JAMES SANDS HANCEY

Written in 1932 by Norma Hancey Skabelund, daughter of J. Willard Hancey

On 24 March 1856, as the ship “Caravan” neared the New Foundland coast, a son was born to James and Rachel Seamons Hancey, who were aboard that vessel with 452 other “Mormon” (LDS) immigrants coming from England to America. When the “Caravan” landed in New York on 28 March, these immigrants were sent at once to Castle Gardens, an assembling place of the Saints. While there John Taylor, who later became Pres. Of the LDS Church, visited them and christened the infant who was born on the Atlantic Ocean. He was named James Sands Hancey after his father and Sands after William Sands, the captain of the ship on which he was born. Because of his birth on the ocean, he was often referred to as “The man without a country”

After remaining in New York for about 6 months, James Hancey, his wife and small son went to New Jersey, where they lived about 3 years before journeying to Omaha, Nebraska. From Nebraska, they crossed the plains to Salt Lake City by ox team when James Sands was about 4 ½ years old.

They arrived in Salt Lake City and stayed there only 3 days before traveling north to the Cache Valley area, arriving in Hyde Park 9 Sep. 1860. At that time, the dwelling places of the 14 families consisted of 3 log cabins, a few dugouts, some tents and wagon boxes.

Being the oldest of 11 children (9 grew to maturity), Jim, as he was called, knew what it meant to work and to share with other pioneer.

The family made their home in Hyde Park, and it was there Jim spent practically all of his life. At age 11, he played the snare drum in the first martial band in Hyde Park. He was a member of the band for 16 years. When only 14, he was chosen captain over 10 boys and young men in training for defense against the Indians. His father, James who for years was Hyde Park’s only carpenter, made wooden guns for the members in training.

One night after guarding horses from the Indians, James S. And his companion went to bed in their camp near Bear River. Later in the night, he became aware that they didn’t occupy the bed alone, a cold, slimy snake had crawled into the bed and across Jim’s body. At 16, James S. Became a member of the first home dramatics company, to which he belonged for 15 years. He played in many plays as well as directed many during this time.

James Sands Hancey married Ellen Balls 8 Oct. 1879 in Endowment House in Salt Lake and to them were born 4 sons and 4 daughters.

Bring the son of a carpenter, Jim learned that trade early in his life. In 1865, when he was only 9 years old, he carried material to the workmen who were building the “Old Rock Meeting House.” In later years he re-shingled it. This building later served as a railroad station for the Utah Idaho Central Railroad which went from Preston, Id, to Ogden, Utah.

James S. worked on Cache Valley’s first railroad for 50 cents a day. He was also employed in the Amalga, Cornish and Whitney sugar factories. He aided in the construction of Hyde Park’s first school house, the amusement hall, and the second amusement hall. He worked on the Logan Tabernacle, the Logan and St. George Temple, the Amalgamated Sugar Factory, as well as many other buildings.

With his brother, Jesse, he built barns and houses in nearly every town in Cache Valley. He also helped construct bridges on the Logan Canyon and Bear Lake roads.

At age 18, James, was appointed organist for the Hyde Park Choir and Sunday School, a position he held for 28 years. He also served as county organist for Hyde Park, Smithfield, Newton and Clarkston for the Sunday School Jubilee of 1873-1874.
He was a member of Hyde Park’s first brass band organized in 1882, and chosen leader when it was re-organized in 1885. In 1889 he went as leader of the band to Salt Lake City to welcome home the soldiers of the Spanish American War. James S. Has to his credit a number of musical compositions, 2 of them hymns. Some have won prizes in contests and 5 have been published by Salt Lake music companies.

Comments and memories written by family members of James Sands Hancey

Daughter Manila Hancey Cook writes the following: In 1879, mother Ellen Balls promised to marry my father, James Sands Hancey. They went to Salt Lake City and were married in the Endowment House on 9 Oct. 1879, as the temple in Logan was not yet finished. I have seen raised eyebrows when I have told people that my father was married that day and his father was married at the same place the next day 10 Oct. Of course, Grandfather James Hancey was a polygamist and it was his 3rd wife. He and Aunt Mary (as we always called her) and father & mother had gone to Salt Lake City together.

I am not sure where my parents lived when they were first married. I have talked to several other people, and none of them remember seeing or hearing of any other than the 2 frame rooms of the house Bingham Morse now lives in, 137 East 100 South, Hyde Park. There was a pantry, a porch, a root cellar and also an unpainted shanty or summer kitchen at the back. Later on, father added the 2 rooms on the west and removed the old shanty, and added a room and small basement on the back. Father and mother were never “well off” as father was a carpenter, and there were no labor unions then, so quite often they were just paid what people felt they could afford. Sometimes when a farmer, whose house they were building, had a poor crop, or even a failure, the carpenter had to stand part of the loss.

