

EVENTS IN MY LIFE CULMINATING IN THE WRITING OF LIFE OF JOHN LOWE BUTLER I

By: ROSS E. BUTLER

My father was John Lowe Butler III, son of John Lowe Butler II, who was the son of John Lowe Butler I. My father was born in Utah in 1874, the eldest of ten children by Nancy Franzetta Smith. John Lowe Butler II was born in 1844, and was blessed by the Prophet Joseph Smith just previous to the martyrdom. While I was a boy my father often told of his grandfather serving as a body guard to the Prophet Joseph, and of the mobbing at the polls in Gallatin, Daviess County, Missouri, in August 1838. The Butler family was a close family, and we often had gatherings of the family where stories were told of forefathers.

In the 1930's two of my cousins, Winona Richards and Erma Christensen Osmond, made a type script of the John Lowe Butler I hand written journal held in the office of the Church Historian in Salt Lake City. They were not permitted to remove it from the office. Mimeographed copies of this were made available to the family, and our family had a copy that I read with interest.

There had been a John Lowe Butler Family Organization in the early part of the 1900's, with the John L. Sevey family being rather prominent in its operation. In 1937, at the death of my father, the Butlers began to hold reunions, and showed a renewed interest in family histories and genealogy. My mother, Bertha Thurber Butler, was much involved in this, and encouraged her family to participate. There were a number of reunions held for the descendants of John Lowe Butler I during the 1940's, 1950's, and 1960's, and I attended all of them.

In the late 1950's, while serving as bishop of the Vale Ward, Nyssa Stake, I took my wife and nine children in a station wagon, and we went to Spanish Fork to view the grave of John Lowe Butler I. When we arrived at the cemetery we checked all over, but could find no marker, so we went to the city hall to inquire. The lady at the desk stated they had no record of a grave for John Lowe Butler I, and this caused me to raise my voice somewhat to the effect that John Lowe Butler I had been the first bishop of Spanish Fork, and I had been told stories of a marker on his grave. An elderly gentleman in a rear office came out and informed me that there was a grave with a large marker for John Lowe Butler and his family, and it was in the west edge of the cemetery. He further informed me that it was all weed overgrown, and that the City did not maintain it because no one had paid for perpetual care. With this information we returned to the cemetery, located the marker, took some pictures, and then went to the local newspaper office where I inserted a story of finding the marker, and asked for any descendant of John Lowe Butler I that may read the story to identify themselves by corresponding with me. That was when LaRae Johnson, a descendant of Kenyon Taylor Butler, living in Spanish Fork, contacted me.

My son, Robert D. Butler, an attorney, formed the JOHN LOWE BUTLER I (1808-1860) FAMILY ORGANIZATION, a non-profit corporation. The first major activity was to remove the copy of the Book of Mormon and records from the center stone of the marker during a big family reunion. We also paid for the perpetual care, and repaired the marker.

During the 1960's I made a trip to Salt Lake City to the Church Historian's office to personally review the original journal of John Lowe Butler I. The woman who waited on me, even though there were cards in the file that there was such a journal, informed me the journal had been returned to the party who had originally placed it there, and they had it no longer. I knew this could not be true, and was rather outspoken about it, but got nowhere. As I sat fuming about what had happened a man approached me, stated that he knew the record to be there, for he had seen it, but could give me no idea how I could further approach the lady. I went home to Ontario, and wrote a letter to the Church Historian, Leonard Arrington, a good friend, telling him of the problem, and giving him my reasons to know the journal was actually in possession of the Church Historian's office.

About three weeks later I received a letter from the Historian's office telling me that they had located the journal, that with the call letters given I could come and review it. Leonard Arrington had penned a personal note at the bottom of the letter, and I feel indebted to him for his help. I took the letter with me on my next trip to Salt Lake City, and had the same lady wait on me. She again informed me that they did not have the journal. I then showed her the letter, to her embarrassment, and she finally produced the journal. I then found they also had a typescript of it, and I also had them microfilm the journal for me.

The descendants of James Butler, brother of John Lowe Butler II, through John Topham Butler, being John Wendell, Karl D. and Mervin Butler, joined forces with us, strengthened the family organization, and set the stage for the funds necessary for publishing a history on John Lowe Butler I. These were and are dedicated men who are proud of their family history. John Topham Butler's wife was Susan Redd, and it is through the Redd family we have Marion G. Romney and Bruce R. McConkie.

John Lowe Butler I had eight wives, but gave a writ of divorcement to wife number 7. The first wife had 12 children, the sixth wife had one, and the eighth wife had two, for a total of 15 children, of which eleven had posterity. I have been blessed to have contact with descendants of all eleven of the children.

In 1984 William G. Hartley (Bill), Director of Family History Services for B.Y.U., and who, as a young missionary had lived in Karl Butler's home, wrote to Karl to encourage him to do something about a history on John Lowe Butler I, saying that this great man merited a good history. Karl sent the letter to me, and I wrote Bill, and set up a meeting with him in April 1985. I met with Bill, and was accompanied by Helen T. Dalton and Etta Mayberry. Bill accepted the assignment to write the book. We turned over to him all the information we had, and then I spent two weeks in the Historian's office, and the Genealogical Library doing research which I gave to Bill.

Bill had hoped to have the book ready for the John Lowe Butler I Family Organization reunion for August 12-13, 1988, but it has been delayed, however, it will be out this fall of 1988. The book will not only be a history of this great man, but will give much new light on such items as the James Emmett Company and on the Danites.

As indicated in the above accounts I feel that the hand of the Lord has been guiding me in this endeavor through the years. The two incidents of locating the grave, and locating the journal, were the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit.

This book will have something about the descendants of each of the eleven children, but to bring things up to date we are asking for descendants of each of the eleven to prepare books on the lives of that ancestor. Several books are already written, such as on Keziah Jane Butler Redd, Phoebe Melinda Butler Sevey, Alveretta Farozine Butler Robinson. Books in process are on John Lowe Butler II, James Butler, Kenion Taylor Butler, John William Butler, and the other four we hope have their books underway. *Charity book underway,*

We have a royal heritage through John Lowe Butler I, and his mother, Charity Lowe Butler, who died in Iowa, and through his fine wives. I think it is very appropriate that one of his descendants was Bruce Redd McConkie, a prophet, seer and revelator, a member of the Council of the Twelve.