



Jim Mickel, Moen Kofford, Fred Mickel

JIM MICKEL STORY

(told by Claus Clawson)

(This is the most accurate account of the story known)

During the latter part of August or early part of Sept of 1894, Moen Kofford was arrested by Sheriff Burns and tried on charges of rustling sheep. He was cleared of the charges, however, and the following conversation is said to have taken place as they left the courthouse: Sheriff Burns said, "You got away this time, but I'll get you yet." Moen replied, "If you come after me again, one of us will die."

About two weeks later, Moroni Co-op suspected Moen Kofford of having rustled sheep from them. Sheriff Burns of Sanpete, Will Brewer, (an expert on identification of earmarks), Jack Bruno, representing Moroni Co-op, another fellow, Hebe _____, were sent to go thru Moen's herd to look for the missing sheep. They arrived at the sheep camp, in Reeder Canyon, near Dry Basin, on Sept. 25, 1894. They stayed there that night and searched the herd the following day. On that same day, Claus Clawson, and Warren Allred, both from Spring City, had been rounding up their horse herd at the mouth of Black Canyon in Joe's Valley. They stopped at Moen and Jim's camp, on reeder Ridge. They met Moen and Jim on the way to camp, where they passed the time of day, then Claus and Warren went on to camp to fix supper. That afternoon, the sheriff and company arrived at the camp, and also Ab Kofford, Moen's older brother was there. The sheriff told Moen that he had come to go through the herd. This was agreeable and was to be done the following day. Ab Kofford asked Sheriff Burns for a warrant to arrest Moen. Burns said that he had taken him before without a warrant and would do it again. Jim Mickel had told sheriff Burns that he had no right to search the herd without a warrant. Said Burns: "I've done it before, and I'll do it again." He was heard to say to Moen "If I weren't sheriff I'd box your ears." To which Moen replied: "Take off your badge and we'll have a boxing match to provide a little sport for the boys." The treats were not carried out.

The next day they went thru a small bunch of sheep at a time, cutting out the sheep suspected of having been stolen. Just before they finished their work, Moen left the corral went to camp, and came

back with a rifle, which he left leaning against a long on the east side of the corral. About this time Ab, suspecting trouble, told Warren and Claus to leave and go gather up their horses. This was about 2 p.m. They returned about 3 p.m., and saw Jim pacing back and forth in front of camp carrying a rifle. One hand was bandaged with a flour sack and tied to his neck. He had been shot thru the wrist, and also had been slightly wounded in the stomach. They asked what had happened and where was the sheriff. Jim merely said, "He lays Low.", and asked for a good horse. Claus roped a little gray and saddled him. Ab came later on in the afternoon. Moen and Jim immediately left for Orangeville, via Straight Canyon. They arrived that night. Jim was taken to Sam Cox's store, where the bullet in the stomach was removed and his wound were dressed. The bullet had lodged between the skin and stomach lining and made an incision about 2 inches long. They left by wagon for Paradise, Utah, about 7 miles from Orangeville, where they remained for two weeks while Jim recuperated.

The details of the actual shooting are somewhat uncertain. It is believed to have happened this way: After going thru the herd, 135 head of stolen sheep had been separated, claimed to belong to the Moroni Co-op. Sheriff Burns then told Moen: "Consider yourself under arrest." Moen said: "Where's your warrant", Burns reaching for his gun replied, "Here's all the warrant I need." Moen also drew his gun, and in the moments that followed, Jim received two wounds, and the Sheriff was shot 3 times and killed. It is not know who did the actual shooting. At the first shot, the 3 men with Sheriff Burns, left their horses tied, and started afoot for town. After the shooting Moen came from the corral with a 6-gun in each hand. A posse returned that night, and with lanterns began the trip home with the body of Sheriff Burns laid across Lawrence Larsen's horse, with L. Larsen riding behind the saddle. Moen took Sheriff Burn's horse, saddle, and .44 revolver, to Orangeville. The horse was left in Orangeville and never claimed. The 135 head of sheep were never gathered up by the Co-op. One of the three men with Sheriff Burns left his horse saddled at camp for two days, and paid ten dollars to have the horse returned. A posse was organized by a man name Swasey to find Moen and Jim and capture them. The posse tried to hire Ab Kofford who knew the desert country well to lead them to the two fugitives. Naturally he refused. The posse then hired a band of Indians, gave them food and supplies, which the Indians enjoyed to the fullest, then returned with the answer, :No catch em."