Like many others, they had homemade bed with ropes stretched across for springs, and a mattress made of ticking and filled with straw. The children slept on the floor until more beds were obtained.

Granddaughter Opal Hancey Clark records these memories:

Grandfather, as I remember him, was a tall, rather thin man with black hair and an equally black mustache when as he would kiss our cheek. A very vivid memory of our visits to grandpa’s house in Hyde Park, is of him taking us into the room where the organ was. There he would play many tunes for us, always urging us to sing. We didn’t know the words of the church hymns he would play, so he would play “Jesus Wants Me For A Sunbeam.” We knew that one.

Grandpa’s and Grandma’s home and yard left a deep impression on me as a child. Grandpa’s yard had fruit trees, apricot, apple, and all kinds of plum trees. There were raspberry bushes and a strawberry patch where we children used to savor the red fruit. There was always a beautiful garden. I was fascinated with the neat, weedless rows of vegetables and would follow grandpa and my father up and down the rows as they talked gardening. Patiently, grandpa would say, “be careful where you step.” I think it pleased him that I was interested. I know it was this early experience with my father and grandfather in their garden which gave me a love for gardening.

I remember watching grandpa graft limbs from one fruit tree to another. This intrigued me. I did not understand all he and my father were saying, but to watch grandpa carefully cut the bark on one tree and then put a tiny limb from another into the cut, and then seal it up was a mystery to me as how it could grow other fruit. I’m sure I pestered him with lots of questions, but he was always patient. He wanted us to learn about things.
A lasting impression of grandpa’s and grandma’s home was the neat and clean appearance of it. There was one piece of furniture in their home which fascinated me. It was grandpa’s desk, a tall shiny brown thing with glass doors on the top where there were rows of books. I loved books and always wished I could get my hands on them. The drawers and door below were always locked. The desk was, oh, so tall. Now, I have a hard time realizing that the piece of furniture which I now have in my home is one and the same piece which I so admired as a child. Grandpa had made his desk. Recently I was told that he would make a rocking chair as a wedding gift for some of the family members.

Grandpa, when he rested (although it seemed to me he was always working) would sit in the Captain’s chair, a beautiful piece which he made, and which sat beside the black kitchen stove. To think about grandpa without seeing grandma at the same time is difficult. There was always something good-smelling bubbling away on the shiny black stove. Grandma was a good cook and her gleaming white pantry was, to me, almost a hallowed spot. I can still see those white shelves with pies setting on them and smell the delicious aroma of spiced pickles.

Grandpa was a builder and painter and he taught his sons to be builders and painters. My brothers and brother-in-law also pursued this trade, being taught by my father, who, no doubt, was taught by his father. One day I was at a Literary meeting in one of the older, finer homes in our town (Newton). The woman who had come from California and purchased the home had renovated it, and was showing us what they had done. As she took us through the house, she called attention to the beautiful varnished woodwork, saying they had left it as it was because of the good condition, and because the artisan who painted it had made such a lovely grain in the wood where none had been before. The woodwork was beautiful and in a good state of preservation, attesting to the fine work done. I surmised it was work done by my grandfather. Later I found out it was.

My father told me how his father used to take him as a boy to Logan Canyon to get wood and to fish the streams for trout, a sport my father enjoyed all the days of his life.

Grandpa Hancey composed music and did genealogy work. He played in the Hyde Park Band. I remember going to Logan with my father to hear the Hyde Park Band play on the Tabernacle Square.

Recently when visiting in Hyde Park, my sister and I stopped at grandpa Hancey’s house. The nice couple living there invited us in to see what they had done with it. Grandma’s pantry is now a bathroom. The bedroom brought back memories as that is where grandpa passed away. As I stepped across the threshold as we left, a flood of memories engulfed me. I could almost hear grandpa playing the organ, and taste the luscious tomatoes from the garden, and small the apples which came from the tree that was on the front lawn.

“As I remember Grandpa” by Orlo Hancey (son of James Sands Hancey Jr. & Mabel Benson

We lived some 18-20 miles across the valley from Grandpa, which was quite a distance in those days. As we didn’t always have a car, our visits weren’t as often as we would have liked. I am told he spent a short time with our family after Grandma died. However, I was too young to recall any of that. I was always glad when we would make a trip to Hyde Park to visit Grandpa and our relatives. He seemed so happy to see us, especially the children.

What I remember the most about Grandpa was his musical talents and his garden. He played several instruments as well as the organ. He would play for us, which I enjoyed until he would get out the piccolo. That always made me uncomfortable. I guess because of the high-
pitched tone. I remember him playing the tuba in a band at the tabernacle square in Logan on Saturday mornings. I enjoyed listening to them when we had a chance. Grandpa was proud of his garden, and rightly so. It was always neat and well cared for. He enjoyed showing it to Dad and us kids, but making sure we didn’t step on any plants. I remember him showing and explaining his “grafting” on the fruit trees. It was a mystery to me how he could grow several kinds of fruit on one tree.

