered and George prayed to die. He remained in bed for 40 days. During this time Brigham Young and his counselors came to the Bean home. Brigham took George by the hand and asked him if he wanted to live. George's reply was, "Yes, if I can do any good." Brigham then anointed George with consecrated oil and blessed him as recalled by George:

He rebuked the power of the Destroyer from my body and from our home. It was like an electric current that ran through me from head to foot and it took the severe pain with it. He plead with the Lord to heal me from head to foot that all my wounds might heal quickly. He asked that faith may increase as the healing takes place, and that I may ever rejoice in God's blessings in performing the works He has for me to do, etc. How I wish I had that blessing in writing. He made it clear to me that the Holy Ghost, bestowed upon me after baptism, would be my constant guide and educator, and that the Lord's work assigned to me will be gloriously completed. My parents were there to hear this consoling prayer, of greater length, but this is enough. We were lifted above all earthly things in rejoicing with the Prophets of the Lord in humility and sincere brotherly love. God saved me through the Prophet's prayers and power of the Priesthood, which God has bestowed upon worthy men to represent Him on Earth.

The next day the scales fell from George's eyes and he later stated, "It has not been possible to describe my feelings when the light first came to me when, after twenty days of blindness, the burn scabs dropped from my eyes."

During the time of George's recuperation, he had many visits from sympathetic Indians. Chief Sanpitch especially became a friend and taught George the Indian language more completely. George felt it was a blessing in disguise to have this time, as his work and missions among the Indians throughout the rest of his life was greatly benefitted and he also became a great benefit to all in the Territory. He was also hired as an interpreter by the government and paid well. His assistance in these endeavors helped bring an end to the practice of the Indians of selling their children to Mexican traders for slaves. George served in many capacities as a peacemaker and a peacekeeper, negotiating important treaties while he was yet a young man. His life was spared many times from angry and warring Indians. In 1872 George traveled to Washington D.C. with a group of Indians who wanted to talk to the "Big White Chief," President Ulysses S. Grant. These talks ended with important treaties being enacted. The Indians referred to George as "Poorets," meaning "man with one arm." They said of him: "He talks straight."

George described some of the challenges presented by having only one arm:

My children never could imagine how we harnessed the mules, put on the brake and handled four lines in going into a hollow and releasing the brakes—all with just one hand. It was a problem for many years to learn how to make one hand do for two. To use the soap, wash rag and towel was easy. To place my pocket knife on my left knee, holding it firmly with my stub arm, I could cut my own finger nails by twisting my right hand about it. It was quite a

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feat to drive a four-horse team, or stubborn mules, with one hand, in pulling the right rein at the right time in a turn, placing the brakes going down a hill or ditch bank, and releasing the brake on the upward climb, but the stub arm, the knob on the front endgate, or the wagon cover bow to which the line could be secured, made it possible. The harness had to be placed on the animals, or the saddle on the riding pony, etc. There were two difficult things for me, buttoning the celluloid collar on a shirt and tying the bow. It was a fine thing when they invented a hook on the tie to slide over the collar button. Well, the other thing was cutting my meat at the table. Someone had to help me, at home or elsewhere. I could eat like the cowboys or Indians at camp, but not so undignified at a table. Well, I must set my brain buzzing and find a remedy. Once a year we had those great fashion guides, or order books come to us, and my wife, Elizabeth, was looking at the cutlery pages. As I came into the dining room, I looked too. She had selected a bone-handled set of knives and forks in the Sears-Roebuck, or it might have been the Montgomery Ward Company, I can't remember, but I got my inspiration then to invent a combination knife and fork for one-handed folks, for myself especially, and sat down to make a drawing of my idea. The knife part was to cut the food, and the fork to convey it to my mouth. It has been very serviceable to me. I carried it on all of my trips. While it is my own invention, I had no desire to get a patent, but the Company that made the unique combination gave me credit for it in a magazine article.

George W. Bean's knife and fork combination is preserved in the Flora Bean Horne collection at the Daughters of Utah Pioneers Museum in Salt Lake City.

George had made a promise to do whatever was asked of him when he was blessed by Brigham Young after his accident. He kept this promise throughout his life, and fulfilled many



difficult and dangerous assignments. He responded to the call for rescue in October of 1856, when the late pioneer companies were stranded on the plains. He left Provo with a Brother Follett and a four-mule team, carrying supplies and hope to those with whom he could uniquely sympathize, as many had lost limbs in

their exposure. S.S. Jones of the Martin Handcart Company was taken into George and Elizabeth's home and nursed back to health. Jones later became a noted citizen of Utah. (See Samuel Stephen Jones story in the Martin Handcart Company section of *Tell My Story, Too*.)

George became an explorer, military man, judge, and father of a large family. He moved many times in order to meet the needs of his growing family and the duties of his work. One family member commented, "We moved so often that after living in one place for several weeks the chickens would come in and lie down on the floor with their legs together ready to be tied for the next move."

George became a comrade with such notables as Orrin Porter Rockwell, Ephraim Hanks and General Robert T. Burton, the latter two who were also major players in the 1856 rescue. During a visit to Burton's home by George's daughter, Burton said: "Flora, your father was one of the truest men that ever lived. Our friendship was a sacred memory. No one will ever know how he quieted uprisings of suspicious Indians to protect the pioneers who failed to understand them."

Sources: James A. Bean: *Poorets*, 1992, *Beans of a Rich Field*, 1993 (Title is a reference to the three families of George W. Bean who lived in Richfield, Utah), and *Life Story of George Teancum Bean*, undated; Interview with James A. Bean Nov. 6, 2006, by Jolene Allphin; *Autobiography of George Washington Bean, a Utah pioneer of 1847, and his family records*, compiled by Flora Diana Bean Horne, 1945.

(James A. Bean was the youngest son of George Teancum Bean. George Teancum Bean was the oldest son of George Washington Bean. George Teancum was born on December 26, 1856, shortly after his father returned from the rescue. The book *Poorets* has updates and corrections to the book on the life of George W. Bean written by his daughter, Flora Bean Horne.)