

Rees Pioneer Day 2013

October 29, 2013

Dear Family,

Happy Rees Pioneer Day! On this day in 1855, our ancestor Joseph Alexander Rees arrived in the Salt Lake Valley with his mother Elizabeth, father William, and older brothers William and David. For this year's installment, I have a couple of stories to share about Alfred Cornelius "AC" Rees (son of Joseph Alexander Rees and Christina Amelia Hessel) and his wife Ida Davis Rees. AC and Ida were the parents of Alfred, Lyman, Stanley, Elias (Si), and Richard Rees. The stories were related to me firsthand by LaRaine Mackley (now 91 years of age), who was personally acquainted with AC and Ida Rees and knew them as "Uncle Alfred" and "Aunt Ida".



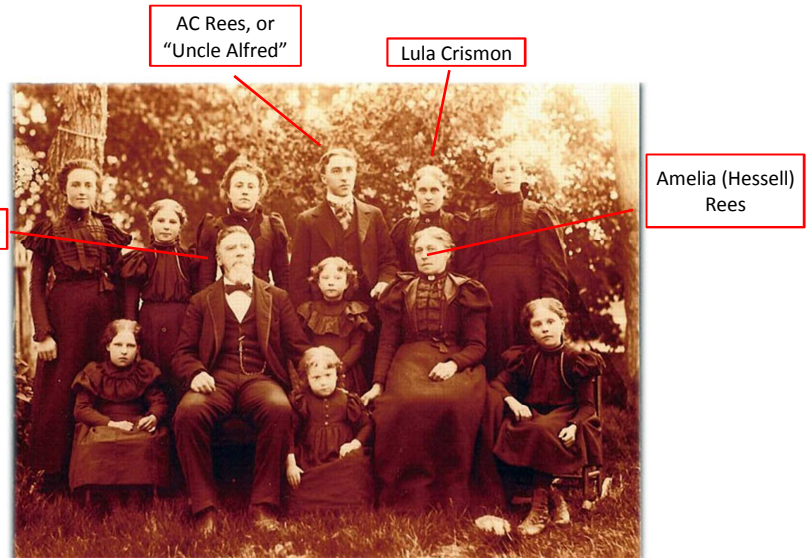
LaRaine Mackley, Matt & Hannah Rees

Fork, but maintained a close relationship with all of Joseph and Amelia's children--her half-siblings². In fact, Lula is present in Joseph and Amelia's family photo to the right.

Lula married Peter Nelson, and they raised their large family on a farm near Spanish Fork. Joseph and Amelia and their family regularly visited Lula and Peter Nelson for vacations, and Joseph would occasionally send his children over to the Nelsons to help out on the farm.

In order to understand LaRaine's relationship to Uncle Alfred, it is necessary to understand the history of Christina Amelia Hessel, through whom we are descended. Before her marriage to Joseph Alexander Rees, Amelia was married to Charles Crismon¹ and with him had one daughter, Annie Telula Crismon, or "Lula" (in Joseph Rees's autobiography, he refers to her as "Lulu"). Lula was raised by Amelia's parents in Spanish

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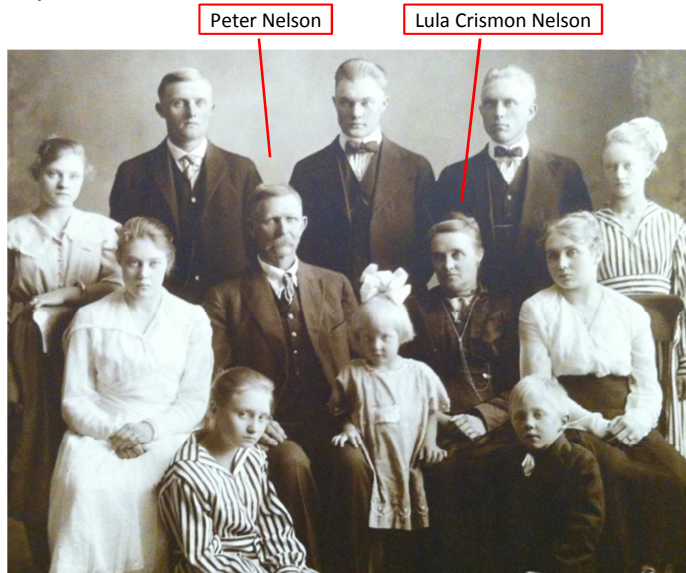
Joseph & Amelia Rees Family