I never had the pleasure of fishing with Grandpa, however, I enjoyed him and Dad swapping fishing stories. Dad like fly fishing and Grandpa was a “bank plunker”. Whenever Dad and we boys would go fishing, we would stop and give Grandpa a few trout, which he enjoyed so much. Grandpa was a good carpenter and painter and could fix most anything. I like to think I inherited some of his mechanical skills, if none of his musical talent.

The last few times we visited Grandpa, he wasn’t feeling well and spent most of the time lying on the couch or in bed. I was 13 when he died, and I along with his older grandsons was a pallbearer. All of my memories of Grandpa Hancey are fond ones, and I shall always cherish them.

Written by Melba Hancey Buttars (daughter of James Sands Hancey, Jr. & Mabel Benson Hancey)

A tall dark man of bony frame with furrowed weather brow,
Hands that told of a life of toil and shoulders that had known the plow.
But he stood erect at the close of day, and shaded his eyes to the sun,
And sighed with manly pride as he thought of work well done.
And then in the evening with gentle touch the organ he often played.
And those who came to sit on the porch, finding it pleasant, stayed.

I was 11 years old when my Grandfather Hancey died so my memories of him are of early childhood going with my parents to visit on Sunday afternoons. It was exciting for all of us to pile into the car and make, what seemed to me, the long trip from Newton to Hyde Park to see Grandpa. It was especially exciting in the summer because I knew there would be apples, plums, raspberries and garden produce, which he freely gave us. My fondest memory is of him taking me by the hand and leading me to the pea patch and telling me to “eat all you want.”

Grandpa was an excellent gardener and raised his own seeds. I was fascinated by the jars of seed lined up on shelves on his back porch. One of my happiest memories is of going with Dad one spring to help Grandpa plow and plant his garden. I would follow Dad up and down the length of the garden as he plowed with the hand plow. I think this must have been one of the last gardens my Grandfather planted. I remember the seeds he gave Dad that year, in Ball quart jars with gray lids, to plant his own garden.

My father too, was an excellent gardener, a skill that was taught by Grandfather to his children and many of his grandchildren and others. As I remember Grandpa, he was a tall man with a large black mustache and black hair, and very kind brown eyes. His hands seemed very large to me as I remember watching him play the organ and wondering how his fingers could reach so many keys. I would sometimes sit on the floor and watch his feet in gray felt house slippers, as he pedaled the organ. I loved to hear him play and remember my Mother and Father and neighbors sitting on the porch listening. These were happy days for me.

I think Grandfather’s health must have been failing him in the years I remember him, because he always wore house slippers and seemed to walk very slowly.
The time came when we were not allowed to go with Mother and Dad to see him. I remember crying and looking out the window as they drove out the driveway, feeling very sad and lonely, I remember the funeral as being a very sad time.

Last summer my sister Opal and I went to see Grandfather’s home. The people who bought it have remodeled it and changed it somewhat. They were very gracious to let us come in and see the home as it is now. I could still recognize the back porch where Grandpa kept his seeds, although it is a laundry room now.

The gentlemen told of an interesting experience. He said his Father died when he was very young and he was trying to plant a garden for his Mother. Grandfather came to help and teach him. Grandpa told him to make furrows with the wide side of the hoe to plant the carrots and beets in, instead of narrow furrows. He said for a time he did this and then for many years went back to the old way. Then one spring, long after grandpa had died, as he was planting, he said he heard Grandpa say to him as clear as a bell, “I told you to plant your carrots in wide furrows so they would’s wind around each other.” He has planted carrots, beets, and radishes that way ever since, and in his words, he grows as good a garden as any in the valley.

My memories are fond ones and I only wish I could have known Grandmother and Grandfather Hancey in my later years.

Memories of My Grandfather-James Sands Hancey by Hazel Hancey Pedersen (daughter of James Sands Hancey, Jr. And Mabel Benson Hancey)

The memories I recall most clearly about Grandpa Hancey are those when we would visit him during the summer time. Always he had a very large garden with every kind of vegetable, and many fruit trees. The garden was always a work of art and beauty as well as a source of a bounteous harvest. We were free to have all the vegetables and fruits we wanted to eat, but care had to be taken not to step on or trample the garden.

Beehives were familiar objects among the fruit trees. It was always interesting to see Grandpa put on the “Bee Bonnet” as we called it, and go to the hives and take the honey combs out to extract the honey from them. How we loved to chew some of the beeswax; and we wanted to be at his house when he was ready to take the honey from the hives.

