

## BRIEF HISTORY OF WILLIAM FERDINAND OTTO BEHRMANN # 2

By Rowena Behrmann Palmer

**BORN:** 20 July 1839 in Skandenborg County, Denmark  
**DIED:** 17 July 1914 in Richfield, Conejos County, Colorado

**PARENTS:** Henrick Clawson Behrmann

Born: 17 September 1799 in Aeroskobing, Swedborg County, Denmark  
Died: 30 November 1884 in Ephraim, Sanpete County, Utah

Anna Sophia Christensen

Born: about 1803 in Aeroskobing, Swedborg County, Denmark  
Died: 17 April 1876 in Ephraim, Sanpete County, Utah

From an old diary, we learn that William Ferdinand Otto Behrmann belonged to the Lutheran Church. Following are some entries taken from this diary. Baptized 13 October 1839 in the Astrup Church. Vaccinated 10 July 1840 by James Koster. Confirmed Helgenas Church the first Sunday after Easter in 1854. Religious lessons were good. The next Sunday he was allowed to partake of the Sacrament. Left for Nyborg 15 May 1854 was recommended by the priest at the church where he was confirmed, when he went to another place to work.

Apostle Frances M. Lyman, son of Richard Lyman, who was President of the European Mission, converted him to the L.D.S. church. He was baptized into the L.D.S. 3 January 1863. It must have been a cold experience in Denmark at that time of the year to be baptized out of doors, however, that is not what impressed him and stayed with him all through his life. When he was returning to the house after he had been baptized he heard a voice speak to him very clearly. It said, "When you are confirmed and receive the Holy Ghost, you will be given the gift of healing." This came true, and was manifested many times during his life. After he came to Zion, he was called to administer to the sick at all times of the day and night, in all kinds of weather, even at times when administration by others had failed. So great was his faith that others had faith in him.

After his baptism, he was called to serve as a missionary in Denmark. Later he served as Branch President there. He worked seven years with his brother to learn the pottery trade. He made two or three batches of pottery after coming to Ephraim, but decided the clay was not of the right quality to make good pottery, so he began farming.

He was married to Ingar Maria Andersen 6 February 1866 at Veil, Denmark. He and his wife left Veil, Denmark 17 May 1866 and went to Liverpool, England, where they boarded the sailing vessel, "The Kennilworth." It took them six weeks to cross the Atlantic Ocean. When they reached the U.S. they traveled by train to Council Bluffs, Iowa. The remaining part of their journey to Salt Lake was made with ox team. They arrived in Fort Ephraim, Sanpete County, Utah 6 October 1866.

He worked and studied hard to become a citizen of the United States. Since he must be able to read and write the English language and have a basic knowledge of the government he hired a tutor to teach him. On 20 October 1868, he made application in the open court in Provo, Utah to be admitted as a citizen of the U.S. just as soon as the five years of residence were up. The 11 January 1871 he received his naturalization papers.

While living in Ephraim, four children were born to the couple, William Ferdinand Otto, Sophia Maria, Annie, and Andrew. The family moved to Fountain Green where the fifth child, Henry, was born. While living in Fountain Green, he tried making pottery, only to find the clay not good, so along with farming he worked in Provo, Utah.

While living in Fountain Green, he served in the Black Hawk War. Due to the trouble they were having with the Indians, the men took turns herding the horses and cattle. W.F.O. Behrmann and six other men were taking their turn, when three of the horses that kept straying became lost. Brother Behrmann went out and got the horses and had just taken the saddle off his tired horse, when he heard a wild warhoop. He shouted to the other men, "Boys, get out of here. It is Indians." The other men were on their horses and rode off, leaving Behrmann, who ran up the embankment where he met three Indians. He took out his pistol and began shooting. The Indians tolled down the bank and rode off with the three horses he had worked so hard to bring in.

While living there, he built a nice brick home, one of the nicest in the community. It was still standing and in use in w956.

