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Turley Family Reunion
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Isaac Turley

This is a story about a man and his wife, and their son, and their house. It is also about his country and his religion.

More specifically, it's the story about Isaac Turley, son of Theodore Turley and Francis Amelia Kimberley. It's about the house he built for his second wife, Clara Ann Tolton in Colonia Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico, and his life spent seeking religious freedom as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and colonizing in both the United States or Mexico. Much of what I will tell you about is information that was related by his youngest surviving son: Isaac Turley Jr., my grandfather.

Isaac Turley was the youngest son of Theodore Turley and Francis Amelia Kimberly—the youngest son who survived into adulthood, that is. He was born November 22, 1837 in eastern Canada, eight months after his family joined the Mormon Church. Isaac's father, Theodore, was a Methodist minister presiding over a church building and congregation. When early Mormon missionaries, Parley P. Pratt and Isaac Russell, called upon Theodore in March 1837 and asked permission to use his building to hold a meeting, Theodore demonstrated his open heart and open mind by agreeing to not only let them use his building but also inviting all of his congregation to listen to the missionaries. He formed a close bond with Isaac Russell, and when Frances Amelia delivered her son eight months later, they named him "Isaac."

Theodore, as all of you know, immediately threw himself into missionary work and building up the Kingdom of Zion. From his earliest age, Isaac saw the example of his father and mother sacrificing to do God's work. Then, in 1840, after Theodore's mission to England, when young Isaac was about 3 years old, the family moved to a brand new town rising out of an Illinois swamp, where Theodore Turley built one of the first homes in beautiful Nauvoo.

Theodore and his family formed a close friendship with the Prophet Joseph Smith. In fact, the Prophet had a favorite horse named “Joe Duncan,” and the boy Isaac—about six years old—was trusted by the Prophet to feed, water and care for this horse. I happen to believe that this is not just an outlandish tale, a claim to fame, for I have a grandson Ben, age 10 who feeds, waters, catches and wrangles my horses for me and has done so winter and summer for the last three years. Ben, like Isaac, he just has that calm, assured way with animals.

But the masses of gathering Saints seemed to scare and intimidate their non-member neighbors. Their Illinois neighbors began waging a campaign of persecution like the bitter struggles the Mormons had recently experienced in Missouri and other places. And imagine the shock and sorrow when persecution raged to the extent of murdering the Prophet and his brother, Hyrum Smith, while defenseless and in the hands of the state while incarcerated in Carthage jail. I ask myself, where were those fearless Federal judges back then who should have assured the guarantee of freedom of religion, and freedom of speech, and freedom to peaceably assemble. As a federal prosecutor today, I am disappointed that the great United States Constitution was not given the sacred assurance and effect written into it. So in the bitter cold of winter, 1845 or 1846, the Saints were pushed by persecutors to the very shores of the deep and wide Mississippi River. The unusual cold was so bitter that the River was frozen over and allowed their escape. But imagine the feelings of doubt every father and mother must have felt as they drove their teams of mules, heavy horses or oxen, pulling their big wagons loaded with the most precious cargo of their little ones and all their possessions and drove out onto the ice, trusting all to that frozen surface.

The Saints regrouped on the other side of the Mississippi under the direction of Brigham Young and other Church leaders, and got ready to leave the United States. Their plan was to travel out into the Rocky Mountains where none of them had ever been before, a place in the distant west claimed by the country of Mexico where they hoped to find isolation, peace and freedom they were denied in the United States. Isn't it ironic that in 1847, before the Saints arrived in Salt Lake, the United States picked a war with Mexico, and called upon the Mormons to furnish a battalion to help invade the neighboring country. By 1848, the Saints again found themselves in the United States, ... and their troubles with the U.S. Government were far from over!

