

## **Manomas Lavina Gibson**

Interviewer - Mabel Jarvis

The following pioneer personal history interview with Manomas Lavina Gibson Andrus, wife of Captain James Andrus, was held at the home of Mrs. Andrus in the presence of her granddaughter, Mrs. Caddie Andrus Graff, and Mabel Jarvis, the interviewer, in behalf of the Utah Historic Records Survey of Washington County, Utah, in 1936. Whenever the pioneer is quoted the writer has made an effort to quote the exact wording given. All supplementary material used was assembled from a previous interview with the writer and from a sketch prepared by Manomas's daughter, Mrs. Vilate Andrus Wadsworth, on the request of the Daughters of the Utah Pioneers.

When I called on Manomas Lavina Gibson Andrus, "Aunt Nome" to most of us Dixie folk, she was busily washing the breakfast dishes, and gave little evidence of her ninety-four years, or of her total blindness, from which incapacity she has suffered since 1922. She resides with her granddaughter, Mrs. Caddie Andrus Graff and family; rather, they live with her in the home built for her by her late husband in the early nineteen hundreds and with which she became familiar before being deprived of her sight. This home is located on First South Street, midway between First and Second West, and is just a block west of the public square on which are located the Woodward School, County Library, St. George Stake Tabernacle, Dixie College gymnasium and General Building and the recently erected Amusement Hall and open-air pavillion.

"Aunt Nome" is a very small woman, and she is growing just a trifle frail. Her voice is not as vibrant as it once was, but her mind is clear and her hearing remarkably keen. Having previously obtained enough items from her life history for a local newspaper writeup, going over her remembrance again in somewhat greater detail was a genuine pleasure for me and seemingly for her. We spent a most affable two hours.

Manomas Lavina Gibson was born in Monroe County, Mississippi, March 10, 1842, the daughter of George Washington and Mary Ann Sparks Gibson, she being the tenth of eleven children. She has no record of the actual town in which she was born, knowing only the county and state. As she recalls, they were in a farming district apart from actual towns.

Manomas was only four years of age when her parents and other family members became converts of the Latter-day Saints (Mormon) Church and commenced the long journey across the Great Plains to Utah. There were seventeen persons in the group from Mississippi, who joined the Pioneers at Ft. Laramie, in June of 1847. They had wintered at Pueblo, along with many others who later joined Captain Brown's detachment of the Mormon Batallion and came on to Ft. Laramie with them, arriving June 16th, the first seventeen having arrived on the 1st. The entire group pushed forward on the 17th, hoping to overtake the main caravan

before it reached Utah. These facts are recorded in the Utah Chronology. The Gibsons were with this company of seventeen who wintered at Pueblo, which was then only a small trading post with a few log buildings. There were only a few other women than those of the Gibson party in the settlement that winter. Mr. Gibson had contracted Mountain Fever (Typhoid) which was their reason for this delay along the route.

Though not yet five years of age, "Aunt Nome" recounts clearly the incidents of that long cold winter. One event stands out prominently in her mind. There were assembled at Pueblo, along with the few Mormon Pioneers, quite a number of traders and trappers who did a good bit of drinking and gambling. One night some of these men were gambling in a building next to the cabin occupied by the Gibsons. An argument arose over the card game, and the Gibson children were terrified at the thought of what was going on so near them, as they could hear every word of the snarling, swearing men. Suddenly there were shots. One man was killed. Keen in her mind today is the memory of that awful night, the loud shouting of the men and their gunfire as they pursued the murderer, who was later apprehended, shot to death and brought to camp for burial. Father Gibson, being a carpenter, fashioned a coffin from rough logs in which the murderer was buried. Much suffering was endured during that long winter and such anguish lest something should happen and they might not get to the Valley.

With the coming of spring they resumed their journey to Utah, continuing with the sick detachment from the Mormon Battalion under Captain Brown, and arriving in Salt Lake Valley July 29th, 1847, five days after the main caravan of pioneers. There was almost a celebration over their safe arrival, as there had been great anxiety concerning them.

The Gibsons remained in Salt Lake during the summer and winter of 1847, and Manomas remembers taking a hand with her brothers and sisters and the others in the war waged on the crickets. The children were given small wooden mallets and did all they could to help exterminate the insects. Then came the great flocks of gulls. She shuddered as she recounted the way the gulls gorged on the crickets till they could hold no more, than disgorged themselves and took on a fresh feeding until finally the cricket horde were destroyed.