¹ Charles Crismon, Lula's father, was a prominent and well-respected Mormon pioneer who built the first grist mill in Salt Lake City, and who was also one of the original settlers of San Bernardino, CA, and Mesa, AZ. In addition to his colonizing efforts, he maintained several successful business interests, which included mining, milling, and stock raising. Shortly after Brigham Young called him to colonize Mesa, Amelia Hessel sought a divorce from him, which Brigham Young granted. Their daughter Lula was raised by Amelia's parents in Spanish Fork, although Charles Crismon continued to support her financially; on his business trips to Salt Lake City, he would quietly give money to the Hessells (Amelia's parents) for the care of Lula. Several good accounts of the life of Charles Crismon can be found here: <http://www.geni.com/people/Charles-Crismon/2886803>

² Joseph and Amelia's daughter Mary Ann Rees Reynolds named her youngest daughter "Lula", after her half-sister Lula. In fact *all* of the names of George and Mary Ann Rees Reynolds' children have family significance: **Samantha** Leona (after George's mother), **Joseph** Donald (after Mary Ann's father), **George Rees** (after George, and Mary Ann's maiden name), **Alfred** Max (after Mary Ann's brother), **Alma Sellers** (after Mary Ann's half-brother, and George's mother's maiden name), Lester **Hessell** (Mary Ann's mother's maiden name), Grant **Amelias** (after Mary Ann's mother, and perhaps even a reference to Grantsville, where her parents met), **Marian** (likely named after Joseph's first wife, Maryann Jenkins, who died in childbirth along with her newborn baby, also named Maryann), and **Lula**.

“Uncle Alfred” Repays a Debt

So back to LaRaine Mackley. LaRaine is the granddaughter of Lula Crismon Nelson, the half-sister of AC, hence her familiarity with him as “Uncle Alfred”. This first story concerns a time when Uncle Alfred, as an adult, visited the Nelsons' farm during the Great Depression. LaRaine, who was a young teenager at the time and was present for the visit, says:



Peter & Lula Nelson Family

“It’s something I have never forgotten, and I think that was the whole gist of my memory, that [my grandpa, Peter Nelson] was crying. And I hadn’t seen my grandpa cry.

Uncle Alfred (AC Rees) drove up in his car. He was by himself, and we were out in the center of the yard, by the old garage, when he pulled in. And [Grandpa and Uncle Alfred] sat and talked for awhile and laughed--you know how men do, when you first see each other. And Uncle Alfred finally reached in his pocket and pulled out his checkbook, and he gave Grandpa a check. And Grandpa looked at it and he said, ‘What is this for?!’

And Uncle Alfred said, ‘Well don’t you remember when you put me out in the beet field to thin your beets and when you came out all your beets were gone? I had chopped them all up because I didn’t know the difference. And I knew that you were tight on money and that it was important about those

beets and I felt badly about it. And that check is to replace those beets I destroyed.’

And that’s when Grandpa started to cry, I guess. It was during the Depression. And so they embraced, and that was about it. I thought it was a special story for both men.”

By the way, the Nelson farm still exists, and it is still in the family. LaRaine’s cousin, Ed Holt, and his wife Berta Lou, live on and still work the farm.