But when the main body of Saints departed for the Great Salt Lake, Theodore Turley and his family stayed behind, probably on account of failing health of Frances Amelia, his wife and Isaac's mother, for she died and was buried there at Winter Quarters, now near Omaha, Nebraska, on _____. In fact, before the ordeal

of this westward trek was completed, Theodore Turley would lose 8 children and two of his four wives, buried along the wagon ruts heading westward.

Theodore Turley and his family finally got underway probably in 1848 or 1849. Isaac was then a lad of 11 and he was charged with caring for the oxen, taking them to water, finding grass for them in the evening, catching them up and yoking the big, ornery beasts in the morning, and driving one of the ox carts. It is interesting to note that a widow—well not just any widow, but the widow of Hyrum Smith—was allowed to travel along with the company based upon the assurance of Theodore Turley that he would help her and her family make the trek. Her name was Mary Fielding Smith. Like Theodore Turley, she also had a son, 10 years of age, named Joseph Fielding Smith, and he chored beside Isaac, caring for the oxen and driving the cart for his mother. In fact, the boys were best friends. As they worked, played, adventured—and undoubtedly misadventured—together each day, they formed a friendship that would last a lifetime, though their future would be separated by decades and they would honorably carry out very different life missions. Upon arriving in Salt Lake, Joseph Fielding Smith grew to manhood in the councils of the Church and serving missions, and eventually becoming the prophet, and ___ President of the Church. Isaac—on the other hand—was called with his family to keep building settlements and cities, taming the land and pushing the colonization of the Church to the far reaches of the west.

Theodore and his families first colonized in the south, in Beaver, Utah. (Utah was the name the federal government called this region.) There they built homes and farms and families. Theodore then traveled with his sons to California to obtain fruit trees which they brought back and planted in the fertile ground of southern Utah. The spent some time there, and young Isaac even learned to be conversant in the Spanish language. They were tempted to stay in that beautiful land of California, but the Prophet Brigham Young called for them to return. Theodore obeyed and—with his youngest son, Isaac who was just about marrying age—returned to Beaver. There he would sojourn the rest of his days, dying in ___ after Isaac had married his first wife Sarah Greenfield and accepted the call to move and colonize further south.

Imagine the virgin lands and overwhelming landscapes that Isaac saw as he moved his family down to St. Joseph to practice the United Order there. He brought with him considerable wealth for a young man, big new wagons pulled by strong teams, 75 head of horses and cows. These he placed into the Order and got back a small part on which to live and re-grow his prosperity. However, due to the failings of human nature—some who will work, some who will idle, some who are honest, some who are selfish—the effort failed three years later. Isaac withdrew a mere

fraction of the shares he had put in, and without bitterness set off to help settle northern Arizona in the Snowflake area. But Isaac was called again to trek into unmapped territory. He and his family were part of the Dan Jones Company that trailed into the Salt River country we now call the Valley of the Sun. The Turleys built one of the first houses in Lehi. He and his sons re-trenched old Indian ditches to bring water to reclaim and expand the growing area of the land. This was long before there any colonization up on the Mesa, or even a development in what we now call Phoenix. But the heat afflicted Sara, so Isaac moved his family back up to Snowflake in northern Arizona. He left them there for a season while he returned to Beaver, Utah to move his second wife and family down to Arizona. That would be Clara Ann Tolton Turley.

