

Francis Adelbert Webb
20 March 1853 24 July 1938
by Elaine Johnson

Delly was born seven and one half months after his father died crossing the plains. He was their sixth child. He was born in Cottonwood, today known as Holladay. Soon afterward his mother moved the family to Fillmore. In later years he said, "The first thing I remember was the old fort. The walls were built of mud, rock, and straw and formed the back wall of the dwellings. We lived close to the big gate on the west side."

He liked to say he helped build the first church building in Fillmore when he was only three years old because he carried lunch to his uncle every day while he worked as a mason. As soon as he was big enough he herded cattle. With the first money he ever earned he bought pink calico cloth and gave it to his mother to make a dress for herself and a shirt for him. He grew up in Fillmore except a handful of years spent in Salt Lake City after his mother married Alexander McRae. They had to move south again when Johnston's Army approached. Seven year old Adelbert was living in his mother's household at the time of the 1860 federal census.

My brother, Eddie, and I used to herd cows on what is now called the avenues and up around Red Butte and where Fort Douglas is now located. I herded cows from the time I was seven until I was eleven when I started helping build ditches, make roads, cut and build fences. When I was ten, Eddie and I grubbed ten acres of greasewood [a spiny, scraggly shrub] at Deseret for my uncle John. Perhaps you will get an idea how pleasant that was when I tell you we did it barefoot.

I worked for a man named Stewart, doing a man's work and for a whole week's work was paid one-half gallon of molasses. After that I worked on a threshing machine. The old-time thresher sent the straw out on an elevator and the chaff came out below. I had to keep the chaff away from the machine. The dust and smut were so thick that I could barely breath while at work. I would stand it as long as possible, then pop out, draw a few long breaths, and then back in to repeat. If it was a big job lasting more than a day, I received one pack of wheat, if short, I got less.

I had some schooling in these years, which consisted of ten weeks during the winters. I also worked at farming, making molasses, butter and cheese. My oldest brother made a business of breaking horses and I used to help him. I helped quarry rock and saw logs to make lumber. I believe I did almost every kind of work in those years but one. There was one thing I had in mind—I wanted to learn the carpenter trade. My father had been a carpenter and had worked on the Nauvoo Temple. I pleaded with mother for months to let me go and be apprenticed to Brother Gibbs to learn the carpenter trade. She said if I went, I would not stay long enough to learn anything and my time would be wasted. I promised her if she would let me go, I would stay until my time was up. I was

apprenticed to Brother Gibbs for three years, during which time he was to teach me the trade and board me. In return, anything I earned within that time went to him. Brother Gibbs was a good man and there was no fault finding from him and I stayed the three years. While an apprentice, we built the Lyman grist mill, this experience being very helpful to me in later years.¹

Delly loved to read and by his own study he became a well educated man. His granddaughter Eugenia wrote, "As I look back at him I never recall hearing him use poor grammar or English and I certainly didn't learn to swear from him. He had a rule for reading that always tickled me. He'd say, 'I read a little bit at the beginning, a little bit at the end, and a little bit in the middle. If I like them I read the book.'"

He married Isabella Callister in January 1873 at Fillmore and was sealed to her the same spring in the Endowment House. Their first three children were born in Fillmore. He was a High Council member in the Millard Stake.

In the year 1875, my wife and I were called to work on the St. George Temple; I at my trade, and she, to cook for the men working there. This lasted until the dedication of the temple April 16, 1877. Here some of the happiest days of our lives were spent. While we were in St. George, President Young preached the United Order, and I was thoroughly convinced. Also, I had talked to a number of brethren from Orderville in Kane County. I decided to join them, but my calling to labor in the Millard Stake prevented my doing so until in October, 1881, when I moved my family to Orderville. In the plan received from President Young, every branch of business was to be under the direction of a foreman, and I was immediately made foreman of the building department. They decided to build a woolen factory and had engaged two millwrights to do the work, but just before I got there, they had sent word it would be impossible for them to do the work so it fell to my lot to do it.