At one time during the hunt, the posse saw Moen afoot helping Jim, but only for a moment. Moen soon had Jim out of sight fired one rifle shot at a rock near the posse to scare them. He could have easily shot into the group, had he chosen, but merely desired to scare them. No one was hurt but the entire posse immediately retreated, leaving Swasey alone. Swasey yelled, "I'm to big a target to sit here and be shot at by Moen Kofford, and he followed the posse.

Peter Mickel, Jim's brother, came home, got his mother and in a wagon took her to his Uncle Nad Olsen's, where they stayed 3 weeks with Jim. They then loaded up a wagon, and Moen and Jim headed for Nevada, probably Cherry Creek. They drove the wagon thru Mt. Pleasant, on west to Nephi, and from there to Nevada.

Occasionally Jim returned home, always coming from the west and arriving at night, dressed as a woman. He would knock gently on the window, his mother would open the door and blow out the candle, so Jim could come in. On one occasion, Jim remained home for 5 days, hiding in the cellar when someone came. The log house was located behind the house which presently belongs to Emery Tate.

Delilah Christophersen helped wash Jim's clothes during his stay.

Jim was broad shouldered, large of stature, and in spite of the times and rough company he kept, he never drank or smoked. He was 17 years old at the time of the shooting, Sept. 26, 1894, and was trying to get enough money to get an education. Moen Kofford owed Jim money and had stolen the 135 head of sheep from the Moroni Co-op in order to pay his debt.

After the shooting, Clause and Warren tried to round up their horses and put them in a part of the corral, but after much chasing and fruitless effort, the horses would not go in and men quit trying. Burn's body laid where it fell from 2pm until 10pm that night, when it was moved. Claus remembers

that it was cold and that there was some snow on the ground. He remembers that on the spot where Burns lay and bled, not so much as a blade of grass grew for three years.

Later on one occasion, Fred Mickel, said he was going to sell some sheep and go see Jim. He was gone from Oct. to Feb. When he returned, Claus asked him if everything was all right, and where he had been. He replied: 'I've had a fine trip, and have been in 27 states.

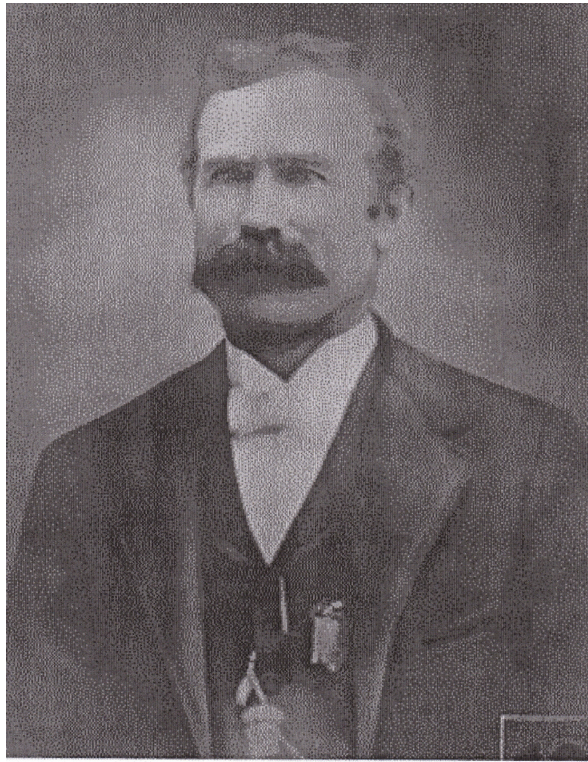
Nothing further is known about Jim Mickel, his whereabouts, or whether he is alive or dead.



Jim Mickel

Story as told to Bishop Mickel by Claus Clawson in the home of Lile Christofferson on the night of Aug 9, 1964. Present were three people: Claus Clawson and wife Kate, Lile Christofferson, also her son Austin, Dortha Mickel, and Bishop Mickel. Claus was at this time 88 years old.

After the shooting, Sheriff Burn's wife is reported to have said, "I told him several time to leave those boys alone, and not to go after them, especially without a warrant; he got what he deserves, and I hope they never catch the boys.