Isaac acquired three strong new wagons, and a light spring wagon to move the rest of his family and belongings to Arizona. A spring wagon—compared to the heavy wagons—was like a family sedan compared to heavy trucks. It had the comfort of a spring seat for the driver, but it wasn't any easier on the little passengers riding in the back who bumped along the rough trail. Isaac's little family consisted of 8 year old Esther, _____, _____ Frances, and baby Ida Mae. He had enlisted a couple of men to help drive the heavy wagons, but the chore of driving the light wagon fell to his wife, Clara Ann. They left in November. An early winter was setting in. The four young children were wrapped in blankets riding in the back of the spring wagon. Little Ida Mae was sick, but children were often sick and there was no postponing the journey. So they set out. Esther held her baby sister as they bumped along. Clara Ann would stop the wagon every chance she got to feed and tend the sick infant. They had made their way southeastward through _____ and were at the brow of Buckskin Mountain when one long, cold day came to a close. In the morning, they would set the brakes for the dangerous trip down the grade. There was no road, just some parallel ruts where others had traveled. The ruts wound between boulders requiring a steady hand. And the unprotected edge of the road fell away steeply so common in western mountains. That night they rested, held their prayers, and pulled heavy blankets over them, and heard the wolves howling on the clear, crisp night air. It was a restless night. Little Ida Mae was hurting and crying. And when first light implacable came, there was an impatient call to move out. It was almost beyond the strength of a young mother to rise up, get her children ready, and take up the reins while she heard her baby fussing in the back of the wagon. With tears in her eyes, Clara Ann set the brake and began skidding the wagon down the rough trail. Skidding a wagon is a slow way to travel and it was a long day. There was nowhere to stop, nor take a rest, nor tend to her baby. Little Esther did all she could to comfort her infant sister, but it

was obvious to her that the child was growing much worse. Clara Ann could hear the pitiful sobbing, the weakened hoarseness in the baby's wailing. Esther urgently called to her mother that something was wrong with Ida Mae. Yet Clara Ann could only travel on. It grew quiet. Esther told her mother she thought the baby had died. What urgency, yet what forbearance gripped Clara Ann. Esther continued to hold the baby until her mother could finally bring the wagon to a stop and reach back and take the infant. Little Ida Mae had died. What a heavy hearted camp that night, as they cared for the other children and put them to bed, then stayed up and prepared a burial shroud for the infant. Isaac took their grub box and converted it into a coffin. He blunted his pick trying to chip out a small grave in the frozen, rocky ground. There, the next morning, they gathered in prayer and said goodbye and placed the little body in the ground. Isaac undoubtedly stacked a cairn of boulders to mark this hallowed place and to protect the body from being disturbed. How would you feel driving away that morning, leaving behind a little girl so precious? But that's what pioneers do.

Isaac and his two families finally found a comfortable and safe place to live in Snowflake, Arizona. His older children grew up and put down roots there. But someone knew his name in Salt Lake. Someone knew that he was the stalwart who would answer the call. And the call came again to move his families. Frictions with the United States government continued. He and other strong families were asked to travel to Mexico and colonize there. He moved his wives, Sarah and Clara Ann and their families, though some of Sarah's children had come of age and married and decided to stay in Snowflake. He left behind herds and belongings for which he would return.

The first company into Mexico was led by Isaac Turley as wagon master. In the State of Chihuahua, about 150 miles south of the American line, they stopped in the desert beside a small river, the Rio Verde. There they established Camp Turley.

From there they explored, and they negotiated for the purchase of lands, and they traveled to Mexico City to get the permission of President Porfirio Diaz to colonize in Mexico. They sought and received the good will of the Mexican government at the highest level—quite a different acceptance from what they were used to in the States. In the interest of full disclosure, they explained that part of their religion involved the practice of polygamy. Interestingly, Porfirio Diaz said in a non-judgmental way: "It doesn't matter to me whether a man pulls his wagon with one horse or two horses." They founded several colonies in Mexico, but these grew out of the first ones at Colonia Benito Juarez and Colonia Dublan.

So they dedicated the land. They began laying out a town beside the Green River. The dedicatory prayer promised that it would be a fruitful place, but the river

was a mere trickle through the foot hills. Many colonists, including my ancestors, remembered and testified about the day when an earthquake hit the area.

Suddenly water gushed out of the mountains and filled the river. It was never a small, narrow river thereafter, and I remember being terrified of it as a child. Have you seen pictures of the stone piers of the wagon bridge? The span across the river testifies to its depth and the size of its muscle.