I did not know a thing about woolen or cotton mills, and there was no one else who did. The machinery was in bad shape, having come from St. Louis, Missouri, to Salt Lake City by train and from there to Orderville by team over rough mountain roads in winter and it was second hand to start with. It was quite a problem to me to study it all out, but there was One to whom I could always go for advice who never failed me. That was the Lord. After I worked and studied and figured on one piece of machinery for three days without success. I humbly went before the Lord and told Him my troubles and that night it was shown me so plainly that I knew just how and where it went. Whenever I felt boastful of my

¹ From the Journal of Francis A. Webb as quoted in *Treasures of Pioneer History*, by Kate B. Carter, pg 399-400

success after the mill was finished and running smoothly, I remembered the help the Lord had given me and gave Him the honor.²

Early in the spring of 1882 with the assistance of Reuben Jensen, Enos Fackrell and Heber Meeks, young men who thought they wanted to learn the trade, and Heber Ayers, an older and more experienced man, we began work by shoveling three feet of snow from the site chosen for the building. Goudy Hogan recommended a man from Franklin, Idaho, to go to St Louis to buy the machinery which was second hand. I did not know a thing about machinery nor of building the penstock and flume. I felt very humble and made it a matter of prayer and am happy to say that in the building of the penstock and installing the machinery, I did not make a single mistake. The flume and penstock never leaked, and although the machinery was almost wrecked in transportation from Salt Lake, we got it in operation and it worked well.³

In Orderville Delly found the Isaac Carling family who had also lived in Fillmore. Polygamy was common practice among the leaders of the Order. Belle gave her permission for Delly to begin courting sixteen year old Martha Jane Carling. On 21 March 1883 he married her in the St. George Temple. Before the wedding Isaac Carling told him Martha was not always truthful. The incident in question was a misunderstanding but Delly believed it and this started their marriage off badly. They were never able to overcome this problem. Three more of his children were born in Orderville. One to his first wife and two by his second.

In time I had at different times quite a number of admirers among the boys of Orderville, while very young to think of keeping company with the opposite sex, and a number of them asked me for my company, but my parents did not want me to keep company with any of the boys or men while I was so young, and so I told four of them this when they asked me for my company that I liked them, but did not want to keep company with them or with anyone until I was older.

But when Francis A. Webb came along and asked me for my company I told or gave him the same answer, he asked me if I had any objection to him coming to see me once in a while anyway. Of course, I didn't object to this, and so he started coming to see me. Our friendship soon ripened into love, and we were married in the Saint George Temple March 21, 1883. I was in my seventeenth year, and being so young and entering into plural marriage was a great undertaking for one so young and inexperienced, but I had been taught from infancy that this was the right and best way and so, I did not hesitate to marry him

² From the Journal of Francis A. Webb as quoted in *Treasures of Pioneer History*, by Kate B. Carter, pg 399-400

³ Delly Webb quoted in *History of Kane County*, by Adonis Findlay Robinson, pg 339

although he was thirteen years my senior, and had a wife and four children. She his wife treated me well at first, and told me that she loved me as a sister, and I thought that we should all be very happy together, but this condition of affairs did not continue long, for she was not willing for him to provide for me and my children as he did for her and her children, and he was not strong enough to do his duty by us against her opposition and the result was as the years went on, much suffering, privation, neglect and humiliation. I tried to struggle through it all and stay with it, for I felt that it would be a most terrible sin to separate from my husband after having been united to him by the authority of the holy Priesthood, but finally after having lived with him for eighteen years. It seemed that I could endure it no longer, and so, applied to the President of the church Joseph F. Smith for a divorce which was granted.

My husband was not well off, in fact, was quite poor as to the material things of this earth, he did not have in fact, as much as to make the first family comfortable as rated by present day living, but, had he divided his substance with our part of the family according to the numbers in each family, there would not have been much suffering of any members of the family.

