

## Early Years

H. Tracy Hall 01-31-95

We moved from Mrs. Hart's little white house on 15<sup>th</sup> street in Ogden, which my parents (Howard and Florence Tracy Hall) rented when I was about four years old. I was born there and so was my brother, Eugene. He was named after a baby named Eugene who died shortly after being born. The parents of this child were my grand parents, Henry C. and Mary Ann Woodcox Hall. This child was buried somewhere in a Pocatello, Idaho cemetery. Ida-Rose and I have searched the cemetery looking for a headstone and made various inquiries into historical records but the location of his grave remains unknown.

I only slightly remember things that happened on 15<sup>th</sup> Street. Most of what I know my mother told me in later years. But I have visited the area and taken a black and white picture of the house. I also have a few pictures that she took. One shows me squirting water with a garden hose. Mom said that this was one of my favorite activities. Another was running down to Washington Avenue to see a *thing* with clanking wheels that ran along shiny tracks. There were people riding in it. When it stopped it made grinding noises and when it started again it groaned until it got going faster. Then it made a whining sound. Lots of times it would shoot sparks against a wire that ran along over the *thing*. This is about the best description that I could give with my limited vocabulary at this age. Mom told me that the *thing* was called a streetcar.

Mother or father built a tall fence enclosure to protect me from the dangers of Washington Avenue. But I soon learned to climb the fence and head for the wonderful sights and sounds of Ogden's main thoroughfare. Often rescued in the nick of time from what is now called Washington Boulevard, she resorted to some kind of harness and rope arrangement to safeguard me.

Mother had two very fine cousins, Dorothy and Alberta Coop, who were daughters of her sister Myra. They often visited us at this house and they also took some pictures. I remember a picture of Eugene and perhaps myself in a white wicker basket type baby buggy. There were also pictures of Eugene and I on the small back porch. I think that this was the first residence of my parents after my father returned home from World War One. He had been stationed at Fort Lewis, Washington and was there when that war ended. I do not know where they lived immediately after their marriage but it must have been a place within the confines of the Ogden Second Ward because I remember mother talking about the good bishop there whom fellowshipped father after he was converted to the church.

From this house, we moved to the northeast corner of Jefferson Avenue and 16<sup>th</sup> Street. (1464 Jefferson Avenue). There was no house at this address. It was just a lot with one irrigation ditch on the west side and another on the south. Eugene nearly drowned in the west ditch. I'll tell more about it later. This part of Ogden had been a cherry tree orchard. Just two lots north of us was Mill Creek. Yes, the same Mill Creek that ran past the north boundary of our farm that we moved to later. At the time we moved to Jefferson and 16<sup>th</sup>, Jefferson dead-ended from the north and from the south because no bridge crossed it.

I well remember crossing the creek. It frightened me. The early spring runoff had swelled the stream and the water was rushing along. I was with my parents when they were searching the area for a lot in this area. Building lots were located on both sides of the creek and only a plank bridged the high, swiftly moving stream. It was late evening. The air was moist, slightly chilled and orchard bloom fragrant. Gathering western skies hid the sun.

There were no shadows. My parents and real estate man were crossing the creek one at a time. The plank was wet and slippery. My turn to cross came and I was quite afraid even though father was holding on to me. The weight of both of us pressed the plank to the water's surface, kicking up a spray that wet our feet. But we make it safely across. I can't help digressing to mention a fact that all of us lived along the Wasatch Front known so well.

For many, many years, orchards have been prime targets for conversion to subdivisions and it continues unabated to this day. After looking at lots north of the creek, we returned on the same plank to the south side where they decided to take a lot. Then we moved onto it. Our home was a tent! The only thing that I specifically remember being inside the tent was a piano. How mother cooked, how we slept and how we ate, I do not remember. It must have been a real pioneering effort on the part of Mom and Dad. Bless their souls!

While living in the tent, my mother's brother, Helen Tracy, built a half-house for us. Half-houses were common in those days. They had no basement and had open steps on the back and front. The idea was that you would complete the front of the house when you could afford it. I can remember a team of horses pulling dirt around to level the land with a scraper. The scraper had two handles that the man driving the two-harnessed horses could lift to control the depth of the cut. After the scraper was full, I watched him turn the scraper handles over to the front and dump the load. That's about all that I can remember concerning the construction of the house.

Inside, we had a coal fired pot bellied heater in the living room where we also had the piano. We had a telephone, which was uncommon for that day. I remember my dad holding me up to the telephone, which was fastened to the wall to talk to my Grandfather Hall. The kitchen had a coal *range* as they were called at that time. My grandmother, Emma Burdett Tracy, an arthritic, polygamous widow of Helon Henry Tracy lived with us.

Fireworks excited me at an early age and might even have foreshadowed my career in science as well as my propensity to acquire junk that might be put to some technical use. I, as well as other children, used firecrackers and other types of fireworks, young as we were.

We had a sand pile just outside of Grandma's window. I found some short lengths of pipe somewhere and got the idea of making a cannon by pushing one end of the pipe in the sand and pointed it upward at an angle. Then I collected a series of rocks that would fairly well fit inside the pipe. Next, I placed a firecracker in the mouth of my cannon with the fuse slightly protruding, light it and bang it with a stick to send it to the bottom. My cannon ball would shoot out some distance of about one yard. I would repeat this over and over again. Grandmother became irritated at the noise and hollered out the window for me to stop it. I think that she also got after my Mom to quit firing my cannon.

#### Addendum

I need to tell of some things that went on in a cherry tree that was on the northwest corner of Jefferson Avenue and 16<sup>th</sup> Street. Unfortunately, older boys would climb the tree and tell terribly dirty stories. Although very young, I heard these raunchy tales and they were so dirty that they had a terrific impact on me.

This worried me to no end because I could not forget them. Even at this late date the picture of this would occasionally come to mind. My parents knew nothing about these dirty

stories going on up in the tree tops. To this very day, some of this stuff will come to mind and I have trouble suppressing it.

I know my parents didn't know what was going on but the people who lived in the house near the tree were taking the Lord's name in vain. I was probably six years old at this time.