



WILLIAM LESLIE CROWTHER

1894 –1969

William Leslie Crowther was born 9 May 1894 in a little adobe brick home in Harrisville, Utah. He was blessed and given a name by Pleasant Green Taylor on the same day as his birth. He was the last of ten children born to David W. Crowther and Anna Louise Josephine Holtgren. Their other children included: Annie Josephine (1871), Alice Charolotte (1873), Clara Marinda (1875), Rose (1877), Walter Herbert (1879), May Eveline (1881), Emma Adella (1882), Albert Lawrence (1885), and Ethel Delora (1892).

When he was four years old, William remembered making a trip with his family in a covered wagon to Blackfoot, Idaho, to visit his sister, Alice Cowles, and her family. On the journey, he painstakingly cared for his two stick horses mimicking his father as he cared for his horses. William became a good horse handler and he always took pride in caring for horses. He remembered that Indians used to camp over the bluff by the Six Mile Creek. They liked to peek into the windows of the white people's homes, and sometimes they would shoot chickens belonging to the settlers.

When he was small, William had the measles, and pneumonia developed. He was very ill and his brother, Walter, carried him in his arms and promised him a nickel if he would get better and not die. He did recover and was baptized a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in a pond south of the barn on the Fred Miller Farm [1135 North Harrisville Road] on 6 July 1902.

William was fun-loving and a tease. One of his chores was to carry water from the well and to put it in tubs for his sisters to rinse the scrubbed clothes in before hanging them on the line to dry. Often they found frogs swimming in the tubs. On cold winter nights, as they sat and warmed their shoeless feet outstretched toward the open oven door of the coal or wood burning stove, William would take the long hot metal stove poker and attempt to burn his sisters' feet.

He attended school in the old red brick Harrisville school house. It was heated by a huge stove, about twelve feet in circumference and seven feet high, that stood next to the east wall. William and other boys liked to climb onto the roof of the school house and slide down the storm drain pipes, which sometimes made them late for class. The teacher discouraged this activity and stood at the bottom of the pipes with a board to swat their bottoms as they slid down.

William had spinal meningitis when he was in the fifth grade. For a time, each spring and fall, an abscess would form in the corner of his left eye. The doctor claimed the abscesses were caused from poison from the meningitis and claimed this saved William's life. Fearing

it placed too much strain on the other eye, William was not sent back to school. Education was not considered as important then because most people earned their living from the soil and by the muscle and brawn of a healthy body.

When William was about eight or ten years old, he and a friend, Marion Taylor, wandered down the lane and into Levi Taylor's pasture. Seeing a young calf, they picked it up and took turns carrying it through the sloughs and Four Mile Creek until they reached home. Their parents would not let them keep it and sent them to return it. As they were about to cross the street, Henry McEntire from Farr West came along and the boys sold him the calf for 50 cents. They took the money and spent it at the celebration being held at the ward meeting house. Two days later Levi J. Taylor came looking for his calf. He gave the boys until night time to bring him \$2 or he would put them in the reform school. William was able to convince his mother to give him the \$2, and that was the end of his cattle rustling days.

From the time he was about nine to fourteen years old, every summer he and Wilford Shurtleff would drive three or four cows belonging to his father, and a larger herd belonging to Wilford's step-father, Charlie Guysler, to the foot hills east of Second Street to feed. Others also brought cows there to herd, and they all brought along their lunch and had a good time exploring the canyons and climbing mountains until evening and time to bring the cows home for milking.

On one occasion, after returning home from a date, William unhitched the horses and put them in the stable. He climbed up in the hay loft to throw down some hay. He picked up the pitchfork and with gusto pushed it into the hay to get a fork full. His fork struck something hard which resulted in an agonizing scream. This terrified William. He leaped from the hayloft, sped for the house, and awakened his father who told him he had given a transient permission to sleep in the hay.

William's family attended church in the old Harrisville chapel which was heated by a large pot bellied stove. Sage brush was burned in the stove to furnish the heat. Behind the church was a wood shed and it was the duty of the deacons each Saturday to gather sage brush and stack it in the shed. The building was lighted by coal oil lamps and it was also the deacon's assignment to fill the lamps with oil and keep the chimneys cleaned as well. They also passed the sacrament in meetings. Curtains were drawn across the room crosswise and again lengthwise to form rooms for classes. William served as librarian for Sunday School and later was on the Scout Troop Committee.