James C. Burns First Sheriff Sanpete County
Killed in a gun fight with sheep rustlers
on Reeder Ridge Sept. 26th 1894

One occasion Claus was camped at the Willow Bunch near the mouth of Black Canyon in Joe's Valley, and gave directions for reaching the Kofford Ranch to Joe Walker, a member of the Robbers Roost gang. Claus especially remembers that the man was dressed in an expensive black suit, very shiny black boots, and rode a large black horse.

On one other occasion, he was camped somewhere on the Sinbad desert. A typhoid quarantine had been placed on all nearby towns, and it was difficult to deliver or receive mail. A man approached, leading a pack horse, said he was going to Green River. Claus asked if he would take a letter, and then invited him to stop at camp for a meal. Claus especially remembered the manner in which this man was constantly looking around, as if someone were after him. When he got off his horse, he took his gun out of his scabbard and would not enter the tent, but sat at the door, where he could see in all directions. Claus said he would not take a bit of food without first looking all around. He declined an invitation to sleep there that night, said he new of a water hole a little farther on where he would spend the night, and go on to Green River the next day. He never gave his name, but Claus figured he was one of Butch Cassidy's bunch.

JIM MICKEL STORY
(as told by Claus Clawson August 1956)
(by Dixie Sperry)

Warren Allred and I were on Reeder Ridge on September 25, 1893, gathering horses when we decided to ride over to the Mickel Brothers camp. Sheriff Burns and three other men came there looking for Jim Mickel and Mone Kofford. Mone was the main one they were after, he was supposed to have stolen some sheep.

That night Pete and Fred Mickel came to camp. We all stayed there over night, including the Sheriff and his men. The next morning they started to the corral with the sheep. They asked Warren and I to go with them and help corral the sheep.

On the way to the corral Mone and Sheriff Burns got to quarreling. Sheriff Burns said to Mone, "If I wasn't a sheriff I would slap your ears."

Kofford told the sheriff if he wanted to take off his guns he would take off his and they'd put on a little boxing match for the boys that morning. Sheriff Burn's took Kofford at his word and didn't say any more.

Kofford's brother Abbe asked sheriff Burns if he had a warrant for Mone's arrest. Burns said, "No, I don't need one!"

We corralled half of the sheep and left the other half outside. Then they took the supposed stolen sheep out of the flock. After they had done this they put the rest of the sheep in the corral and picked out the stolen sheep out of the flock. After they had done this they put the rest of the sheep in the corral and picked out the stolen sheep from these. After they had finished separating the sheep, Burns said to Kofford, "We have got the sheep now consider yourself under arrest".

Kofford asked him, "Where's your warrant." Burns pulled his gun out but he didn't get time to shoot Kofford got him first. The shot knocked him down but it didn't kill him so Jim Mickel finished him off. After Burns was shot the man that claimed the sheep went up to Kofford and said, "here, take this and defend yourself," and handed Kofford a gun. Kofford's brother Abbe stepped in front of him and said, "You've caused enough sorrow now."

Burns dead body was left in the corral until about 10:00 pm that night. Laurence Allred came most of the way up with a rig then he came the rest of the way on horseback. He carried Burns in front of him to the rig and then brought him to town. (Spring City, Utah).

During the shooting Jim Mickel was shot in the stomach and through the left wrist. When the shooting started one of the men with Sheriff Burns left afoot. They left their horses tied to the corral.

When it was all over Abbe Kofford told Warren and I the best thing we could do was to just leave and if anyone ask us anything about the shooting we didn't know anything about it This was about 1:00pm

We left there went out gathering up our horses and got back about 5:00pm to the Mickel camp. When we got back we saw Jim Mickel

