

HISTORY OF
ROBERT DOCKERY COVINGTON

Principal residences

Rockingham, North Carolina
Nauvoo, Illinois
Cottonwood, Utah
St. George, Utah

Copied by the
Brigham Young University Library
1954

PREFACE

This is a copy of a typewritten history of Robert Dockery Covington. It has been copied exactly as in the original except that obvious typographical mistakes were eliminated.

The typewritten manuscript from which this copy was made was typed on regular type paper 8 1/2 by 11 and was 6 pages in length, single spaced and 3 holes punched in the left margin.

Permission to type this history was secured through the kindness of Mrs. Mariam C. Bradshaw of Orem, Utah to whom the original copy was returned.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Robert Dockery Covington

Born Aug. 1815 in Rockingham, North Carolina	
Cross plains in Hunters company, 1847	
Genealogy and biography of family	
Hear Benjamin Clapp preach, become interested	
Baptised February, 1843	
Join saints in Nauvoo -----	1
Experiences on journey west	
Eliza R. Snow nurses sick in company	
Jedediah M. Grant's wife & child die -----	2
Arrive in Salt Lake Valley	
Wife died, December, 1847	
Teach school in Cottonwood	
Marry Malinda Kelly, Children listed	
Wife dies	
Marry Nancy Roberts, from Cheshire England	
Wife, Nancy dies	
Called to Dixie Mission	
List of men in Dixie mission	
Branch of church organized -----	3
George A. Smith visits mission	
Chosen as Notary Public for Washington County	
Receive contract to build Beaver Dam	
Cotton raising in Dixie, 1850-60	
Grape cuttings imported from California, 1858	
Sugar cane imported from China, 1858 -----	4
Chosen County Representative of Agricultural Society	
Meeting to discuss defense	
Letter to George Albert Smith concerning Washington County -----	5
Missionary tour, January, 1867 indicates prosperity	
Telegraph Office established in Washington, Feb. 1867	
Indian depredations, 1867 -----	6
Serve mission in the Southern States, 1870	
Conditions in the Southern States, 1869-70	
Malaria in family recorded by friend	
Condition of Washington colony as told by Robert Gardner	
Dies in Washington County -----	7

Name Index

History of Robert Dockery Covington

Barron, Alexander, 3
Boyd, (Dr.), 6
Choper, Mendez, 6
Clapp, Benjamin, 1
Clark, Jacob, 3
Coley, Gabriel, 3
Couch, J. M., 3
Covington, Elizebeth, 1-3
 Emily Jane Farr, 1-2
 Henry, 1
 John, 1
 John Thomas, 1-2
 Malinda Kelly, 3
 Mary Ellen, 3
 Nancy Roberts, 3
 Phoebe Ann, 3, 6
 Robert Laborious, 2
 Sarah Ann, 1
 Thomas, 3
 William, 1
Crawford, W. H., 3-4
Dodge, Walter E., 4
Duggins, Stephen, 3
 Wm., 3
Flake, Green, 1
Freems, Wm., 3
Freeman, John, 3
Gardner, Robert, 7
Grant, Jedediah M., 2
 (Mrs.) Jedediah M., 2
Green, Richard, 3
Gurley, Samuel, 1
Haight, (Bro.), 3, 5
Hatfield, Joseph, 3
Hawley, Wm., 3
Holley, S. P., 7
Howley, John, 3
Hunter, Edward, 1
Kelly, Malinda, see Covington,
 Malinda
Loyd, Robert, 3
Lyman, Amasa W., 4
McCullough, James D., 3-4
Matthos, James, 3
Murry, Fanny, 4
Pierce, Harrison, 4
 James, 4
Prince, Wm., 6
Regean, Johnathan R., 4
Regin, J. B., 3
Richer, Olmstead, 3
Roberts, Nancy, see Covington, Nancy Roberts
Sessions, Mrs., 2
Slade, William Sr., 3
 William Jr., 3
Smith, George A., 4, 6
 Thomas, 3
Smoot, A. O., 2
Snow, Eliza R., 2
 Erastus, 5
Spouce, John, 3
Thomas, Daniel, 1
 John, 3
West, Edward, 3
Whitehead, Dolph, 6
Young, Brigham, 4-6

HISTORY OF ROBERT DOCKERY COVINGTON

Born 20 August, 1815 in Rockingham, Richmond County, North Carolina. He crossed the plains in 1847 in Edward Hunters Company under Captain Daniel Thomas arriving in the Valley 25 September, 1847.