He was very proficient at ice skating and even when he was in his sixties he enjoyed going skating with his children and grandchildren. One cold winter day in his youth, he was skating at the Harrisville Brickyard pond with other young people. He was sitting on a sleigh with Mary Henderson fixing his skate when someone gave the sleigh a push out onto ice that was thin. The ice broke letting them and the sleigh into about six to eight feet of water. Mary was headed under the ice but William grabbed her by her toe and pulled her back into the open hole. He held onto her and clung onto the ice at the edge of the hole until other skaters could finally pull Mary out. She was taken to a nearby home for dry clothes. William was able to climb out onto solid ice, but by the time he rode his horse home, his wet

clothes were frozen stiff. William also liked sleigh riding either with a bob sleigh, or cutter or small sleighs pulled by horses wearing jingle bells. In the summers, William joined in playing baseball at the Costley's pasture or the ball diamond behind the church.

William and his pals found a good swimming place where the water was deep and wide, near where the Ogden and Weber Rivers merge on West 17th Street. His sister, Annie, and her husband, Ben Dinsdale, lived nearby. His brother, Walter and wife Sarah, who operated a one hundred-acre farm for the sugar factory also lived close by. William remembered swimming one day when he was about sixteen or seventeen years old. His friends, Walt Blair and Vaughn Yearsley, dived in and swam across the river while William and Amos Taylor waited on the bank until the other two reached the opposite bank. Then William and Amos dove in and started across. William made it to the shore but Amos tired about two thirds of the way and went under. All three boys went to his aid and pulled him onto the bank. When he recovered he said, "You darn fools, I would have made it if you hadn't jumped on me and tried to drown me."

One day William, Vaughn Yearsley, Walt Blair, and Lyle Lake took a push car that had been left off the side of the rail road track used by the little train called the "Dummy" that went through Harrisville. They put the push car on the Dummy tracks loaded with the children of the neighborhood, and William pulled it with his horse. This was great fun, but they made the error of leaving the car on the tracks. When the Dummy came along and struck the car, the impact broke the cow catcher off the front end of the engine. The sheriff came and got the boys out of school and blamed them for all the mischief, including spikes on the rails near Plain City, which was not their doing. Since they were minors, he reprimanded them and let them go.

Home life in the David Crowther home was simple but filled with love. Each year the family made a trip to the mountains at Christmas time to obtain a tree. The children spent happy hours making colorful decorations for the tree while anticipating the one gift they hoped to receive.

The fifteen acres where the Crowther family lived was mostly swamps, willow patches, and hills. The Crowther boys worked years at clearing and scraping down the hills and leveling the land with a horse drawn land scraper. When William was about eight years old, he went with his brother Walter and brother-in-law, Ezra Yarsley, with a team of horses and a wagon to Skunk Creek in the Monte Cristo area to get logs to build a stable and hay barn for his father. He also made trips with them for fire wood. When he was about seventeen, he and his friends went alone with teams and wagons for wood. It would take them three or four days to make the trip. They took food and blankets and slept under the wagons if it stormed.

While in his late teens, William obtained employment working the night shift at the National Coffee House on the south side of 25th Street between Wall & Lincoln Avenues. It was a great worry to his mother because the element there was rough and evil. Several times drunks stumbled in to the coffee house for black coffee to sober up. One big rough Spanish speaking fellow pulled a knife and William was terribly frightened, especially since he could not understand what the man was saying, but incident ended without harm.

At the age of ten or twelve, William took notice of a quiet young girl, Laura Laverna Taylor, who was living with her married sister [565 West Harrisville Road] because their parents, Josiah and Abigail Arilla Taylor, had both died. He liked to ride his horse up the street to talk to her. She went to Idaho to live with an aunt for several years. She returned to Harrisville and lived with her grandmother and her brother Junius and did housework for Mr. Owens to earn her living. William and Laverna were married in a simple ceremony by Bishop R.D. Brown in his home in Harrisville 8 February 1915.

They lived for a time in a large tent pitched in front of his parent's adobe house. The tent had boards half way up the walls. They were fairly comfortable living there, but one night a terrible east wind came up and blew the pictures off the walls and knocked their cupboard over. They feared they would find their tent down in the meadows before morning, so William took his wife over to his brother Albert's house to stay until the wind died down. Next they lived in a harness shop that had been converted into a two room house located near the street [approximately 948 North Harrisville Road]. Their first son was stillborn 18 August 1915. Second son Lorin William was born 11 September 1916 in the harness shop. William and Laverna received their endowments 22 March 1916 in the Salt Lake Temple. They moved from the harness shop and lived for a short time in a home one block east of Washington Boulevard on Second Street. A bicycle was their only means of transportation and William would put Laverna on the cross bars holding Lorin and peddle them to Harrisville over the dirt roads to visit family. In February 1918, William and Laverna bought the home his brother, Albert Crowther, had built on property purchased from their father, David Crowther, several years earlier [954 North Harrisville Road]. This frame home is where the family lived and where William eventually died. Their other children were born here including: Leslie Taylor (1919), Carl Lloyd (1921), Florence Laverna (1924), and Laura Lois (1925). Their family enjoyed camping trips to the canyon and several trips to Yellowstone. Albert, William's brother, lived just down the street from William. They were very close throughout the years. Together they cared for their father prior to his death. They shared tools and together they even bought a Farmall tractor to help with their farm work.