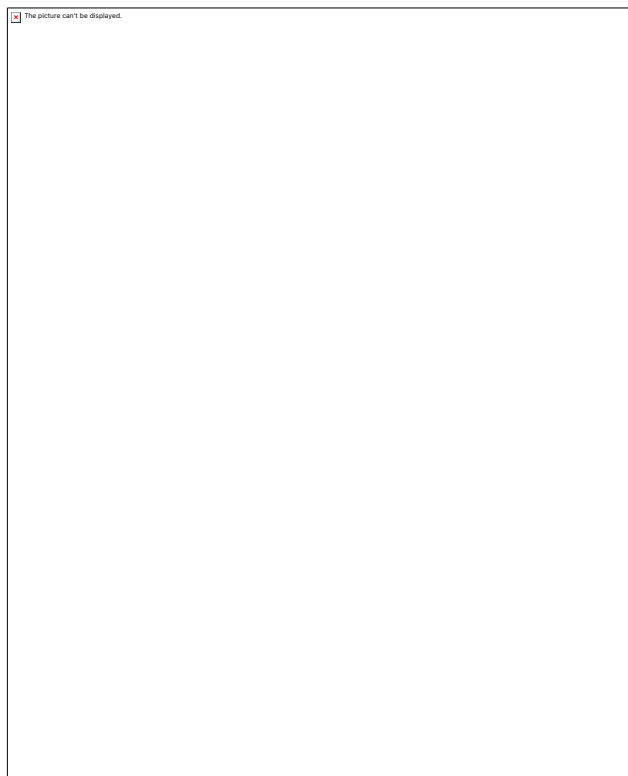
March 1982

The above events were told to me in approximately August of 1956, by uncle Claus Clawson. Before completing the transcription the notes were lost and I was unable to ever complete the story as told by Uncle Claus. Foolishly, I failed to write down my recollection of the events as told at the time, and now so many years have passed I could not be sure of what Uncle Claus related to me that day.

As I best recall , Uncle Claus either seen Jim Mickel being put into a wagon by some Indians or he was going in the wagon to an Indian camp where he would be taken care of until his wounds healed.

To this date and to my knowledge, there does not seem to be an accurate account of what happened to Jim Mickel and Mone Kofford after they left the Mickel camp. There have been some stories written by various western writers but where they found their information, and how accurate it is, is unknown.

Dixie Mickel Sperry



JIM MICKEL STORY
(by Rulon Dahl)

This is the story of the shooting of the sheriff of Sanpete county, Jim Burns. It was told to me by Fred Mickel, the brother of Jim Mickel who was involved in the shooting.

The incident took place on Sept 26, 1893 and it was many years later when I was herding sheep with Fred that I asked him what exactly had happened that day Sheriff Burns got killed. The following is the way as nearly the way I can remember it. Fred told me, "I'll tell you, Rulon, exactly how it happened and I am the only living man that knows unless it's Jim Mickel or Moen Kofford- if they are still alive." He said, "Jim, my brother, was herding sheep for me and was camped at the head of Dry Basin on Reeder Ridge. Moen Kofford and his brother, Ab, owned another herd and they were camped down in the bottom of Reeder Canyon. I'd been to town for supplies and came back to camp that day. It's funny, I always carried a .45 pistol either strapped on me or on my saddle, but for some reason I had forgotten it and left it home. I didn't miss it until I was part way to camp and didn't go back after it.

When I got to camp it was about night and when I got there I saw Jim Burns, the sheriff of Sanpete County, and Heeb Yipson, better known as Heeb Anderson. Scott Bruno and Joe Brewer were also there at camp. I asked my brother Jim, when I rode up, what the sheriff was doing there and the sheriff spoke up and said that he was there to arrest my brother Jim and Moen and was going to take them to court." I said, "What for?" The sheriff replied, "for stealing sheep- there are some freshly marked sheep in your herd and they belong to the Moroni Co-op herd. Joe Brewer, who was with the sheriff, was an expert on marks and brands in a wide area of the country. The sheriff had brought him to help identify the sheep. They had a bunch of ears that they claimed to have found which would match the ones supposedly cut off our sheep. They had them tied up in a red handkerchief.

