

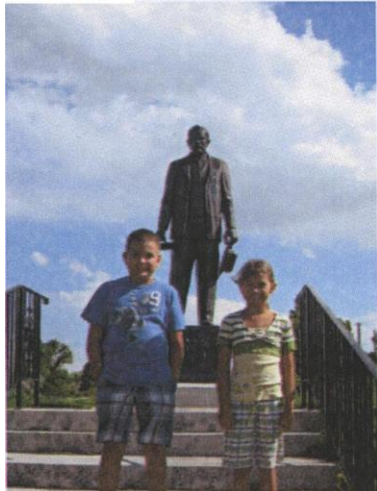
Byron Sessions 7 November 1851

By Haleigh Hansen

and Prayer Rock

My great-great-great-great grandfather, Byron Sessions was born November 7, 1851, in Salt Lake City, Utah. His parents, Perrigrine and Mary Call Sessions, were among the early pioneers to settle in the Salt Lake Valley. They had very little, and Byron, who was a strong little boy, had to work very hard. His clothing was all made at home, even his shoes, which were moccasins. When he was twelve years old he got his first pair of leather shoes. His mother died when he was young, and his father and his aunt, raised him. When he was seventeen years old, he helped haul stone for the Salt Lake Temple.

In February 1900, Byron was one of fourteen men called to make a trip to the Big Horn Basin in Wyoming, to help the Mormon people settle there. After returning to his home in Woodruff, he was called by President Snow, and told that he had been recommended as a very good man to take charge of the construction of the canal to be taken out of the Shoshone



River. He said, "Brother Sessions, it is the desire of the Church, that you move your family out into that land, take charge of the construction of the canal, and stay with it until it is completed. Now what do you say about it?"

Byron replied, "President Snow, I accept the call and will fill it to the best of my ability."

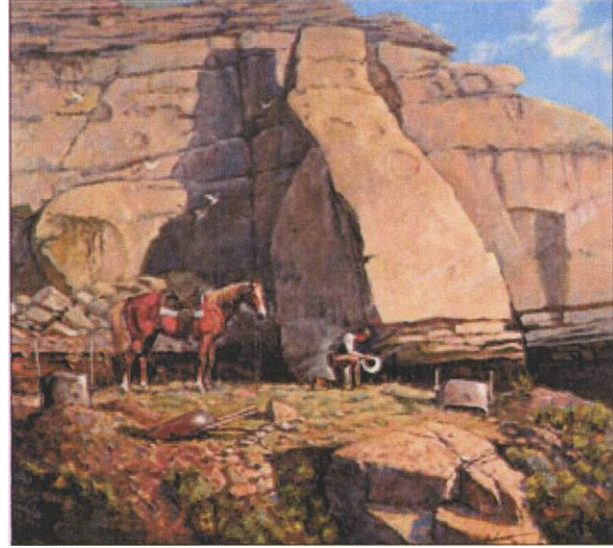
On April 24, 1900 Byron left Utah with his family and the other families who were called by President Lorenzo Snow to settle the Big Horn Valley. They arrived a month later on May 22, 1900. (We have gone to the Big Horn Basin every summer since I was born to visit our family who still live there and it only takes us about 12 hours. I don't think I would go if it took a whole month.)

This is a picture of me and my brother with the statue of Byron Sessions in Byron, Wyoming.

One of the first tasks when they got there was to build the canal to carry irrigation water from the Shoshone River to their farms. In the morning of May 28th Byron drove the team as Apostle Abraham Owen Woodruff held the plow as the first furrow was plowed to begin work on the canal. The men lived in tents while working on the canal. Twenty year old Cash Carlton was one of them. "Cash said it was so cold in the winter that his hair froze to his pillow sometimes". The men soon discovered that a huge boulder was directly in their path. Due to the canals grade they could not go around it on one side because of a sheer rock wall and on the other side the dirt hill side sloped away steeply. It was hoped that dynamite, placed between the towering boulder and the rock wall would weaken the boulder so it would fall into a hole they were digging at the boulders base.

They hauled the dirt away from the base of the boulder exposing more and more of its enormous base. Many earnest prayers were said by those digging in the hole at the boulders base that no harm or accident would happen to them. Just east of the boulder was a small ravine that Byron would ride his horse "Old Bud" into each morning. He would stop "Old Bud" get down and remove his hat and offer a prayer. He thought he was alone, but as he

removed his hat "Old Bud" would put his head to the ground and remain in that position until Byron put his hat back on. Byron's daughter, Julia Idella and her boyfriend William Walter Graham were watching and saw this happen. One day at the close of his prayer, it was made known to him that the rock would fall within 24 hours. When Byron told the men who were digging, this one man doubted him and pulled out his watch and said, "Let's time him." Later the next day, while the men were working in the hole Byron felt impressed to call the men away from the boulder and bring their tools and horses



with them. Because it hadn't been too long since they took a break, one man said, "We just had our rest." Again, Byron called for the men to bring their horses and tools and come out of the hole. The men complied. Then the rock cracked, and split, falling where it was intended, into the hole where the men had been working only moments earlier. The man who had timed him looked at his watch and it was just 5 minutes short of 24 hours. Another man named Joseph Meeks said, "We must call this Prayer Rock".

This is the painting "Prayer Rock" by Harold Hopkinson

In 1925 his wife, Ida passed away. He moved A back to Salt Lake City to live with his sister as he grew older. He passed away January 5, 1928. His body was taken back to the city of Byron which was named after him and he was buried beside his wife.