Isaac returned to Snowflake with his son Edward to bring the rest of the herds and their family belongings to their new home. As they were traveling back to Colonia Juarez, Isaac was touched by the Spirit and filled with urgency. He came upon messengers from the colony telling him to hurry because his wife Sarah was dying. He left business in the hands of young Edward and rode without stopping. As he entered Colonia Juarez, he saw his neighbors returning into town in their wagons. They had just buried his wife up on the hill overlooking the little valley town. She was the first of the Saints to die and be buried in that land.

But wherever life ends, other life sprouts up; when one dies, another is born. On Nov ____ 1888, Clara Ann Tolton Turley gave birth to the first child born in the Colonies. They called him Isaac Turley after his father. Isaac Jr. was the last of Isaac Turley's sons. Because of his personality, the boy loved to be with his father, and accompanied him everywhere. An unusual bond of love and trust grew up between them. They freighted wood together, tended the orchards, worked with the stock, and Isaac taught his son the carpentry trade.

Sarah's children had mostly been raised and were on their own. So Isaac built for Clara what can only be called a "home," one of those places that was as substantial as he could make it with the crude materials at hand at that time. It was a home that would stand for decades—nearly a hundred years—and anchor the history of the Isaac Turley family. It was a place that saw family members born and family members die. It was one of those sacred places, a refuge from all that was wicked or threatening. It lives in the memories of an extended family, with its picket fence, its gate hung with a large rock to bring it closed, the barn and chicken coop, the outhouse located a hundred yards away inside the barnyard, the wood stack. The hollyhocks—nothing so reminds me of that home as the hollyhocks, and the poppies. And there were sycamore, locust, and cottonwood trees. The two or so acres around the home was surrounded by gardens, and apple trees, peaches, pears, persimmons, cumquats. It was quite a sight in little river bottom below the Mexican foothills. Isaac had taken his son Edward and made a trip by wagon to California and returned with bounteous fruit tree starts, just as he had learned from his father, Theodore. Isaac began the fruit economy of Colonia Juarez, for which it is still famous throughout Mexico.

The house itself was not made of brick, ... nor of stone, ... nor of handsome timber. This ample home was made of adobe: humble mud strengthened by straw. It had a sturdy wooden floor, solid wood doors and cabinets, all well finished. The walls were plastered and painted on the interior. It was stuccoed on the exterior to protect it from the merciless sun and season rains. It had a screen porch and fruit rooms. It had a brick kitchen and bathroom with plumbing added a few years after it was first built. Whenever we sing "Love at Home" in our church meetings, it is the image of Isaac Turley's home that I imagine.

One more story about the Isaac Turley home. Young Isaac—about 14 years of age—accompanied his father to Colonia Dublan on business one day in 19 ____ and found the town abuzz with the news that the Prophet had just arrived in the colonies for dedication of the Juarez Stake Academy and church building, and stake conference. That Prophet was, of course, Joseph F. Smith. When these strong men saw each other, so many decades after driving their oxen across the plains as boys, they embraced heartily, sharing a bond that nobody around them could fully fathom. It is interesting to imagine the scene: both men were tall, lean, and of strong build. Isaac's daughter, Frances Turley Romney, described her father as 6' 4" tall. After Sunday's meetings, President Joseph F. Smith was invited to the new Turley home for dinner. And after dinner, the Prophet pronounced a dedicatory prayer upon the Isaac Turley home.

As age came upon him, Isaac increasingly relied upon his son Isaac Jr. The home was bequeathed to Isaac Jr. in consideration for the merciful care with which he tended to his father, Isaac, and his mother, Clara Ann, in their senescence.

As a young man, Isaac Jr. had gone up into the Sierra Madre Mountains to hunt game with _____. Isaac Jr. had learned from his father to live close to the Spirit. As he was camped that evening, he had a strong impression to return home quickly. He obeyed the prompting and return home to find his father gravely ill. Isaac Turley passed away the next night, in the Turley home, surrounded by his wife Clara Ann and his loved ones. His son, Isaac, mournfully gripped his hand as he slipped away.

