



Olive Ida Nixon Hickman Elggren

Interview About Early Life

How They Obtained Water

Transcribed from a Recording by Nanette Garrett
Two Weeks Before Her Death

I am Olive Nixon Hickman Elggren. My father was James William Nixon II, and my mother was Effie Dean Wooley Nixon. My parents lived in Huntington, Emery County the first years of their married life. Then I was born. I have one brother older than I; James William Nixon III, and I was the second child. I was born in 1891, February 15th. We were a family of eight children, four boys and four girls.

Life in those early settlements in Utah were more difficult than they are today in our cities. We had no water in the house, but we had a canal that ran across town from which each block drew a ditch, that ran down the street to the length of the street. Each family could dip their water from this ditch. It supplied water for the animals, and also for the residents. When we wanted to wash, we had a little more difficulty than you have today. We would carry the water from the ditch to a forty-gallon barrel inside the fence. We would fill it full of water, and then very often find it dirty and muddy. So, we would have to take a teaspoonful of alum, crush it, and dissolve it in the water.

In about four or five hours, the water was ready to use for washing. Then we carried the water home after we made a fire in our stove and put a big boiler on top of the stove. Then we would dip the water in a bucket into the boiler and heat it to the temperature we wanted to wash our clothes. This was the water for our first washer full of clothes. Then we would repeat the same process for every batch of clothes we had.

Carrying the water from the barrel by the fence, into the house, into the boiler, to the stove, getting it hot, and then we would wash another batch. Now there was a problem

of rinsing the clothes. So, we had two galvanized tubs with bluing water. We always used a little bluing in our water. We would rinse them in one tub first and then run out, and put them in another tub, and rinse them in the other water.

Now they were ready for the clothesline. We took the clothes in a basket and hung them up one by one. We had no dryers in those days. In the wintertime, the water problem was much more difficult. All the ditches in town were frozen up and we had to drive a mile to the creek. We put this same barrel on two blocks of wood, hitch a horse to the sleigh, and drag it a mile down the hill to the creek. We would dig a hole in the ice and fill the barrel full of ice water. Then we would put a sheet over the top of the barrel, and a tub on the top of that to hold the water in, so it would not splash so badly as we went up the hill.

I well remember the year of 1896 when I was but five years old, and my brother Willy was seven. My father was called on a mission to go to California for the church. My mother was expecting her fifth child. This winter was a hard winter. I remember Mother and Willy coming up the hill into the loft, his pants frozen to him, and her skirts with icicles hanging to them. As soon as they had taken the horse to the stable, they came into the living room where a roaring fire was burning in the fireplace. We thawed them out and did the best we could to make them comfortable.