The family moved to Big Cottonwood in the spring of 1848, where they erected, first, just a shelter of willows, and her father did some farming. They brought some tools with them when they came across the plains, a heavy axe, a sort of spade shovel, and her father had a few carpenter tools. Soon they had a log house, or cabin, in Cottonwood, but just a very small place and plenty crowded, even though their possessions were very meager.

They had only Johnny cake most of the time for the family, but her father secured a little flour for her invalid mother. They did have a pretty plenty of meat most of the time, as her father was handy at killing the wild rabbits and pine hens, and there were lots of fish in the stream not far from their home. They also dug sego

roots, cooking the bulbs much the same as potatoes. And they soon raised their own potatoes and such small vegetable as are found commonly in gardens--benas, pease, carrots, cabbage, beets and turnips. They made some molasses from beets, as well as from cane, and this syrup was the chief sweetener for all purposes.

She laughed a little as she described the lighting systems of those first years in Utah. "Often all we had was the pine log in the fireplace. And before we got to making candles, we use the tallow dip. For this we would use one of mother's heavy saucers, which was deep enough to hold a good cup of the melted tallow. Then we would select a heavy button around which we fastened a piece or scrap of course cloth. This was tied over the button, then the ends were stripped and braided. Such a lamp would give us a fairly good light for two or three evenings. Candles, when we could get them, were better, but it was a long time before we had any lamps."

Manomas was baptized into the Church in Big Cottonwood Creek, in 1850, when she was eight years of age. When Manomas was fifteen years of age she went to work in the home of Levi Stewart, who had three families for whom she did the general housework, most of the cooking, and all of the washing. For this she received a wage of \$1.50 per week, mostly in store-pay. With this money she purchased her first dainty piece of calico print at 25 cents per yard, and made it up during odd minutes and after work. She remained at Stewart's until her mother's illness made it necessary for her to return home. Later she worked at the Beehive House for Zina D. Young.

Due to her mother being ill most of the time after she was of school age, this pioneer girl had little opportunity for an education. She did attend a few weeks of school in Big Cottonwood, and was able to complete the Third Reader before being compelled to discontinue school.

When Manomas was fifteen years of age, her father brought home a second wife, just a young girl her own age. From time to time there was considerable trouble between this young wife and the Gibson children. Because of this experience, Manomas vowed she would never marry in the order of polygamy then practiced by the Church. Her father was very pious and strict in his demands of no labor on the Sabbath, and it seemed to be Manomas' misfortune to be reported for extra floor scrubbing or cooking now and then on the Sabbath. And when father Gibson punished, he never slighted the job in the least. The wounds thus made in the heart of this girl were slow to heal, though she thinks now of ways that she might have avoided much of the trouble then endured.

In 1851, the Gibsons came to the Dixie Mission, settling at first in what is now the town of Grafton. Her sister, Laura, had married James Andrus, and after a time she came to live with them in St. George. After some time, James asked her to become his plural wife. She did not consent at once, although she did not "spit in his face" as she had vowed she would do should any man ask her to enter

polygamy. In 1862, James was called to go back to the Platt River and escort a company of emigrants to Utah. Manomas went to Salt Lake with her sister Laura in time to meet the men on their return, and while there the marriage to her sister's husband was consummated in the Old Endowment House--a step in life she has never felt to regret, although for many years it meant partial isolation from community life and plenty of hard work. She said, "James never showed any partiality. If he bought a spool of thread for one, he did for the other too."

The first five years of her married life were spent at Duncan, which was an important location for her husband who ran his cattle and horses between there and Canaan. He was also appointed as a Captain in helping to quell the Indians who were giving a good bit of trouble during the early sixties.

In 1864, her son George Judson was born, and in March of 1866, she bore a daughter whom they named Medora. In September of that year the Bishop requested the people in the nearby settlements to congregate at Grafton for greater protection. Captain Andrus had been sent to Salt Lake City for supplies and ammunition, but before going had arranged for his wife and children to be moved into a place he had secured for them. But when the hired man got them to Grafton, the house they had expected to have was already occupied, and scarlet fever was prevalent. The only place available was an open cow shed in which her possessions were assembled in the best order possible. Not having been used for some time, this shed at least afforded a shelter; and as her two children were ill with the fever, she was grateful for that much. While here, her two children continued to grow worse, finally dying, one six weeks after the other.