He and his family were called by Brigham Young to help colonize in the spring, while the snow was still on the ground. When the company reached the Colorado River and were preparing to cross Lees Ferry, they became worried as there had been Indians hovering around for days watching what the whites were doing. With the crossing the river problem before them, it was no time to have to worry about trouble from Indians. Finally, one of the Indians dared one of the company to shoot an eagle which had lit on a cliff near by. One man picked up his rifle and shot the eagle. It came rolling down the cliff. The Indians must have been impressed. They went their way and did not bother us anymore.

When the company reached Brigham City, Arizona, they lived in an adobe fort. It had one-roomed homes around the inside of the fort wall. The saints lived the United Order. This was quite difficult for the mother of the family, who unlike the father had never learned much of the English language. Because of her shyness, and lack of knowledge, she usually ended up doing dishes or some similar task.

Another son, Niels, was born here, making six children.

While here at the fort, Behrmann's gift of healing was made manifest. The story is recorded by May Whiting Cardon, about her mother, Vernon Snow Whiting as follows: Verona Snow Whiting, a bride of 17 years, with her husband, Charles Whiting, were called to help pioneer Arizona. They were with the saints at Brigham City, living the united order. On 17 February 1877 their first child, a baby girl, was born. They were miles and miles from a doctor and she herself knew very little about the facts of life. On Thursday evening she began in labor, and had light pains all night. Toward morning she called her husband and had him go for the midwife. Pains kept up all day Friday and Friday night getting harder and harder. The Elders were called in several times but with no results. It seemed the baby could not be born. Now in her own words, "Saturday evening I was so exhausted and discouraged that I gave up and prayed that I might be permitted to die. Then a Brother Behrmann came in. He laid his hands on my head after I had been anointed with oil and commanded the child, in the name of the Lord, to be born; and in the next pain the baby came. Such a heavenly, sweet feeling of peace came with the delivery of the baby!"

In the spring of 1879, W.F.O. Behrmann was called on a special mission. The leaders of the church had decided to try raising cane and making molasses in Brigham City, so Bro. Behrmann was to travel by mule team to Provo, Utah, where he would pick up a molasses mill. This he was to take to Ogden, where the mill was repaired and put in working order. The mill was shipped from there on train to Nephi, Utah, where he would pick it up again on his return. He traveled with four mule teams. He took his oldest son, Will, who was ten years old, with him. It took the entire spring and summer to accomplish the things he had been assigned to do. They must have left early in the spring, as old papers among Behrmann's possessions shows that he paid \$225 to H.B.Clawson in April, as follows: \$125 on account of L. Victor Cane Mill, and \$100 to apply on account of two cheese vats, and on 22 May 1879, he paid \$90 on the mill and vats. This was a large sum of money to be in one's possession in those days. Behrmann did complete this mission satisfactorily, proving himself to be dependable and reliable. He was 39 years old at this time and had six children. While on this trip he and his son Will visited his father, Henrick Clawson Behrmann, who had come from Denmark to live in Ephraim. This is the only time Will can remember seeing his grandfather. His grandfather lived the remainder of his life at Ephraim, Utah, where he died 30 November 1884.

While on this mission to Utah, his son Andrew became very ill with black diphtheria. His body was very swollen and he was not expected to live. However, the elders were called in and he was administered to and he did recover.

In the fall of 1879 they set out to pioneer a new country. This time they went into the San Luis Valley of Colorado. Behrmann was in charge of 16 head of work oxen, 5 yokes, and 5 chains to be delivered to the bishop in Manassa, Colorado. He received charge of these by Lot Smith, the Bishop in Manassa. They traveled by ox

team and settled in Manassa, where two more children were born, Mariana (Mary Ann) and Magdalena.

