

THE WILLARD, UTAH FLOOD August 13, 1923

By Sylvia Ward Johnson

As the flood hit Grandmother Ward's house, I looked out the door and saw a mass of swirling mud and water. I turned to Grandmother and said, "Oh, Grandmother!" She took me in her arms and said, "Don't be afraid, dear."

She led me into the kitchen along with Aunt Aggie. We remained there until the mud and water were up to our knees. Suddenly we were swept out the back door into the swirling mass. I called to Grandmother. We reached our hands out to each other, but our hands never met.

As I was swept down in the swirling mass, a log came by. I grasped it with my arm. My shoes were swept from my feet. I felt something float by me other hand. I grasped it. All of the time I was struggling to keep my head above the water. I uttered a little prayer, "Heavenly Father please let me live to go home to Mother!" A feeling of peace came over me and I drifted into unconsciousness.

At 11:30 P.M., three hours later, a rescue crew started up one end of a block. The mud was too deep there. They tried to other end and it was also too deep, so they came up through the middle of the block. One of the men heard a noise. He listened and heard it again. He shone his lantern onto the spot from which the noise had come. There he saw my hand grasping the side of the hayrack. He called to the others and they pulled me out of the mud, which was reluctant to give up its victim. They feared that they would pull the arms out of the sockets as the suction of the mud was so great.

They took me into the Bishop's house, bathed the mud off my body, took me over to the depot and put me on the train which took me to the hospital in Ogden. A nurse and intern worked to keep me alive during the trip. They could feel no pulse and my lungs were nearly filled with muddy water, but the Lord saved my life! He caused a groan to come from my unconscious lips.

Miracles do happen! The log and hayrack traveled side by side in that swirling mass of water, mud, rocks, and debris for three and one half blocks without changing direction or separating, or hitting together. Also, only my chin and nose were out of the mud. I know that only through the Lord's help was my life saved that night of August 13, 1923.

This information was copied from a document that was included in a Book of Remembrance compiled by Hazel Dawn Ward Beecher for her daughters. The following notes were written at the end of the document.

This copy is from the original, written by Sylvia Ward Johnson, for my sister Hazel Dawn Ward Beecher in October, 1981.

Sylvia is a daughter of William Alfred Ward, Daddy Orville Welton Ward's oldest brother. She was staying in Willard with Grandma Mary Ellen Ward at the time of the flood. Sylvia was then eleven years old--she and her family were living in Elba, Idaho.

Sylvia became a school teacher and married Kenneth Johnson of Heber City, Utah. They have three children, a girl and two boys. She and her husband are presently fulfilling an L.D.S. Mission in California. Their home is still in Heber City, Utah...

Aunt Aggie (Agnes) that is spoken of was Uncle Irl Bryan Ward's (Daddy's youngest brother's) first wife. She was expecting their first child. Both she and Grandma Mary Ellen lost their lives in the flood--Grandma would have been sixty one years old in seven more days. Grandma's large brick home was completely swept away, there was nothing left of it!

Irl was in Willard tending their Ice Cream Parlor and Store at the time. He tried to make it home to them, but was unable to. by Edith Ward Carlson

Edris and I were seven years old at the time of the flood.

I will always remember that night we were all out around the barns and corral and Daddy remarked to Mamma, that he bet Willard was really getting a storm! I can remember how black it looked in that direction.

Early the next morning Daddy received the dreadful phone call, telling him of the death of his Mother and Aunt Agnes.

By Edith Fae Ward Carlson

P.S. I have Grandma Mary Ellen's trunk that was salvaged from the flood.

(Note) by Deborah Jones

I have a dress that was Mary Ellen's that my mother had obtained. I believe that it was discovered in the trunk that Aunt Edith has.

What I remember was that mother said Uncle Irl had tried to get back to the house in Willard when it was evident that there was trouble and was caught in the flood. As he was swept away by the water a ring on his hand caught on the wire of a fence. That held him in place and helped save his life. She also said that after the flood, if Sylvia was visiting and a storm would come up, she just wanted to go home.

Sylvia and Kenneth Johnson were both killed in an automobile accident in Utah caused by a drunk driver April 1, 1989.

Victims of Willard Flood



Mrs. Agnes Ward, left, 25, who perished in the deluge at Willard last Monday night. Mrs. Ellen B. Ward, 55, (right), who also her life in the flood. Joint funeral services will be held at 2 p. m. Friday from the Willard tabernacle.



The log upon which Sylvia was carried and under which she was found with the hay rack resting on top of the log.