In the Sixteenth Century, William, John and Henry Covington came from England to the United States with Lord Baltimore. They settled first in Maryland and Virginia where large grants of land was given them by England's King. Family tradition states that William Covington was America's first Silver-Smith. The molds were deeded to his daughter who cared for her parents in their old age.

Prior to the Revolutionary War, John and William moved to Richmond County, North Carolina while Henry remained. As years passed, the Covingtons grew in number, most of them with large families. They pushed into new frontiers and we find they were capable in many fields of government, education, Religion, manufacturing and farming.

Robert Dockery was great, great grandson of William. He grew to manhood in Rockingham. Most of his time was spent gaining a good education college graduate and helping on his fathers big plantation where the principle crop was cotton and tobacco. Soon after he married Elizabeth Thomas of Molborough (Marlboro?) County, South Carolina. He with his Fathers family moved to Summerville, Noxbee County, Miss. where several of his Mothers people had moved in 1834. They soon established themselves on large plantations with plenty of Slave labor to make farming a very profitable occupation. Here three children were born, John Thomas (7 August, 1840) Emily Jane Farr (1 January, 1843) and Sarah Ann (2 February, 1845) who died in that year.

In 1843 Elder Benjamin Clapp, Samuel Gurley and Hullett, were preaching the Gospel in a town ten miles away. Daniel Thomas happened to hear this new strange religious Doctrine. It sounded good to him so he came home with a Book of Mormon which his relatives were anxious to read. His Brother after reading it said, "You had better be careful how you fool around these Mormons. They may be deceivers. The book is quite a history, a very interesting novel. But, I don't know about it all." A week or so passed. The people of Summerville, at least some of them, were anxious to hear the Gospel. After Elder Clapp had preached two weeks, Robert Covington asked for Baptism, (3 February, 1843). His wifes people all ask for membership in the Church. Robert's Father, Mother, Brothers and Sisters all turned against him. They felt that he had lost his reasoning. He was disinherited.

When talk of joining the Saints in Nauvoo was first mentioned, the slaves protested for they had deep love for their master. They all wanted to go too. In 1845, when he moved, one couple with their children did go. (I do not know if they came on to Utah or not. But, my brother living in Idaho by chance met a colored man who said that his Father came West with Robert D. Covington, and they later settled in Idaho.) Green Flake was the color(e) m(an's) name.

Two years with the saints when the move West began, His wife was expecting a baby and the ordeals the Saints had suffered had made inroads on her health. It must have been a trying journey for it seemed that the forces of the elements were pitted against them. The dust storms, hail storms, lack of good (p. 2) water, and wood to burn, with Indians camped on the opposite bank of the Platt River stampeding cattle crossing often to beg or trade for food that was so scarce. Sometimes they swarmed in their camp like bees often helping themselves to whatever was handy. Housewives would miss their camp and cooking equipment.

One day while men were fixing broken wagonsthey stopped near some Currant bushes. Robert D. sent his two children, John and Emily with buckets to gather what they could. They worked hard cleaning the currants as they picked. Just as they finished filling their buckets an Indian stepped from behind the brush and gave a war hoop. They dropped their bucket and fled toward camp. When they neared camp they looked back and saw the Indian with their Currants laughing at his huge joke.

1 August, 1847 at Scotts Bluff, Nebraska

The morning was quiet, heat was terrific. The imigrants had called a halt. Saints had not found wood to burn for eleven days and water was not fit to drink. Some of their animals had died by licking Alkali off the ground. They also had wagons to fix. Mrs. Sessions, the midwife, was called to take care of Elizabeth Covington. Mrs. Sessions had a buggy. She drove back to the second Hundred, a distance of five miles. She brought Sister Covington back to her camp and put her to bed with a new son, Robert Laborious Covington. While the saints were halted, A. O. Smoot called a meeting pleading with the saints to be more united, to trust in the Lord and to consider this a school of experience, training them to be leaders.