Perhaps the right thing for me to have done would have been for me to complain to the church authorities about it, for there is provisions made in the Church to have all such things handled, and the offenders brought to task, but I was always of a peaceable, charitable and tolerant nature and would rather suffer wrong than to do wrong, and would put up with all kinds of impositions rather than make trouble for others, and so, the wretched years kept on and on. There was a little new life added to my family every two years, but they too were made to suffer with the rest of us. I saw when it was too late to mend matters in our family treatment, that I had used patience after it had ceased to be a virtue, causing my dear children to lose faith in the gospel, because, they attributed all our sufferings and humiliations to the principle of plural marriage, when really it was the failure of the individuals living up to the principle to live this law as the Gospel teaches it.

Had all of the family lived up to the teachings of the gospel in this respect, I think that I could have lived it forever and lived a happy life.

Had I taken my troubles and the neglect of my husband to provide for his family to the proper authorities at the right time, when I saw that my efforts to have wrongs and neglect righted, there would have been some effort made to have our wrongs made right and had justice dealt out to us.

But when there was no complaint made, there was no bases for the authorities to take things into their own hands, and so, we continued to suffer until our affairs came to the breaking point, and a separation was the result. And so let me advise my dear ones to do things in the proper time, and do not do as I have done in this way. But if you know of worthy examples that I may have set, I'd be glad to know that I had been a help to my children in some way. I've certainly made many mistakes during my life, but I have tried so hard to do what I thought was right. There is many things that I feel that I would like the privilege of doing

over if I could have the knowledge and experience that I now have, to start with, this is, that I think that were I to have this opportunity, I think that I could do better by you children, I would demand justice for you.

But to try to make a better job of it all and not have had more experience and knowledge than I had then, I would not want to try it over, for I may not be able to do any better than I did.

Well that part of our lives is past, never to return, no matter however much regrets we have, but we may profit by these past experiences.⁴

Once the Order was dissolved Delly and some of Martha's family decided to go to Mexico to escape persecution for polygamy. They left 1 April 1886. The journey was slow because one of the women was expecting a baby. They had plans to stop for a time in Woodruff where Delly's uncles lived. Erastus Snow advised them to stay and they settled in the Snowflake and Woodruff areas. He bought two rooms inside the fort for Martha and her children. He served as a Bishop's Councilor in Woodruff.

Delly worked in a sawmill and hauled freight from Holbrook to Fort Apache. He also built a dam across the Little Colorado to supply irrigation water. And he owned a flock of sheep tended by his son Ed. His daughter remembered that every time they moved he would start building a large four room house for his first wife but never got it finished before they were moving again. During these years he moved both his wives into several temporary homes as his freight business migrated.

His son James died in 1887. His wife Martha went to visit her parents who still lived in Orderville and took their surviving son with her in 1888. She gave birth to a daughter in Orderville. The baby died of Scarlet Fever before she returned to him. In 1893 Delly and his brother Edward made a trip to Salt Lake City to attend the dedication of the temple. The trip convinced him to move his family back to Fillmore.

In August 1895, after nine years in Arizona, he took his wives and children to Utah. He left Martha in Orderville while he rushed north to his mother's death bed. While they were separated Martha gave birth to another son. She joined him in Fillmore and homesteaded a farm outside town. Delly had a homestead nearby but moved with Isabelle to Hinckley soon after.

Delly helped his son Ed make the floor and then the walls and ceiling of a shack, with a quilt door, where Martha and her children spent the winter. Delly and Martha's last two children were born there, the last in 1900. Martha divorced him sometime after this. Shortly following this he moved to View, Idaho, near Burley. In June of 1908 Delly was informed of the death of his son Isaac. He traveled to Basalt where Martha and her children lived. He hadn't seen them for six years.