Isaac's death in 1908 spared him the next difficult ordeal of the Turley family, and the Mormon Colonies in Mexico. As Isaac Turley had sensed and even prophesied, a grave unrest could be felt throughout Mexico. And, indeed, the Mexican Revolution broke out violently in 1910. Many are the stories of the courageous Saints who tried to live peaceably among the warring factions. Desperate not to leave their homes and what they had built, they did not leave the danger became too great and their lives were in danger. Their first Exodus took place in 1912. Most returned in _____ hoping to resume their lives. But the Revolution raged on and the Saints were forced to make a second Exodus. After

that many chose to remain in the States. Isaac Jr. was a newly married man when he heroically rode into the mountain colonies of Colonia Pacheco, Colonia Garcia and Colonia Chuichupa to warn the colonists to evacuate. He took his young bride, Ida Mae Lake, and his mother, Clara Ann Tolton, and they found safety in St. George, Utah where they waited until the Revolution was over, and there bore their three children: two sons and a daughter—my mother, Viola Turley Haws.

If you will bear with me, and if the Spirit will permit me to relate a sacred account passed down in our family, I will tell you one last story of the strong bond between Isaac and his son. His father's death greatly affected Isaac Jr. He struggled to accept that his father had been taken from him when he felt he still needed his father's guidance and love. One Sunday, Isaac Jr., now a young man, was sick enough to stay home from church. Early that afternoon, as he sat on the side of his bed thinking about his father, he felt his father's presence.

There is one final footnote here. A personal note. I have always felt deep gratitude that I was fortunate to be born in that adobe house in Colonia Juarez, the Turley home; the home built of Mexican dirt by the stalwart pioneer hands of Isaac Turley, my great-grandfather; the home dedicated by the Lord's prophet; the home where Isaac Turley passed away, and the home where Clara Ann Tolton passed away; the home and the very room in which my grandfather received that amazing visitation from his father, Isaac Turley after death; the home which has always symbolized all that a home is, where I spent some of my most happy moments growing up with my family and my cousins.

In closing, if you recognize yourself in these few adjectives I am about to list, you may have some of the Turley genes, some of the blood of a great ancestor, Theodore and maybe Isaac.

“An eternal bond does not just happen as a result of sealing covenants in the temple. We have to obey the commandments and conduct ourselves in such a way that our families will want to live with us in the eternities.” Elder Robert D. Hales

PICTURES FROM PRESENTATION:



Isaac Turley

Clara Ann Tolton



Isaac & Sarah
Greenwood's family





Isaac & Clara Ann
Tolton's family

Ways down Perry June 1877
 dear Clara it is with pleasure
 that I answer your most welcome
 letter it came to hand to day I have
 wrote 2 letters since I got your
 last Tell your Father to write
 to me the prospects if he gets a
 good chance to sell some of the
 land we are all well and I hope
 this will find you enjoying the
 same blessing may god bless
 you and your children is my
 constant prair Clara you must
 not forget to be up for it is a
 trying time and we must keep
 in the channel of the gospel or
 we are an Shiprey ground I
 feel well in the Truth of the
 living god I have had a
 great many byals since I left
 Beaver but I am detirmed
 to prove myself true to god
 and his comandments we are

Isaac's letter to Clara Ann – June 1877

Isaac Turley home in Colonia Juarez





Clara Ann (Tolton) Turley – Turley Home

Isaac Turley Jr. and Ida Mae (Lake) Turley
in 1914



Isaac Jr. and Ida Mae (Lake)
Turley – Turley Home



Brick kitchen added to Turley homestead
Isaac, Turley, Jr., Melvin, George, Viola, Ida Mae (Lake) Turley



Viola (Turley) Haws -- 1919 - 2008



Clara Ann Tolton Turley 1852 - 1932