In 1884 they moved to Richfield, Colorado, 8 miles north of Manassa. The saints formed a company called the Richfield Field Company. They bought a large tract of land from the State at \$1 per acre. The land was divided among the saints, 5, 10, and 20 acres according to what each wanted. It was not fenced. Some of the old records show where some have paid as little as 25 cents to hold a few acres. Since there were no fences at first, large bands of wild horses would come in on the crops and destroy much of them. On one occasion Grandfather was asked why his crops were better than others were. He said it was because he had so many children to guard the field. He kept his field free from weeds by going around the edges with a scythe and cutting all weeds before they could go to seed. In the winter, the family would spend some evenings around a large home made kitchen table picking weed seed out of wheat he had saved for spring planting.

When he first moved to Richfield, he built a two-room log house. Later, he added two more as a lanto. The house had dirt floors and dirt roof. When it rained it leaked. One day when he came home form the field it was raining. The muddy water was leaking on everything, even on the children. He decided right then he was going to build an adobe house. Instead of having plans drawn as we do now, he had everything written up in detail. Size of material, work to be done. It was to be 32' long and 28' wide. The foundation to be of good rock, 1 foot in the ground, 2 feet above ground, and 2 feet wide. The adobes, 10 inches long, 3 inches wide, the walls to be one and on-half adobe thick. It was cool in summer and warm in winter. Things did not freeze in that house! The contract was signed in 1897 and was to be finished by 1 August 1898. It was a happy day when the family moved into the new home. A Mr. Dennison was the contractor.

Later a milkhouse was built just east of the house, with a long porch joining the two buildings. In the milk house, a series of wooden runways were built with cold artesian water running through the troughs which were on legs so they were waist high. Cocks of milk and cream and things they wanted to keep cool were kept in the troughs of cold water. A pipe was run from the well to a box where they kept some things. "The thing I remember best, said Rowena B. Palmer, "was the Danish Beer in two quart jars. It was ice cold, which refreshed those who had been at work all day in the field. The beer was made from whole grain, which had been allowed to sprout. Malt was made from this then hung in a cheesecloth bag. I don't know all the process, but the beer was finally put in fruit jays. It did not contain alcohol, as it was not allowed to ferment. This was a wholesome grain drink with an unbelievable delicate flavor, which I shall never forget."

His home was just across the street and one block west from the church, and for many years he served as first councilor in the Bishopric. When the visiting brethren from Salt Lake came out for conference, he would take them for refreshments after

church. They would be served some of grandfather's famous Danish beer and cake. Brother Goddard, who was an old friend of grandfathers, came out as a visiting authority. After the meeting he was taken to Behrmann's to have beer and cake, then grandfather took him to the train. I want you to make me a promise." When Grandfather said he would, Goddard said, "I want you to promise that you will not take another drink of beer till you see me again." Brother Goddard died before Grandfather saw him. Nevertheless, Grandfather kept his promise, and to his dying day he never drank beer. It must have been hard for him as much as he loved it and Grandmother continued to make it. And they tried to get him to forget his promise, but his old saying was "My word is as good as a bond I will not break it."

Four more children were born to this couple while living in Richfield, Colorado; Joseph Hyrum; Heber Alma; Franklin Eugene and Bryant Edgar; making twelve children in all for them to raise.

He spent the remainder of his life in Richfield. He held many responsible positions in the church, also in the town, on the schoolboard, and the ditch. He was councilor in the Bishopric for several years, teacher in the Religion class held in Richfield school from 1899 to 1904. He was President of the High Priest Quorum 1910 to 1913. Elder Joseph F. Smith ordained him a High Priest in 1892.

He sent two sons on missions; two daughters were instructors in the religion class. Three sons were Bishops and another son was a Councilor in the Stake Presidency. He was secretary of the Schoolyard for several years, beginning in 1883. He was also secretary of the town board. He was loved by all and respected for his honesty.

He was a hard working man beginning the day at four in the morning and working till late at night. He had only a few sick days in his life, and was ill only a few days before his death, which came three days before his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. He died 17 July 1914. At that time he called his wife and all the family that was near to his bedside and told them his time had come. He felt that his work was complete and he was ready to go. He passed peacefully away.