

## GEORGE TAFT BENSON

Today more than ever before the world is realizing the great value of a life of service. The self-sacrificing spirit of doing what you can do well, with no thought of fame, is true success. The life of George Taft Benson was one of this type.

The hearts of a frail, but determined, mother, and a strong, earnest father were made happy by the birth of a darling son on a spring day, May 1st, 1846. The home was a wagon; the place, Garden Grove, Iowa. It was during that critical, but interesting period in Church History when the Saints were being expelled from Nauvoo to seek refuge in the then uninviting West, to the reclamation of which this babe was to devote his life.

This mother, whose maiden name was Adeline Brooks Andrus, suffered much for the Gospel's sake, but remained true and firm until the last. This father, later known as Apostle Ezra T. Benson, became colonizer, founder, and organizer in a life of service to the Church.

This son arrived in Salt Lake Valley with his mother on the 2nd of October, 1847. The babe was christened George Taft Benson, and lived happily with his parents in Salt Lake City until 1860, tasting the hardships incident to the pioneering of a new country. At this time they were called to Logan, Cache County, where he grew to manhood under the tutorship of kind and loving parents, showing by obedience to their counsel and his active participation in Church activities, that he loved truth and right. He was strong of body and mind, and a favorite among his companions.

During the days of his early manhood, Louisa A. Ballif was his favorite admirer. Her family had, because of the Gospel, left their rich estate in beautiful Switzerland, in 1854, to settle in the western wilderness. On December 20, 1867, these two young people were married, the father, Apostle Ezra T. Benson, officiating. This marriage must have been sanctioned of God, for from the beginning to end, it was one of love and beauty. Many hardships arose, many obstacles came in their path, but together they fought the battle bravely, each strengthening the other when it was most needed. This love and devotion grew stronger and more beautiful as the years and responsibilities multiplied. When old age began to shine upon them, they were still lovers, even more so than when first cupid drew them together.

George T. Benson's life of public service began shortly after his marriage. He was chosen a member of the first High Council organized in Cache Valley; was assistant Superintendent of the Sunday School in the Fourth Ward of Logan, where one of his sons is now bishop (1926); and also acted as a ward teacher. In 1871-2 he filled a mission in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Here he had many relatives, who received his testimony of the truth kindly. In 1875 he was appointed Assessor and Collector of Logan City, which position he filled for nine years. During the years spent in Logan he passed much of his time in the canyons obtaining materials for the building of the Logan Temple and other buildings. It was while on one of these canyon trips that he, with W. K. Robinson, a bosom friend and close neighbor, was caught by a sliding log, which resulted in the death of Brother Robinson and what was feared to be fatal injuries to George T. Benson. Through Divine Power he was later fully restored to vigor and health again. This made an impression on his life which he never forgot.

In 1884 he was called to go to Preston (later Whitney), Idaho, to engage in reclaiming more new country. Here he was made Counselor to Bishop William C. Parkinson, which position he held for five years. This new country required stout hearts and willing hands to build it up. George Benson was known for both these qualities. He assisted with means and labor in building school houses and places of worship at Whitney and Preston, and donated means and hauled many loads of stone for the Logan Temple and Tabernacle. Much of all this work was canyon work and required time and many days of exposure and sacrifice. He spent much time and energy as a promulgator and builder of the Oneida Stake Academy and was a member of its board of regents for many years.

He took a leading part in the constructing of irrigation projects in northern Cache Valley and acted as President, Secretary, and Director of all the irrigation systems at Whitney. When the Whitney Ward, which was at one time part of Preston,

was organized, he was chosen first counselor. For two years he served this capacity, when he was made bishop, in which position he labored for twenty-three years. He showed great wisdom and ability in the execution of his duties in this capacity. A man who labored with him for seventeen years said the other day, "There was no better bishop in the Church than Bishop Benson." His ward for years was held up as a banner ward, known for its promptness, preparedness, and beautiful singing.

His home was a happy one, known far and near for its hospitality, order, and beautiful music. Nothing seemed to please him more than to see his children and their friends gather around the old organ and blend their voices in song. Because of this training, one may often see similar sights in the homes of his sons and daughters today. Many of the children became choir directors and music leaders in their communities. His love for his own ward choir was shown when they entered the contest with many large choirs at Logan. When asked by one why he had brought that little, insignificant choir down, he confidently replied, "We came down to get first prize and we won't go home without it." He was not disappointed.

He was an extreme lover of children. Canyon parties and trips of the Benson family will be remembered by others because of the many beautiful children present. At one of those canyon outings where there were the usual number of children, that article of clothing which is used most frequently in the list of babies' clothes became so numerous on the limbs of trees, that the grove where they camped was christened "Didee Grove." He seemed to be happiest when he was with the family and whenever possible he would be with them.

In all his labors, George T. Benson showed his great aptitude and executive ability, and also his great love for his fellow men, often sacrificing much to visit sick and care for the distressed. While he labored as bishop, his wife was kept busy. Ward Relief Society President, Primary Stake President for five years, and Stake Relief Society President for sixteen years, were some of her many duties. Many were the night calls from the afflicted to which this good couple responded willingly. Always his wife received his hearty support and encouragement in the performance of her labors.

Thirteen children blessed the Benson home: ten were reared to manhood and womanhood; all married in the Temple; and are the parents of children. Nine are now living. Besides being the father of thirteen children, George Benson is the grandfather of sixty-four. The fiftieth arrived just after the fiftieth anniversary of his marriage. He is also the great-grandfather of thirteen. Those of his descendants who are living, are honorable citizens and faithful members of the Church. Seven have filled missions and two are now in the field.

In April 1916, the subject of this sketch fulfilled his heart's desire by moving back of his old home at Logan, Utah, where he could be engaged in that which he loved so much--Temple work. In the little bungalow with his life's sweetheart, he spent the last three years of his life, loved and adored by a large family and hosts of kind friends.

On May 14, 1919, the light of life faded from kind and patient eyes, and the loving voice of our Father's chosen servant was silent.

The funeral was quiet and peaceful. All of his living descendants were present; and, almost without exception, the good people of Whitney, where the name of Bishop Benson and family will ever live, turned out to pay their last tribute to one they dearly love, and whose name with them is a household word.

His last act of love and service was to bless his fifty-seventh grandchild. Today his life is shining in the lives of his posterity. They alone can bring him joy and glorify his name.