2 August: They traveled Twenty-two miles on a dry prairie finding food for their cattle in only one place. They traveled Fifteen miles on empty stomachs traveling long after dark.

4 August: Indians came into camp and spread blankets on the ground. We were advised to feed them but not trade with them. There was sickness and death among the Pioneers. Eliza R Snow was a great comfort to the sorrowing. On one occasion she remarked "Death makes occasional inroads among us. Nursing the sick, tending wagonswas a laborious service. The patient faithfullnesswith which it was born. To consign loved ones to these desolate graves was enough to try the hearts of the strongest."

5 August: They camped Eight or Nine miles from Fort Laramie where food was plentiful and water good. Here they camped five days to fix wagons, wash, mend and bake. Chokecherries and wild Currants were quite near this camp.

Seven deaths occurred on the journey. Captain Jedediah M. Grant lost a child. His wife died before they reached the valley, but she was taken to the valley to be buried.

7 August: Bears near the camp disturbed their sleep. Two Indian women were gathering berries when they saw a bear watching them. Carefully laying their basket down for the bear to eat, they retreated. This was witnessed by some of the pioneers in the company.

Traveling for a few days was slow and rough. There were hills to climb which broke several wagons. In September the pioneers crossed lots of sand and the wind blew hard. They saw fearful storms with dust, rain and snow.

4 September: The Pioneers going East to help the remaining saints West camped all night with them giving words of encouragement and telling them of their new home in the West and what a feast was prepared by the women of the company. The last miles were hard ones because of the cold and rugged Mountain country. (p. 3)

24 September: They arrived in the Valley. Robert's wife was frail. The hardships had all but taken her strength. She hoped to get stronger, but the cold winds of winter added a severe cold to her troubles and 7th of December she left a devoted family to carry on her good name. Robert had a trying time for a while with his motherless children. He lived in Cotton(wood) near Salt Lake City. Here he was an able School teacher and was known as Professor Covington.

He married Malinda Kelly next. She gave birth to a daughter named Mary Ellen the 28th of December, 1849, in Big Cotton Wood Utah. She lived a few years. Then he married Nancy Roberts, born 19th February, 1839, in Hyde Cheshire England. They were married in the Endowment house 28th December 1856. She had two children Phoebe Ann and Thomas. Then she died in 1864. With each child she was taken by team to Big Cotton Wood where medical aid, the best to be had was provided. It took two weeks to make the trip one way.

From Documentary History of the Church

"The Dixie Mission left Salt Lake City the 6th of April, 1857 and came to Parawan without any serious accidents. We remained three or four days to get grinding done. They to Cedar City were we met Pres. Height. It took six days from Cedar to Washington. President Height guided us on our trip, having to make roads over the roughest ground I ever saw. We arrived on the 6th of May. On the 7th we were called together to organize a Branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. We numbered about 160 men, women and children, 200 head of cattle, some sheep and pigs and chickens."

Men who were called were J. B. Regin, John Spouce, Richard Green, W. H. Crawford, John Thomas, J. D. McCollough, James Matthos, Gabriel Coley, Wm. Freams, William Slade Sr, Wm. Slade Jr., Robert Loyd, Joseph Hatfield, John Freeman, J. M. Couch, John Howley, Wm. Hawley, Jacob Clark, Stephen Duggins, Wm. Duggins, Thomas Smith, Olmstead Richer, Alexander Barron, Robert Covington, and Edward West. Bro. Height took charge. Bro.

Crawford took the minutes.. "Oh My Father" was sung. Bro. Haight offered Prayer. It was moved that Bro. Haight appoint a President. He appointed Robert Dockery Covington. It was Bro. Covington's right to choose his counselors. But he said that he preferred for the President to choose them. So, Bro. Harrison Peirce, 1st counselor and Johnathan R. Regean, 2nd counselor were chosen. Instructions were given on how to honor the Priesthood, how to treat the Indians and the brethren were exhorted to put down evil wherever it was found. Prayer was offered by Harrison Peirce. That evening a meeting was held and the charge given over to Bro. Covington.

