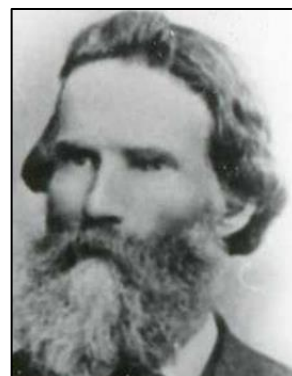




Amos G. Thornton

Written by Hattie Thornton Snow

Amos G. Thornton, my father, was born at West Pickering township, Ontario County, Canada, December thirtieth, 1832. His parents, Oliver Thornton and Mary Griswold Thornton, received the gospel message which came to them through the Mormon elders and joined the church in 1837. In the spring of 1838, they tucked a few of their personal belongings and their four children into a big sleigh, drawn by two prancing horses and crossed over Lake Ontario on the ice to the United States.



Their first stop was at Kirtland, where they remained for about three months and then went on to Far West, Missouri. February of 1839, they moved to Bear Creek near Fairfield, Adams County, Illinois. From here they went to Hancock County and settled on a farm near Carthage, owned by a man named David R. Fales. During the next two years they engaged in farming. In the spring of 1846, they left Nauvoo with the saints and went to Iowa, where they remained for two years, and then moved on to Lynn County, Missouri, where the saints went on account of the mobocracy and persecution that were rampant there at that time. They traveled westward about one hundred fifty miles and settled on the Des Moines River where they engaged in farming and freighting for two years when they managed to get two good teams and twenty head of other cattle and struggled on to two miles north of Kanessville, Iowa, near Council Bluffs.

Here their efforts were centered on preparations that would enable them to go to the "valley of the Mountains," which was the goal toward which all saints were traveling at that time. In the summer of 1852, they made the journey across the

plains in the Peter Wimmer Co., and arrived in Salt Lake Valley , in the fall. President Young sent grandfather to American Fork which was then sparsely settled. Here he lived in the old Fort then he took up land in the lane that now lies between American Fork and Pleasant Grove, where he built an adobe house which was his permanent home as long as he lived.

My father was six years old when he was cuddled into the buffalo robes and was carried from his birthplace to go with his parents who had been actuated by a divine message.

With his parents, brothers and sisters he passed through the drivings and privations that the saints endured. When he arrived in Utah he was a young man twenty years of age, full of life, vigor, and intelligence. For two years he labored hard to help establish the new home, but in 1854, he received a call from the First Presidency of the Church to go south to labor with the Indians in company with Jacob Hamblin and several other young men. They were known as Indian Missionaries.

Rufus Allen was the first president of their company and they made Fort Harmony their first headquarters. They traveled through the country in all directions, laboring with the Indians. South of Cedar City there were no roads except the old Spanish Trail to California. Through canyons and over the mountains they followed the Indian or the buffalo trails. The main Indian tribes they contacted were the Utes, Piutes, Navajo and Mohave. Some were friendly, others, very hostile. But the missionaries followed the advice of their leaders and made friends instead of enemies by feeding the Indians, dealing fairly with them and keeping their promises with them. An Indian is either a friend or an enemy.

At Cedar City my father met, wooed and won my mother, Mary Whittaker. They were married on December 18, 1856, by James Whittaker her father. They lived with mother's people until May, 1857, when they moved to Pinto, Washington Co. where they lived ever after except two winters, 1857 and 1858, when they moved to Santa Clara, a village forty-five miles south, near where St. George was later located. On one trip down mother and Sarah Richey walked most of the way and drove the pigs. Mother has often told the story to her children of how they would scare the pigs along for a while, then let them saunter and the two women would sit on the rocks or logs by the road side and knit and rest and then trudge on. "We did not mind it at all," she replied to me once when I

exclaimed that I thought it must have been a very tiresome task. I have often thought since as I have traveled over the road by team and later by automobile, how little do we realize the price our parents and all the pioneers paid for the comforts of a subdued and producing wilderness we now enjoy.

On October Sixth, 1860, father went with that 111 fated company across the Colorado River where George A. Smith Jr. was killed. The company consisting of Jacob Hamblin and nine others had gone out into New Mexico (now Arizona) to a point 35 miles northwest of Moquis Village to learn the language of this tribe, and to ascertain where a road might be built.

On November 2, as they were in camp some of the horses strayed away. Young brother Smith jumped on my father's horse and galloped after the band. His own horse "Black Hawk" being among the ones that had strayed. The Navajos delivered his horse to him in a most friendly manner, then without any warning fired upon him piercing his body with four bullets and three arrows. The Indians were very hostile. But they told Jacob Hamblin that they would spare their lives if they would leave that country immediately. Brother Smith's wounded body was placed on the back of a saddle mule with one of the elders supporting him. For eight miles he traveled in this agony when he died. The missionaries made a scant grave in the sand, wrapped his body in a blanket and prayer fully and sorrowfully left it to the ravages of the Indians. Latter that night the Navajos came to the white man's camp with their murdered companion's scalp.

The Navajos had just received word that Lieutenant Colonel Ruggles of the U.S. Army with the detachment of soldiers had burned their villages 250 miles east. They had massacred 250 squaws and papooses and killed 40,000 sheep. The receipt of this news by the Navajos was the cause of the murder of George A. Smith Jr.

Father had many trials and suffered severe hardships; he buried eight children and many dear friends, but he has often told me that the trial of his life was when they laid Brother Smith away in a shallow grave and left his body to the mercy of the savages.

Next year my father with other friends of Brother Smith made a journey of 300 miles at the expense of \$1800. and recovered his remains. They were taken to Salt Lake City in a stone box and interred in the city cemetery.

Father served in the Walker War and served as home guard from 1862-65. He did special service from September to November 1866.

He never was released from this mission. He was always a friend to the Indians and labored with them willingly whenever his services were needed.

Father served as the presiding elder in the Pinto Branch for several years until the ward was organized. Then he became first counselor to Bishop Richard Robinson--Prime Coleman was 2nd counselor. He was engaged in farming, cattle and sheep raising and was ever active in church and civic affairs.

In character he was absolutely fearless in the performance of his duty. He could look any man right in the eye and say what he had to say to him, and then he was through. Slander or gossip never were a part of his conversation. His judgement and advice were sound and sought by many. His religion was his guide in all his activities in life. Father had the gift of faith and the gift of healing. Wherever there was sickness and trouble, it would be said, "Send for Brother Thornton," and the night was never too dark or too cold for him to respond. Many women have borne testimony to me that they never could have lived through the sickness and suffering they had to endure in raising their family out on the frontier away from doctors and all medical aid had it not been for the wonderful blessings that had come to them in answer to my father's prayers as he had administered to them. He honored the priesthood which he held and lived to magnify his calling and be worthy to officiate in the name of the Lord.

Father and mother lived beautifully together all their lives. His success came through their cooperation. One cannot write intimately of his life without weaving in hers too, so I shall turn back the years for a few pages and acquaint you more intimately with mother.

Written by Hattie Thornton Snow, the daughter of Amos Griswold Thornton, and taken from FamilySearch.org