JESSE SAMUEL HANCEY

Written by Irene Hancey Gilgen and Maggie Hancey Barrett, daughters.

Jesse Samuel Hancey was born in Hyde Park, Cache, Utah, 8 June 1869, to James and Rachel Seamons Hancey. He was the 7th child in a family of 11 children, 2 having died in infancy.

James and Rachel were converts to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in England. Their 1st child was born on the ship coming to America. They crossed the plains in 1860 with 2 small children, and were among the original settlers of Hyde Park.

The home of James and Rachel was a log house with four rooms in a row with each room having a south door. The kitchen was the east room, and had door to the east. This home was typical of the early pioneer homes. Jesse’s schooling was the same that all boys and girls received at this time. He was promoted in the Priesthood Quorums. He was ordained a Seventy, and was one of the 7 presidents of the 132nd Quorum. He was a teacher in this Quorum for many years. He was Pres. Of the Ward YMMIA and a Sunday School teacher for a number of years.

He was also a leader of the Boy Scout Program. He taught them many nature lessons and animal life. One of his favorite studies was the stars, as he studied astronomy and understood enough about it to make it interesting. He drew a map of the “Starry Heavens” on the blackboard in the south upstairs classroom of the Hyde Park Meeting House. It remained there for many years after his death and was used by other leaders.

Jesse loved nature, especially the small animals and bugs. It has been said that if he could have gone to school, he certainly would have been a teacher of biology. Many times when he was not to be found at home, he had gone to the hills. He would find where small animals had their homes, in caves or under bushes, and he would study the habits of lizards, beetles and spiders. He knew how they made their nests and what they lived on.

Never as a boy or man did Jesse use tobacco or strong drinks. And judging from his pure speech as a man, and his insistence that his children refrain from bad or unclean language, it is certain this principle was important to him throughout his life. There is no one, so far as I know, who has ever heard father use profanity and he never allowed others to use it, or to use tobacco in his home. Some of the men working with him in construction tried to refrain from these habits because they knew they were distasteful and repulsive to father.

As a young man, Jesse helped his father in the shop at carpentry. At the age of 17 he was hired to go to Franklin Canyon to run a shingle mill. It was here, in the year 1886, that he met with an accident and lost most of his right hand. He was brought to Logan in a wagon, and nearly died from the loss of blood. He was not able to work for a long time, and many times when he tried to work his hand would bleed. As soon as he was able, he went with his brother, Frederick Hancey, and a brother-in-law, Enoch Joseph Broadbend, on a hunting trip. This was when hunting and trapping were very good and were financially successful also. He had many trophies such as bear feet and claws which he always treasured. The stories of these hunting trips were always interesting to the Boy Scouts as well as to older people. This hunting was done in the mountains east of Hyde Park, as well as Wyoming and Montana, where they would spend all winter.

Father was a fine looking man. He had fair skin, dark eyes, and black, slightly curly hair. He was clean in actions and the girls really noticed him. In 1889, Father went back to Franklin
Canyon to work. He was now 20 years old and was planning to be married the next spring. He came home from Franklin and he and his sweetheart, Christine Erhartsen, went to work in Logan Canyon at a mill, she as a cook for a number of workers, and he was manager of the mill.

Jesse and Christine were married 5 March 1890, in the Logan Temple, the same day as his brother Horace. After marriage, he went to work with his father at carpentry. They lived in part of Grandma Rachel’s log house for about 3 years, and their first child, Maggie, was born there. He bought a building lot in Hyde Park, and he worked for a year to improve the lot and prepare for a sawmill which he bought for $600. The canal ran on the east side of the lot, and he made a pond and flume to get the water down to the mill to run the water wheel. He worked very hard for 3 years to pay for the mill, and it was in use for a long time. During this time, he finished a 2 room home, one room down stairs and one upstairs. They moved into it in Nov. 1893, just a short time before their 2nd child, Irene, was born. Later he added to this home and improved it. This family home still stands in 1987, located at 136 South Main, Hyde Park, Utah.

Many men were going to the canyon for logs and they brought them to the mill to be sawed into lumber for homes, barns and all other buildings. Jesse always ran the saw himself, even if he had to hire help at the mill. As time passed, the mill became unprofitable as other more modern mills came into existence. He sold the mill to Alex Hill of Wellsville, Utah.

After selling the mill, he went to work at building. Unfortunately, he had a fall and injured his right shoulder. He then decided to contract and build. He drew plans and made blue prints. He earned a little in this way and seemed to like it. Business men tried to get him to move to a larger place, and told him that he could make more money, but father was never a wanderer. He gave his hometown the benefit of his talents, as well as the church and the ward. He became one of the best architects in the county at that time. Because of his crippled right hand, he held his pencil or pen, between a part of his middle finger and half of the fourth finger. His index finger and thumb were completely severed. He helped many relatives and friends by hiring them to help build homes he contracted. His work was always well done. He built many homes in Hyde Park, Wellsville, Benson, Smithfield, Clarkston, Newton and Lewiston. He planned and helped to build the Lewiston 2nd Ward LDS Chapel.

Father was involved in yet another accident that caused bodily injury. He was driving to Smithfield to work when the horse he was driving became frightened and ran away, tipping over the buggy. His right shoulder was broken in the joint and he suffered with it the rest of his life. There were no x-rays then and it was set wrong and made his arm shrink and gave him much pain

Father was always interested in civic and political affairs as well as in education. He was a delegate to the Democratic Conventions at Salt Lake City and other places. He acted as judge of election many times, but he never allowed himself to become over excited or radical about political of religious questions. Yet he was interested and active in both.

In 1918, Jesse was elected to the Cache County Board of Education where he served 4 years. During this period, South Cache High School was built in Hyrum, Utah, and North Cache High School was built in Richmond, Utah. (These buildings are still in use in 1987. The earlier North Cache High School building referred to in some histories was located in Richmond, Utah, while this later building is south of Richmond.) He was the only member of the Board who understood architecture and only member of the Board who understood architecture and building, so he became a valuable member in the building and planning of these schools. He was also
instrumental in securing an addition to the Hyde Park School House.

He later became interested in Genealogy and did a lot of work on the Hancey and Seamons lines. He was a charter member of the Hyde Park band which he belonged to for many years. He was a choir member and president of the choir for many years. He was also the chairman of the amusement and dance committee. Drams was another of his big interests both as a director and taking many drama roles. He was considered a very good actor and newspapers wrote of his fine acting. He gave many public readings and helped many young people along these lines. He directed a Mutual Improvement drama group. He trained his daughter Irene to take parts in many of these plays which were taken to many towns in the Valley and substantially helped out the finances of the organizations. After Hyde Park was incorporated he was the first town clerk.


He passed away 18 Dec. 1925 at 56 years. He died on the operating table following an operation. He was buried 21 Dec. 1925 just 2 weeks after he helped conduct a double funeral in Hyde Park.

The LOGAN JOURNAL after his death printed the following: “Jesse S. Hancey was a man of sterling character. He was an architect and builder, and his work was always noted for durability and solidity. He was never too busy to help others when needed. He was honest in his work and in his convictions. His life was above reproach. He was efficient and faithful to the cause he espoused. He was respected and loved by all who knew him. He will be missed by our community and all of Cache Valley as a valuable citizen.”

Typed into computer by Kathleen Jardine Woolf 18 Oct 2002 Idaho Falls, Idaho
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