

EARLY HIGHLAND LEADERSHIP

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The organization to the Highland Ward in 1915 was not the beginning of the Church on the Bench. The beginning was in 1892, when on March 13 a Branch of the American Fork Third Ward was organized and functioned for about fourteen years. Here are vignettes of the four men who led the Branch during that time.

With the building of the school in 1888, there was finally a place for the people of Highland to meet together for socials and Church. The first mention of a Church organization was March 13, 1892 when Bishop George A Halliday of the American Fork Third Ward along with Samuel Wagstaff and Steven D Chipman visited and organized a Branch of that Ward. Samuel A Eastman was sustained Presiding Elder of the Branch. Three months later, on June 26, 1892, S S Jones and O H Berg visited and organized a Sunday School and set apart Samuel A Eastman as Superintendent with James J Bolin and Richie Harkness as his assistants.

Apparently other meetings were held beginning in March but the first Sunday School meeting was held on July 3, 1892 with 24 members present from six families: Eastman, Bolin, Givens, Munns, Wilson and Manning.

Samuel was born May 24, 1860 in Ashburton, Plymouth, England to Samuel and Agnes Cook Eastman. He married Leila Bender in 1881 and they came to American in 1885. Leila was born March 9, 1862 in Plymouth, England to George and Eliza Stephens Burden. They arrived in Highland in 1891 with four children and added four more later.

The following year it was decided to make a change in leadership and on August 13, 1893, a large group of leaders assembled to make the change: David John and Edward Partridge of the Stake Presidency, Bishop T R Cutler of the Lehi Ward, Bishop Albert Marsh and Counselor Carlisle of Alpine, Counselor George Cunningham and High Councilman Wm D Robinson from American Fork. The people were given slips of paper and asked to suggest leadership and they suggested Samuel A Eastman, Richie Harkness and Hyrum Healey and left it to the leadership to make the final choice. They chose Hyrum Healey and he was unanimously sustained and set apart. Samuel A Eastman was given a vote of thanks for his services as Presiding Elder and was continued as Sunday School Superintendent which position he held until August 11, 1895. He died September 30 1953.

When the first Sunday School was held on July 3, 1892, Samuel and his three oldest children are listed as attendees.

Hyrum Healey came from England in 1862 with his mother and 3 other children and settled in Alpine. Within a year they were joined by his father and brother who had stayed in England to help raise money for the move. He married Elvira Carson of Fairfield, Utah territory in Jan of 1875 and moved to his 80 acre homestead at the far northeast corner of Highland, where they built a 2-room log cabin. They welcomed 5 children but the first one died at 10 months of age and Elvira died at the age of 34, a few days after giving birth to their 5th child, William, in May, 1886. Hyrum asked his mother and 3 sisters to care for his children, who in the summers helped their father take care of his farm. In 1891 Hyrum married Mary Read from Salt Lake City. She was a good wife but was not fond of children and never had any of her own.

His choice as the second presiding Elder of Highland was a tribute to his faithfulness and the esteem he held in the eyes of his peers.

Two years later, as he was performing the duties of his calling by delivering a load of hay to American Fork, his horses were spooked and he fell off the load and was injured so that he had terrible headaches and a stiff neck until he died about 6 months later, in April, 1896.

James J Bolin was born in 1852 in York, South Carolina and was married to Elizabeth Jane Wilson in 1882 and they came to Highland in 1891, having been converted to Mormonism in 1888. They lived here until about 1902, when they moved to Idaho. They had sixteen children.

After the death of Hyrum Healy he was sustained as the third presiding Elder of Highland on November 8, 1896 and served until April 29, 1900. His son, Robert Adams Bolin served as the first missionary from Highland from October 1897 until April 1900 in the Southern States Mission.

After living in Idaho for five years they moved to California, then back to Lehi where James died August 24, 1914 and is buried in the Lehi cemetery.

James C Orr followed as the fourth presiding Elder of Highland, being sustained on April 29, 1900 and serving until May of 1906, when the Branch was disbanded.

James C Orr was born January 1, 1865 at Clover Creek, UT, and served a mission to the Southern States when he was 24. While on his mission his younger brother drowned in Idaho, his mother passed away and his father fell ill so he was called home after about 18 months. After his father passed he left Clover to attend the University of Deseret and received a teaching certificate from there. He married Maggie Farrell of Alpine and they went to Avon, Cache County where he taught all 8 grades of school in one room. They had 13 children. In 1899 they moved to Alpine, living with his wife's parents for a short time then moved to Highland. It is recorded that he was the first school teacher at Highland and was considered a very good teacher. He was set apart as Presiding Elder of the Highland Branch on April 29, 1900 with James Brown and William Loveridge as counselors. He was chosen as one of the first trustees of the Alpine School District. His health was not good and he was unable to teach for a few years before his death on February 11, 1917, at age 52.

The next Church organization was a Sunday School, started by O.C. Day in September, 1907 with William Westwood as his assistant, adding Rex Pehrson as a second assistant later. He was followed by Richard H Duffin-1909, James C Orr-1910-11 and Archie Taylor-1912-15, who were successful in getting increased attendance at the Sunday School until, at last, the Ward was organized, August 1, 1915.