22 August, 1857: George A. Smith and others visited Washington where the Dixie Mission was getting established. We arrived Tuesday, 18th and was most cordially welcomed by Bro. Covington and others who spared no pains to make our visit a pleasant one. Bro. Smith thought that no other settlement had a more promising start in the mountains, considering the lateness of the start. The corn planted by the Indians was fifteen feet high. Ours was not quite that high as it was not planted until the 15th of June. The cotton looked well, never had the old cotton grower seen so many balls on a single stock and such thrift.

6 January 1859: Robert Covington was in President Young's office when he with others went with President Young to administer to Fanny Murry, a sister of President Youngs. (p. 4)

14 April, 1859: Elder Amasa W. Lyman tarried with Bro. Covington. He found them busy planting wheat.

31 October, 1859: Bro. Covington in Salt Lake reports the cotton crop good. Sugar cane the best he had ever seen.

3 June, 1857 (sic) Amasa M. Lyman writes returning from California, he camped with Robert D. Covington who informed him that he thought 1,000 acres of good land could be cultivated. Good herd grounds with plenty of grass also plenty of wood and water.

1860: Robert D. Covington was Notary Public for Washington County.

16 April, 1860: Was chosen as a Judge of cotton and tobacco at State Fair.

1 April, 1861: A contract was let for a road to be built near Beaver Dam to Robert D. Covington, James D. McCullough, James Pierce and Walter E. Dodge.

Robert D. has cultivated cotton every year since he was Bishop and has preserved specimens from each year's crop. Each year the staple has improved and seems to be climated, and he feels encouraged to continue. Peach stones were planted and peaches took their start from them.

1858: (sic) Grape cuttings were imported from California. The chinese Sugar cane was planted. Grain was taken from fifty to ninety miles to be ground. To get blacksmithing done, they also traveled that far. Many

southern men left after the first year declaring cotton could not be grown there. Those who remained are acquiring sheep, cattle and goats.

27 August, 1862: Robert D. was chosen County Representative of the Deseret Agriculture and Manufacturing Society. Within six weeks he was to hold a County Fair, give awards and choose helpers.

25 September 1862: President Brigham Young returning to Salt Lake relates that they were given peaches and grapes to feast on in Washington. Also viewed with pleasure the fine crops of Bishop Covington's who understands his business and puts his whole heart into his work.

22 March, 1863: Robert D. at St. George Conference took his seat with the Stake High Counsel.

5 November, 1865: Bishop Covington was one of the speakers. He reported Washington Ward in good condition.

7 May, 1865: At conference in St. George, Robert D. was sustained Presiding High Priest over his ward.

6 November, 1864 (sic) A conference was held with Apostle Erastus Snow Presiding. A convention of experienced men of Washington and Kane counties to consider self-protection. To establish uniform prices in exchange for grain, etc. Cotton-\$1.25 lb., Molasses \$4.00 a gal. Tobacco \$3.00 lb., and Preserves \$6.00 gal. R. D. Covington was one of the men chosen.

2 September, 1867: Robert D. Covington wrote the following letter:

Elder George Albert Smith

Washington Ward,
St. George Stake
September 2, 1867

Dear Brother,

Knowing you are interested in the property and general welfare of our Southern Utah Dixie, I thought it would not be amiss to send you a few particulars and items of interest with regards to the settlement. We have had the warmest (p. 5) summer ever experienced in this country. It has had its effects on many of us in the shape of languidness. It has been very oppressive. But aside from this the general health of the people has been very good. While sickness and death are making such inroads on human families in different parts of the country, we feel like offering our prayers of gratitude to the Almighty for the blessings of health that we enjoy, notwithstanding the difficulties we have had this season in obtaining sufficient water for irrigation. Our Cane and corn look remarkably well, I believe the best that I have seen in Washington fields.

The cotton crop will be late because of the lateness of the season in getting water onto the land. Our fruit crop is prolific. The Indians are quiet and peaceful. Quiet prevails at home in our settlement. Taking all into consideration, we are pretty well satisfied with our Dixie home.

I remain your Brother in the Gospel of peace,

Robert Dockery Covington.