AC Rees’s Yellow Cord

The second story concerns AC’s car--a convertible 1937 Cord 812 Supercharged Phaeton³. For those who may be unfamiliar, the Cord 812 was *the* car in the 1930’s. It was built by the same company that built Duesenberg automobiles and Lycoming aircraft engines (note the aircraft-inspired dashboard below), and technologically, it was decades ahead of its time, incorporating front wheel drive, independent front suspension, retractable headlights,



1937 Cord 812 SC Phaeton

³ Based on the photo of AC’s car, next page, from Tony Rees (grandson of AC by his son Si), as well as my own recollection of Grandpa (Stanley) Rees telling me about driving his father’s Cord across the Bonneville Salt Flats at over 100mph. The photos of the Cord above, in stock trim, are likely the actual exterior and interior colors of AC’s Cord.

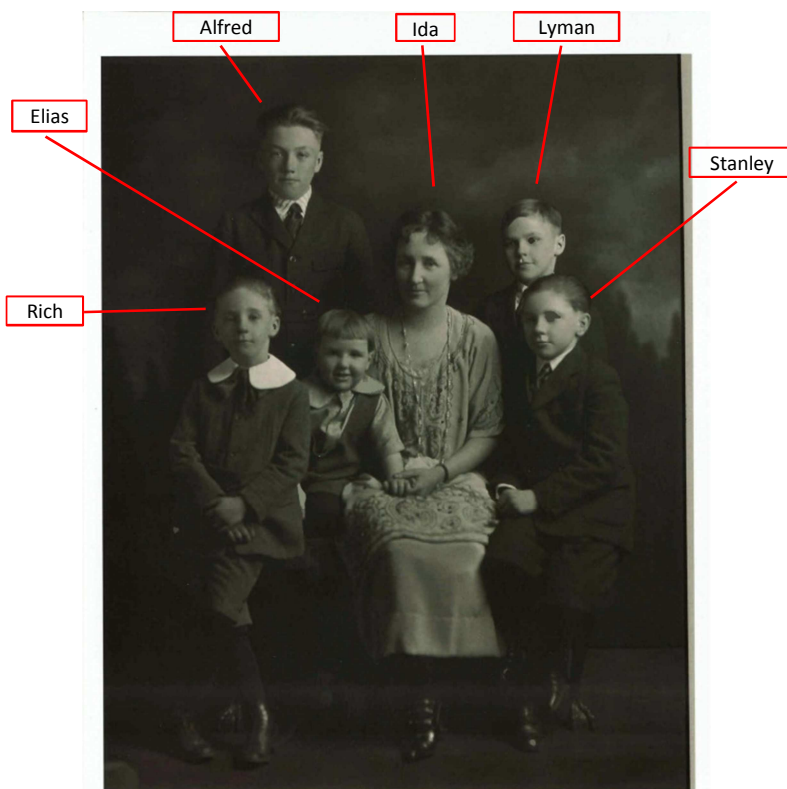
hidden door hinges (rear-hinged “suicide” doors, actually), a semi-automatic transmission, variable speed wipers, a factory radio, and a supercharged inline-8 cylinder Lycoming engine. LaRaine remembers AC's Cord as having flamboyant yellow paint and a purple interior (this at a time when the typical color combination for most cars was black/black!). She recalls:



One of AC & Ida's boys (Stan, Rich, Si?) in the Cord

“His youngest son (Si) was there at the house after he came home from his mission [to Germany]. And I went down there and I could see he was bored. They were having a football game, so I said, ‘would you like to go down to the school and watch the football game?’ And he said, ‘yeah, I would’. So we got in the car and drove down to the high school in this fancy car and I alighted out of the car and we went over to the field. My boyfriend at the time was playing football and he was mad, but we had a laugh after he found out who it was”.

LaRaine's Memories of Ida Davis Rees, Wife of AC Rees



Ida Davis Rees and her sons

LaRaine recalls of her Aunt Ida that “we always had to wear hats so we wouldn't get freckles on our face. And I thought, ‘oh, [freckles] must be horrible things.’ But when I saw Aunt Ida, she was pretty, and she had a lot of freckles, and they didn't bother her. They looked nice on her.”