The succeeding two or three years were spent in St. George, where two more children were born, Edwin in 1868, who died when a month old, and Moses in 1870. These first four children were born under great hardships and suffering. Each time she was confined in a bed made on the floor, and after the fourth day she felt obliged to be up and at the housework again.

In the spring of 1872, Manomas moved to Canaan, where the next eleven years of her life were spent caring for her family and cooking for the men who were assisting her husband in caring for his droves of horses and herds of cattle. For the first few years, her house was a wagon box, and over a fire in the open she did the cooking for the fifteen hired men, her husband (when he was home), and herself, and children. Finally, a rock house was built for her.

While she was living in the wagon box, and was alone at camp except for a sixteen year old boy and her son, Moses, who was only eighteen months old, a frightening experience occurred. One evening, just at sundown, eighty Indians came riding up to the ranch, all in their war paint, and camped down in a clump of trees close to her wagon box. The only thing she could do was to kill them a beef, so she and this young boy proceeded to do so before it became too dark to see. They gave the Indians the beef and a sack of flour. She didn't sleep that

night or undress herself or her child, shaking for fear that they would be killed.

Next morning as she was straining the milk she looked up and found her child gone. She frantically searched for him and found him sitting in the middle of the Indian camp. She walked out, picked up the baby and brought him back to the wagon. The Indians went away without harming them.

Just as her new rock home was completed, except for doors and windows, her husband was called by President Erastus Snow to set out with as many men as he could muster to pursue a band of Indians who had been molesting the various settlements of southern Utah. Leaving two men with his wife at the ranch, Captain Andrus took the other thirteen with him and started in pursuit. They were absent three weeks during which time the little family at the ranch remained right in the rock house with windows and doors rocked up, afraid to venture out, or to light a candle at night, lest the natives, finding they were unprotected, would attack.

During their life at Canaan, her husband traded a horse for a husky four year old Indian boy. He was so utterly dirty and unkempt, that Mother Andrus sickened at the thought of having to clean him up that first time. Seeing how she felt, her sister's daughter, Laura, told her not to worry, she would take care of him. Then with her soap, towels and tub, this young girl disappeared into the corn patch a few yards from the house, returning for a pail of warm water and the wailing child. It required two or three returns to the house for more warm water before she was satisfied with her job, but how different he looked when she finally brought him back to the ranch house scrubbed to the point of shining and decked out in clothing. It was weeks before the little fellow ceased moaning for his own people, and he almost grew ill before he would accept food and make friends. But when he once yielded, they got along nicely. He grew up to be an excellent help at the ranch and was a grown young man when his relatives coaxed him to return to their circle. Seeing he wanted to go, Captain Andrus gave him an excellent horse and saddle, and released him with kindness and the best of feelings.

She lived in Pipe Springs for one year, then they moved to St. George, where she lived for the rest of her life, except for two years which she spent in Oxford, Idaho, 1887-1889, where her youngest child was born. She was the mother of thirteen children, six of which died in infancy.

She witnessed the hectic days of Silver Reef, the endless and arduous labor of trying to control the Rio Virgin for irrigation purposes, the bringing in of the Cottonwood water supply for culinary use, and the tragedy of the Mountain Meadow Massacre, the gruesome details of which still fill her with distress.

During her life she has witnessed the transition of western travel from the heavily built, ox-drawn prairie wagon to the finely equipped carriage. In 1901 she rode in her first automobile, and during the years since then, she has enjoyed driving in some of the finest of the modern makes of cars. The Andrus place was well known for its fine stalls of work and draft horses, and they went about in real

style in their fine carriage, behind excellent trotters. James Andrus was never happier than when driving a well-groomed outfit. To the end of his life he preferred to travel behind his own team.

She was an active Relief Society worker, and served in the Primary Presidency. Her husband, James, died in 1914. Her past many years, especially since her blindness, have been spent doing ordinance work for the dead, in the St. George Temple. Even at ninety-four, she is still able to enjoy this activity, and she looks forward with happiness to the time when she may be permitted to meet with those for whom she has performed this religious service.

She bears no ill will toward any living or departed person, and is never disturbed by the racket of little children. Five of the thirteen children born to her are still living close about her. And she now has twenty-eight living grandchildren and twenty-four great grandchildren.

Manomas Lavina Gibson died May 31, 1940, at St. George, Utah, being 98 years old at that time.