⁴ by Martha Jane Carling Webb Porter, 23 Jun 1934, Logan, Utah

In 1917 he moved to Draper, Utah, just south of Salt Lake City. He had a forty-acre farm with fruit trees and a berry patch. Eugenia, who lived across the street, also wrote, "He was an early riser--too early for my taste. By the time we kids were up he'd have gone over all his tomato patch and killed every bug in sight, or completed some other task about the farm. He was a very busy man." That first winter back in Utah he was taken to the hospital with acute appendicitis. When the doctors operated, they found a growth in his intestines. They told him he had cancer and would only live another six months. They moved into Salt Lake, but Delly didn't die.

A few years later Isabella's health deteriorated and they moved to San Francisco where some of their sons were living. The mild weather helped both of them. When she became weaker, he brought her back to Draper near their daughter who could help with her care. He built a two room house. During these years he was an ordinance worker and officiator in the Salt Lake Temple. Whenever he wanted to go into the city, he walked.

He fed his chickens a mash with hot water and cayenne pepper "and they would lay eggs and sing like mad." When Delly wasn't busy with other things he would push his wheel barrow up into the hills and cut oak brush for firewood. He kept enough for several weeks on hand. The metal wheel barrow squeaked loudly and since his favorite time to get wood was early morning he often woke the neighborhood as he squeaked his way up the road. His wife Isabella died in August 1936 in Salt Lake City.

Delly's daughter Helen wrote, "Father was kind and generous to a fault. He had a keen sense of humor and a wonderful memory. He was always ambitious . . . In spite of a serious physical condition he had for twenty years he walked long distances, raised a garden and was very much interested in genealogy work. He enjoyed reading. Even at his advanced age he could read for hours without glasses. Father never forgot the persecutions his parents had endured for the gospel sake and he remained true to the faith to the end."

The summer of 1937 he made a trip to San Francisco where he witnessed the opening of the Golden Gate Bridge. On the morning of July 22nd, 1938, Delly got two loads of wood in his wheel barrow and finished all his work early because he planned to go into Salt Lake for the afternoon. He was taking a bath when his house caught fire. His injury and subsequent death were reported by the newspapers.

Burns Leave Old Draper Man in 'Poor' Condition

Francis Webb, 85, of Draper, who was severely burned yesterday when fire destroyed his two room house, was in "poor" condition today at the Salt Lake General Hospital. Mr. Webb suffered second and third degree burns about the head, arms, back and legs. County Fire Chief Jack Clay said he was unable to determine the origin of the fire.⁵

⁵ *Deseret News*, 23 July 1938, pg 11

Aged Draper Man Succumbs to Fire Hurts

Burns incurred when his Draper home was destroyed by fire resulted in the death yesterday of Francis A. Webb, 85. He had re-entered his flaming house Friday to get some clothing.

Mr. Webb was born March 20, 1853 at Cottonwood, a son of Edward Milo and Caroline A. Owens Webb. His father died July 31, 1852 while crossing the plains.

On Jan. 27, 1873 he married Isabelle Callister in the Old Endowment House. In March 1883 he married Martha J. Carling.

A carpenter and builder by trade, he assisted with many early projects for the church, including the building of the St. George Temple. For several years he was an ordinance worker in the Temple and he had been a High Priest for 61 years.

Funeral services will be conducted Wednesday at 2 p.m. in the Draper First Ward Chapel. Interment will take place in the Salt Lake City Cemetery.

Surviving Mr. Webb are the following sons and daughters: Francis A. Webb Jr., Los Angeles; Mrs. Nettie Freeman, Mesa, Ariz.; Mrs. Amelia Carter and Mrs. Hellen Vawdrey, both of Draper; Grant W. Webb, Los Angeles; Porter C. Webb, San Francisco; Irvin Webb, Vallejo, Calif.; Wallace Webb, Salt Lake; Edward M. Webb and Alma Webb of Pingree, Idaho; Mrs. Dapne Jimmett, Alridge, Idaho; one sister, Mrs. Estella Beauregard, Fillmore, Utah; 60 grand-children and 58 great grandchildren.⁶

⁶ *Deseret News*, 25 July 1938, pg 3

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