One more interesting detail that highlights the close relationship between Lula (and her family) and her half-siblings. In 1962, Albert Loewe, the husband of Esther Rees (one of Joseph and Amelia's daughters) died while he and Esther were on a camping trip in the mountains. He had left camp to go fishing, but never returned. People searched for him for days, and they finally found his body. He had presumably died from a rattlesnake bite, as there was a tourniquet around one of his legs when he was found.

Esther was devastated by Albert's death, according to LaRaine. She sold her house, threw all of her pictures in the garbage, and moved into a hotel. The authorities eventually found her wandering the streets homeless, not even knowing her own name. She was placed in a county facility, and they eventually

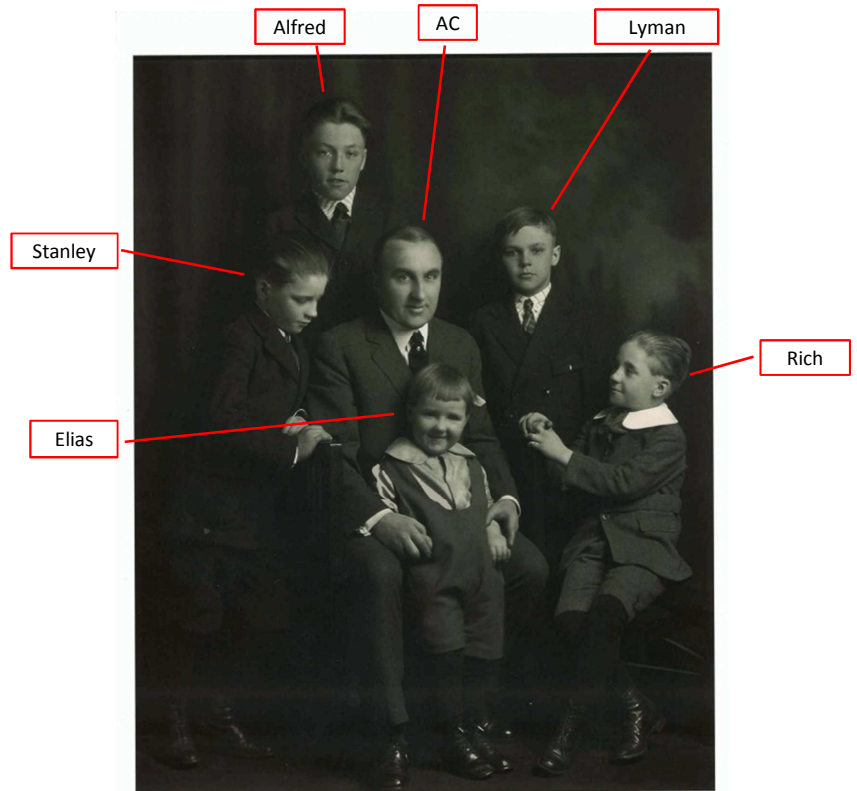
managed to track down a relative (she and Albert were childless)—LaRaine Mackley and her husband Eldon.

LaRaine and Eldon took her in, and she lived with them until she was able to care for herself. Eldon was the bishop of their ward at the time (in Northern California), so they took Esther to church with them every Sunday. It was the first time in many years that Esther had been to church, but LaRaine recalls that she “knew all of the hymns by heart, and she loved singing them”. While she was living with Esther, she completed her family group sheet so that LaRaine could do the temple work for her and Albert after she had died.

Another interesting connection—Esther Rees at one time worked for a doctor in San Francisco, and that doctor happened to be one of Eldon Mackley’s instructors in school.

Happy Rees Pioneer Day!

Love,



“My picture of bliss in the hereafter is to be surrounded by my dear wife, my children and their posterity, in the Celestial Kingdom of God—at work.”

--Alfred Cornelius Rees, Christmas 1930