William worked at various jobs during his life time. Besides those mentioned, he worked at the Ogden packing house as a meat inspector. He worked for Weber County driving a water wagon to sprinkle the roads. He helped build a rock crusher south of Utah Hot Springs and worked there crushing rock to build roads. When Weber Central Cooperative Association was organized, William volunteered to haul the milk from the local areas. He could throw full cans of milk up into the bed of his truck with one arm. It amazed people that such a slightly built man could have such strength. At the dairy, each can of milk was weighed on platform scales before being emptied into a pasteurizing machine. Empty cans were again weighted to give the producer credit for weight of the milk delivered. William washed the empty cans by hand, loaded them back on the wagon, and returned them to the owner for the next day's milk. He also made two or three trips to Salt Lake weekly with his truck to take a load of butter and powdered milk. He worked for the dairy about seventeen years and received recognition for careful driving.

When World War II developed, the Ogden Arsenal was built, and William and his son Lorin quit the dairy for better pay. He started 5 January 1942 in the link and belt plant as a shell inspector of 30 to 50 caliber shells. He transferred to the bomb plant, 23 September 1943, as an explosive operator. His duties were to stir the TNT powder in large tubs, and then tamp it into bomb shells for shipment to the war areas overseas. This was extremely dangerous work; not only from the danger of explosion, but from the inhalation of fumes. William received TNT poisoning before he was transferred to another job. He worked as a warehouse foreman, inventory counter, tool and parts keeper. He also worked in the packing for shipment department.

On 16 March 1937, Laverna died leaving William with five children; the oldest was 21 and the youngest 12. He had a number of housekeepers during the next four years. Then on 17 June 1940, he married Irene Thurgood Montgomery; a widow with two children, Darrel, age 17, and Donna, age 11. Within two and a half years after their marriage, four of their combined children married. William and Irene had a child, Boyd Thurgood, born in 1941.

Due to damage to William's kidneys and liver from TNT poisoning, he received a medical release from work, 13 May 1954. His condition required that he make weekly trips to the doctor for shots. After retirement, he kept busy caring for his small farm and garden. He also took pride in caring for his yard.

After sixteen years of retirement and poor health, William became ill with influenza in November 1968. He spent some time in the hospital. He was released to return home just before the New Year. He suffered a cerebral hemorrhage and died 22 January 1969. He is buried in the Ogden City cemetery next to Laverna.

SOURCE

Crowther, Irene M. William Leslie Crowther. Unpublished manuscript. 1965.

Blair, Walt	Harrisville Brickyard
Brown, Bishop R.D.	Henderson, Mary
Brown, Florence Laverna Crowther	Holtgren, Anna Louise Josephine
Costley's pasture	Lake, Lyle
Cowles, Alice Charolotte Crowther	McEntire, Henry
Crowther, Albert Lawrence	Miller, Fred
Crowther, Alice Charolotte	Monte Cristo
Crowther, Annie Josephine	Montgomery, Darrel
Crowther, Boyd Thurgood	Montgomery, Donna
Crowther, Carl Lloyd	Montgomery, Irene Thurgood
Crowther, Clara Marinda	Ogden Arsenal
Crowther, David W.	Owens, Mr.
Crowther, Emma Adella	Reed, Donna Montgomery
Crowther, Ethel Delora	Shurtleff, Wilford
Crowther, Florence Laverna	Smith, Abigail Arilla
Crowther, Irene Thurgood Montgomery	Stratford, Laura Lois Crowther
Crowther, Laura Laverna Taylor	Taylor, Abigail Arilla Smith
Crowther, Laura Lois	Taylor, Amos
Crowther, Leslie Taylor	Taylor, Josiah
Crowther, Lorin William	Taylor, Junius
Crowther, May Eveline	Taylor, Laura Laverna
Crowther, Sarah	Taylor, Levi J.
Crowther, Walter Herbert	Taylor, Marion
Dinsdale, Annie Josephine Crowther	Taylor, Pleasant Green
Dinsdale, Ben	Weber Central Cooperative Association
Guysler, Charlie	Yearsley, Ezra
Harris, Leander S.	Yearsley, Vaughn