Also the body of her grand mother was found between the log and the small building in the distance



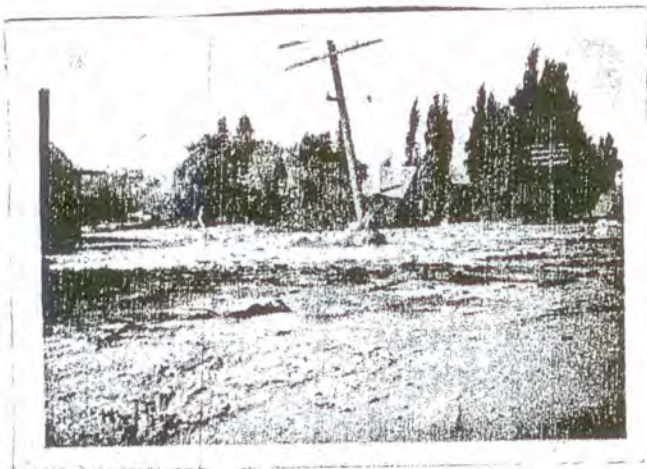
Where the Ward home stood



The hay rack under which
Sylvia was found



Street running east and west
passed the Owens' home



Main street taken from in
front of Orvil Ward's place
looking north



Picture of Leonard flood
The house of Leonard Wells
which was wrecked and what
was left of it deposited in
front of where Ward's home
had been.

**MARY ELLEN WARD
&
AGNES M. WARD
BOX ELDER NEWS
FRIDAY, AUG. 17 1923**

Page 1, Col. 1

**SERVICES FOR WILLARD'S
FLOOD VICTIMS TODAY**

Funeral services for Mrs. Mary Ellen Ward and Mrs. Agnes M. Ward, the two Willard flood victims, are being held at the Willard ward chapel this afternoon commencing at 2 o'clock under the direction of Bishop Ephraim White.

Mary Brewerton Ward, wife of the late George Alfred Ward, was born in Willard, Utah, August 20, 1862. She married Mr. Ward in December, 1881, to this union a large family was born. He died October 16, 1898, at Willard. After her marriage, she removed with her husband at Almo, Idaho, where they lived for a number of years, returning to Willard in the spring of 1898. Mrs. Ward was one of the honored and highly respected citizens of Willard, and president of the ward Relief society, and treasurer of Willard city. She became known for her kind and charitable acts in the capacity of Relief society president and for her untiring effort in helping others. She was loved by all who knew her.

Surviving are the following sons: William A. Ward, of Elba, Idaho; Melvin M. Ward, of Sublet, Idaho; Orvil W. Ward and Acel W. Ward of Almo, Idaho, and Earl B. Ward of Willard, Utah.

**Mary Ellen Ward
&
Agnes Mason Ward
Box Elder News
Friday-August 17, 1923
Page 1, Col. 6**

Agnes Mason Ward, wife of Earl B. Ward, was born September 17, 1898, at Plymouth, Utah. She was the daughter of Charles and Emma Mason, now of Ogden. May 12, 1920, she married Mr. Ward of Willard. At the time of her death she was a teacher in the ward Religion class.

Mrs. Ward is survived by her husband, her parents, and the following brothers and sisters: Mrs. Eloise Lessey Garfield, Erza Mason of Plymouth, Eliza Mason, Twila Mason, Hortense Mason and Bessie Mason, all of Ogden.

**MARY ELLEN AND
AGNES M. WARD
LAID AT REST**

Very impressive services were held at Willard Friday afternoon at 2 o'clock at the Willard ward chapel for Mrs. Mary Ellen Ward and Mrs. Agnes M. Ward, the two victims of the Willard flood disaster. Practically all of the people of Willard and hundreds from surrounding cities and other parts of the state turned out to the services, the building being packed to capacity and immense crowds stood at the doors and windows on the outside of the chapel. The floral tributes were most beautiful and numerous. Bishop Ephraim White presided at the services which opened by the choir singing, "I Know My Heavenly Father Knows." Prayer was offered by John D. Peters of this city. Wm. C. Wright of Ogden sang the solo, "I'll Go Where You Want Me To Go."

The speakers were Bishop Ephraim White, John J. Ward, S. N. Cook, Mrs. Minnie H. Jenson of this city, Reuben Beecher, Bishop Christensen of Salem, James M. White, Mrs. Ida Davis, Wm. Owens, R. E. Davis, and President Wm. C. Horsley of this city. The special musical program included two solos, "Face to Face," and "Dream of Mother" by Shupe of Ogden, and the solo, "Sometime We'll Understand" by Wm. C. Wright of Ogden. The closing song "I Need Thee Every Hour," was rendered by the choir, and benediction pronounced by Harvey Wood-yatt. Interment took place at the Willard cemetery, the graves dedicated by John M. White.

BRIGHAM CITY BUGLER

Saturday, October 22, 1898

The angel of death has again visited this place and called from our midst one of our brothers. Alfred Ward, a son-in-law of the late T.W. Brewerton, died Saturday morning. He was 36 years of age and leaves a wife and five sons to mourn his loss. He has been a sufferer of a very complicated disease for many months. The funeral services were held in the tabernacle Monday afternoon where a large number of relatives and friends met to pay their last respects to the deceased. The family has a host of sympathizers.

Cymraegas.

Willard, October 19th

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