3 November, 1867: R. D. Covington's Washington Choir furnished the music.

5 January, 1867: Bishops from different settlements started on a missionary tour. R. D. Covington was among the number. They visited and held meetings with all the people of the Upper Virgin Valley, then to the Muddy and Beaver Dam settlements. They reached St. Thomas on the 19th having crossed the Virgin River 38 and the Muddy 1. The people of the Muddy had raised that year 6,500 Bushels of wheat, 10,000 bails of cotton. On the 24th of January they returned to St. George. The early part of February Iron county with Pinto and Pine Valley were also visited. The products of the past five years were astounding. When they saw how much the people had accomplished. The choicest products of the earth were there.

24 February, 1867: The Western Union Telegraph Office came to Washington. Robert D was the man responsible for the line also the first to operate the Telegraph. Robert D. did not place it until he heard from President Young. It was put in Dolph Whiteheads home. Moroni, Sanpete County, was as far south as the line extended at that time.

Col. D. D. McArthur:

Bro. Mendez Cooper and Wm. Prince have just come in from Harrisburg and they report that an Indian had told him that 40 or 50 Navajos were in the vicinity of grape Vine Springs and had killed three head of cattle, and were traveling in the direction of Harrisburg fields. All are afoot. The friendly Indians are very much excited. The people of Harrisburg are on guard. Indians say they want Horses. We wish to know immediately what to do. We await your orders.

Yours hastily,

Robert D. Covington

19 June, 1868: Elder George A. Smith wrote in the Melinnial (sic) Star, "On horseback from Montana to Arizona. At Washington 19th of June, we were kindly received by Bishop Covington." He writes, "It was amusing to see my sole companion, Dr. Boyd a batchelor from Louisiana, pronouncing the quality of the cotton as we went through the mills and looking around at the buxom girls and mechanically nodding a yes, yes to the explanations of the sedate Bishop Covington as he explained the difference of spinning, weaving, twisting, etc. Bishop Covington's daughter was one of the Handsome girls. Phoebe Ann Covington. (p. 6)

Southern Mission Conference

20 November, 1868: Bishop Robert D. Covington was a speaker. He was still President of High Priest Quorum. He spoke of some of his 25 years exper-

ience. Referred to the Lamanites, asked the people to give them work then pay them food and clothing to incourage them to be industrious.

18 April, 1870: Bishop Covington just home from the Southern States Mission. He started for the East 18th of last November. Labored in Mississippi and brought two families comprising thirteen persons as part of the fruits of his labors. This Bishop's account of conditions is far from good. He says a feeling of unrest, insecurity to life and property is prevalent, greatly increased by suspension of military and civil rule. Instead, Klu Klux Klan is numerous and powerful and no mans life is considered safe. Many are moving to Texas and California. He met no opposition from the ministers. A few scattered saints were left in charge of S. P. Holley. ---
(End of copy)

Robert Gardner wrote in his diary: "We found Robert D. Covington, our old neighbor and others who had been sent on that mission some years before. The appearance of these brothern, their wives and children was discouraging. Nearly all had Malaria. They had worked hard and worn out their store clothes and had replaced them with the cotton they had raised on their own lot or farms. The women had corded, spun, and woven by hand and colored with weeds this cotton. The mens shirts, women and childrens dresses and sunbonnets were all made of the same piece of material. Their clothes and faces were all of the same color, being blue with chills. This tried me more than anything I had seen in all my Mormon experience, thinking if I remained my family would soon look the same. I wanted to go back to Salt Lake and spare them this. Bro. Covington said, "Let's pray about it." We knelt in prayer. It was the Lords will we stay. So I said, "We will trust in God and go ahead."

Robert D. cut large stones from a nearby mountain and built a grand home for those pioneer days. The walls were three feet thick and built Colonial style. There were two big fireplaces on each of the three floors. The upper floor was used for years as a dance floor for the young people. Many people speak of the Southern hospitality enjoyed in his home. He had no tolerance for sin. He had the name of doing a good job of keeping his Ward living the Gospel. He died at a ripe old age, in Washington, Washington Co. Ut.

Robert D. Covington led saints to Dixie in 1857 - They arrived 5 May 1857. Adair springs was the sight chosen. First man from this district to go to Legestator