JOHN WILLARD GIBSON
1875-1950

John Willard Gibson was born 2 Dec. 1875, at Hyde Park, Utah, the first child born to William Moroni Gibson and Harriet Woolf Gibson. He had 8 brothers and sisters: Harvey, born 4 Dec 1877, Franklin, Idaho; Lois, 3 Sep. 1879, at Hyde Park; Howard, 27 May 1883, at Franklin; Willis, 28 March 1885, at Franklin; Andrew, 12 June 1887, at Franklin; Pearl, 18 Sep. 1889, at Franklin; Wesley, 10 June 1892, at Franklin; Tressa, 24 June 1895, at Hyde Park.

John’s father, William Gibson, took up a homestead in Cherryville, Idaho, located 3 ½ miles northeast of Franklin, and John Willard was about 5 years old, when they moved from Hyde Park to Cherryville. They were among the first settlers in the valley.

When 8 years old, John went to live with his Grandmother Woolf during the winter months to attend school. He completed the 6th grade. His mother had been a school teacher before she was married, so she was able to help him with his lessons during the summer months. During the period from 14 to 20 years of age, he didn’t attend school because the nearest school was in Franklin. About 1895, the neighboring farm people constructed a schoolhouse in Cherryville. John was 20 years old at this time, but had the courage to attend this one-room school until he completed the 7th and 8th grades. Some of his boyhood friends were Richard and John Oliverson and Aaron Chatterton.

His father had a sawmill up Maple Creek which the boys helped to run, dragging the logs with oxen. John helped at the sawmill and at the farm until he was 24 years old.

Of first meeting Sarah Grace Chatterton, it is said by their son, Willard, “She first met my father, John, when she was 16. She was sitting on a pile of logs near the Gibson home waiting for Lois Gibson and Annette Whitehead to return from a horseback ride; John came out and talked with her. They started dating and attended dances and parties. They “went steady” for 2 years and were married 8 Nov. 1899, in the Logan Courthouse. She told of his taking her to a café for dinner. After eating the main course, bananas and whipped cream was served. This must have been rather unusual at that time, for John looked at her and said, “Grace, I don’t think you had better eat that, it might be poison.”

That night, a Wednesday, Grace’s mother gave a little party at her home for the newlyweds, where they received many nice gifts. The following Friday night, John gave a dance for their friends and relatives.

Their first home was one room in Sarah’s mother’s house. This was where Willard was born 11 June 1901. Their next home was a one room house built by Father Chatterton on a 40 acre piece of land in Crooked Creek on William Gibson’s farm. They planted apple, prune and an extra room on their house. They made their home here about 7 years. Two children were born in this home; LaVern was born 7 March 1904, and Russell, 23 Nov. 1907. That spring, Father Gibson became angry with John and refused to give him the deeds to the 40 acres after they had made all the improvements on it.

They left their nice little cottage and took a homestead in Central, Idaho, in May 1908. They lived in a 1 room cabin with a dirt floor and slab roof (the shingles had not yet been put on), so it was quite a sieve during a rainstorm. In the fall, they moved back to their home in Cherryville. The next spring they gathered up all their belongings and made the 50 mile journey back to their sage-and grass covered homestead. Their worldly possessions included 3 horses, one colt, 6 milk cows, 6 yearlings, 1 pig, 35 chickens, a cook stove, table and 2 chairs, a
separator, a bedroom set, cupboard, a white-top buggy and a little black single buggy.  3 children were born in this home; Florence was born 12 Aug 1910, and twins, Philip and Phyllis, 15 July 1912.

On 16 Oct. 1909, John and his brother, Harvey, purchased the Telford ranch near Grace. They farmed this land together for several years, then John traded his homestead in Central for Harvey's share of the Telford place. John and Sarah and their family lived there for over 30 years. 3 children were born in this home. Grace was born 13 March 1915, and only lived 24 hours. She was buried in the rocks in the cow pasture: her mother and sisters decorated her grave with wildflowers for 20 years thereafter. Lee was born 23 June 1920, and Afton, 23 July 1923.

John purchased a dry farm at Central from Jim Budrow. On 5 Nov 1917, he bought Joe Gunnell's place across the road from the Budrow farm. He and his sons batched a few weeks during the spring and summer to put in the crops, farming with 16 head of horses.

John had one of the first cars in the area—a Paige bought in 1916. He was one of the first in the neighborhood to have a player piano & one of the first to have a phonograph, $300 Edison. He was not a public figure, but was a man of character, stability, and honesty. He was successful in his chosen vocation in life and was thrifty and industrious. He joined the Lions Club in about 1920 and was a school board member for many years.

He suffered a great tragedy when his 2 younger brothers, Willis and Andrew, lost their lives in a snow slide in Cherryville, Idaho. The accident occurred 15 Jan. 1915, on the slopes of the mountains 4 miles up the canyon from the Gibson's ranch. Joh had a nervous breakdown afterward, which caused him to be very restless, & he would ride his old horse, Jake, 40 miles to be with his folks. This was a very brave undertaking, because it was winter & the snow was 6 or 7 feet deep in the mountains between Central & Cherryville. This tragedy left a sadness in his heart from which he never recovered. He became cross, impatient, and moody.

In 1930, John built a beautiful brick home in Logan, Utah. Joy was of short duration though, because the depression came & in 1931 they had to move back to the farm in Grace. His wife & children felt very badly when they had to leave the nice home that they had waited 20 years for. This heart breaking experience caused John to have another nervous break down, from which it took several years to recover. The family planned on going back to live in the Logan house, but World War II came in 1941 and John was needed on the farm, as Russell was taken into the Army Air Force in 1940 and was gone until 1945.

John's son, Willard, relates, “We moved to Franklin 23 April 1937, living in Grandma Gibson’s house in town the 1st year; we then bought the Gibson ranch in Cherryville. The old home that Father used to have in Crooked Creek had been moved down on Maple Creek, where it still stands (the old home having burned down several years before). We lived in this one room a couple of years until we got our brick home built. Father came down and stayed with us and helped in the plans and building of the home. He helped us pipe a spring from the mountain east of Crooked Creek. Up until this time, water had to be carried from Maple Creek. We burned an old kerosene lamp, and one day the base of the lamp was broken, so we set the oil bowl in a pound coffee can to support it. The next trip Dad made down to see us, he brought a new Aladdin lamp. I guess he was afraid we would set the house afire with the old one. What a difference it made to see across the room. We used it when we moved into our new home until we got electricity.”

“He continues, “Father used to come and see us every month or 6 weeks during good weather, but not as often during the winter. The children always looked forward to his coming,
as he always had a sack of candy for them. That was his way of showing affection. He usually came alone, but once in awhile Mother and some of the family would come with him. These were happy occasions for we enjoyed having them come. During later years his visits became fewer.”

In 1947, John bought the 2nd Telford Ranch with a 12 room house on it. He worked very hard on this farm trying to improve the house and yards. He built a cement front porch and cement steps out by the road. He intended to make a cement sidewalk connecting the porch with the steps, but didn’t live to see it finished.

He died 31 Dec. 1950, of a heart attack in the Caribou Hospital at Soda Springs, at the age of 75. Interment was at the Grace Cemetery. He and Sarah Grace had celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary 8 Nov. 1949.

Willard C. Gibson, Son

Typed into the computer 28 Oct. 2002 by Kathleen Jardine Woolf Idaho Falls, Idaho
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