Grandma Hancey was ready to fix us a slice of fresh bread and honey whenever we wanted one. It was a special treat for us to visit “grandpa and grandma Hancey” and we always looked forward to those visits. Grandpa contributed much to the communities throughout Cache Valley in the way of musical talents and building, and in many other ways. His musical abilities have been of great interest to me, and have brought enjoyment to me as a child. Also now as I have grown to appreciate the value of music in our lives. He was a good example to all of us and I value our heritage and the memories I have of my Grandfather.

Written by Bertha Hancey Gittins (daughter of J. Willard Hancey)

The man, James Sands Hancey, who was born on the ocean and who has been called “the man without a country” may not have had a country for many years, but he gave his whole life for the improvement of this country of America.

My first recollections of Grandpa James S. Were of food and music. He was forever interested in his orchard and garden. The well-pruned fruit trees were always loaded with many varieties of apples, pears, prunes, peaches and cherries. His garden of straight, even rows, produced every vegetable one could imagine. A new variety of squash, beans, corn, peas or
tomatoes that was ever shown in a seed catalog. Grandpa would try it. If it were a produce
worthy of its name, he saved the seed for the next year’s planting.

The cellar under the large shanty (built on the north of the kitchen) was always full of
produce for winter use. Some was in jars, some dried, and other fresh, such as squash, cabbage,
parsnips, carrots, apples and pears. The crisp apples, winter pears, and dried pop corn were
special treats on holidays and winter evenings at Grandpa’s and Grandma’s house, as we sat on
the large braided rug in front of the front room stove while Grandpa played the stately old organ,
or just while the grown-ups visited.

Grandma’s Thanksgiving Day dinners were something else to remember. She didn’t have
a lot to do with, but her mashed potatoes, buttered green beans and roasted chicken, or plain
boiled beef, were favorites. The apple pies and suet pudding or lard “crackling” cookies were
long to be remembered.

During Grandpa’s later life, he gathered genealogy of dead relatives, and had over 1200
names in 1932. His life was one of willing public and church service. During his last years,
health failing, he still helped others by gathering records and writing histories of families, bands,
etc.

Written by Waldo G. Cook (son of Manila Hancey Cook)

What I remember about my mother’s father. Actually, what I remember falls into 2
categories. First, my personal experience of seeing and talking to him. Second, what I have read
and heard about him.

Grandpa Hancey died when I was 12 years old so I don’t remember seeing or talking with
him very many times. The last 3 or 4 years before he passed away, he remained at home as his
health was failing him. As I remember him, he was tall and slim, dark complexioned with a
mustache. He seemed to cough a lot of the time. When visiting his home at about 140 East 1st
South in Hyde Park, we usually found him sitting in a rocking chair in the east room of the
house, or, on warm days, in front of the house. We didn’t go to see him often as it was a walk of
about a half mile each way. At least I don’t remember going very often.

I do remember going up there in the fall a few times pulling my wagon. He would take
me to the back of the house and to the garden where he would fill the wagon with vegetables,
melons, and pears. I especially remember the good banana cantaloupe he raised.

The times I remember him best was a few times dad’s father, William Cook, would hitch
up his horse “Prime” to a buggy and come and get me. We would go get Grandpa Hancey and
we would go to Benson Ward to fish in the Bear River on sloughs. Grandpa Cook was short and
Grandpa Hancey tall. Regular “Mutt and Jeff” types. They called each other Jim and Billy. We
had long cane fishing poles, cans of worms, gunny sacks for the fish, and also sacks of
sandwiches for lunch, and bottles of water. I remember not only the catching of fish, but sitting
with them in the shade of a tree eating lunch and drinking warm water.

On the way home, they would argue who had caught the most and the biggest fish. Back
in Hyde Park, they would keep a fish or two each and take the rest to widows, older coupled,
neighbors and friends who liked fish. Generally we caught two gunny sacks full.

One final thing, I remember visiting with Grandpa Hancey a short time before he became
sick and died. He showed me the candle or taper molds, I think he called them, and explained
how they made candles for light in the houses. He also had a bullet mold and some lead that he
had used to make round ball bullets. These bullets were used in fighting the Indians in the Battle
of Bear River. Grandpa Hancey died 28 Sep. 1934, just 2 years after his youngest son, Norval Heber, passed away in 1932. James and his wife Ellen left a large posterity that now number well over one hundred, most of whom are active in the LDS church that their parents joined, and for which they came to America.

The music to “Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken” was written by James Sands Hancey. This song was included in 2 editions of the LDS Hymn Book, however it is not in the latest edition. It is included in this book of the Hancey Family to preserve it for his posterity.

The Information has been taken from the Hancey Family Book published in 1988. Many of the Hancey family worked on this book and have put so much information, pictures, etc. in the many histories. To them we are most grateful. There are pictures of the Hyde Park Band and also a picture taken years later of the people. There is a history of the band also on page 71. Very interesting.

Typed into computer 15 Oct. 2002 by Kathleen Jardine Woolf Idaho Falls, Idaho