I turned to my brother Jim and said, "is there some freshly marked sheep in this herd?" He said, "yes, it's those that Moen turned over to me on the horse trade we made." I said, "oh, that's all right!" I then turned to the sheriff and asked him if he had warrant of arrest with him. The sheriff had a .45 six-shooter on one side and a .38 caliber on the other strapped on him. He patted the .45 and said, that was all the warrant he needed to take the boys. I then told him, "you've taken us before without a warrant and I told you we would never go with you again unless you brought a warrant of arrest, and we won't go." The sheriff laughed and said, "I don't need one, this .45 is all I need to take a couple of beardless kids!" That made us mad – my brother Jim was 17 years old, Fred Mickel was 21 and Moen was 19 years old. Fred weighed in the neighborhood of 145 pound, Jim was about the same size. Moen was a larger man, tall and raw boned, had a sandy complexion and was very wiry. Jim was also sandy complected and wiry and Fred was a little darker. I never knew Jim Burns personally, but I did know his boy and they say he was about the same size and looked just like him. Jim Burn's boy was also a sheriff in later years. He weighed about 130 pounds, short and small built. Heeb Anderson was a larger man, probably 175-180 pounds and dark in complexion. Joe Brewer was a man of about 155 pounds and was also dark complected. I asked the sheriff and his men to stay that night, so they unsaddled and hobbled their horses. We gave them supper and a bed, but before going to sleep, we had a book of the laws of Utah and we read it to the sheriff. It stated that when a sheriff went after a man he had to have a warrant for his arrest with him. That was the law! The sheriff just laughed and put his hand on his .45 and said. "This is all the law I need to take them." (Jim Mickel and Moen Kofford).

The next morning we gave them breakfast and they got their horses and we took the herd to the corral up at the head of Hogan Basin, which was about a mile away. On the way up to the corral I argued and quarreled with the sheriff and at one point I told him, "And damn you, you lied about me in court last time." He said, "If you're not careful, I'll put you under arrest right now." Just then Moen rode up and heard me say this and said to the sheriff, "you're a damn liar". That was the first time we had seen him, we didn't know he was there. The sheriff then turned to Moen, "young man, I'll take you off your horse and slap your ears!" Moen replied, "If you want to, I'll get off and you can get all the slapping you want!" At this point I was glad Moen was there as it gave me a chance to break away and

go around the other side of the herd to my brother Jim and I asked him how many bullets we had for the big gun which was a .45 – 70 caliber. I told Jim, “I can see this can't be settled today without our guns”. Jim told me he only had a few shells for the big gun but he had plenty of shells for the .44 rifle we had in camp. I then told him to run back to camp and get the .44 and all the bullets he could as we were going to need them this day.” Jim left on the run back to camp and when he caught up with us he had the .44 rifle. I told him to give it to me as I was the oldest and it was my herd. Jim told me, “No, I've got it and I'll keep it!” By this time we had reached the corral with the sheep. The corral wasn't large enough to hold all the sheep – there were better than 2,000 in the band so we had to split them into two bunches. When we got one bunch in the corral, it was full, and I told them to leave the rest out and we'd hold them until we got through with the first bunch. The sheriff hollered at his men and said, “Shove them in!” That made me mad as they were my sheep, and we put the bars up and held the rest out of the corral.

The sheriff and his men then went into the corral and Moen and my brother Jim began to pick out the sheep that were freshly ear marked. In a few minutes the herd which we left outside started to stray away and I went out to go around them to hold them around the corral until they got through with the first bunch. After they had picked some out and all the time they were picking them out, Moen followed the sheriff around cussing him and finally he told the sheriff, “You can't take any more out, you've taken enough!”

The sheriff's men all went over the fence and left the corral. Then Scott Bruno came around the fence to where I was holding the sheep and just then the shooting started! We heard several shots fired, all in a few seconds and knew someone was down, but didn't know who. Scott Bruno wanted me to go see who had got killed but I told him, “No – if I go in the corral and Jim Burns is alive, he'll kill me and if you go and Moen is alive, he'll kill you- we'd better stay here a few minutes until we can tell who is down – somebody's down!!”

Now, I didn't see the actual shooting, but Moen and my brother Jim both told me exactly how it happened and this is the way they told it. Moen told the sheriff, “You can't pull any more sheep out, you've got enough.” The sheriff said, “Young man, I'll put you under arrest right now, and reached for his gun and Moen reached for his.” They both drew their guns at the same time and fired at the same time. The sheriff's bullet hit Moen's cylinder on his gun and glanced and went through my brother Jim's wrist and into his side. Moen then emptied his .45 right up the middle of the sheriff's stomach. The sheriff fell forward on his face. Moen stepped straddle of him, rolled him over, unbuckled his .45 and said, “I might need this,” and buckled it on himself. Fred said at this point in his story, “you see, he was fair – he left him with one gun anyway”.

Scott Bruno and I heard a horse coming on the run around the pins and Moen was on Jim Burns' horse (a long-legged horse) and had Jim Mickel on behind him. When he seen Scott Bruno he stopped and pulled his six-shooter, dropped it at his feet, and said to Scott, “You're the dirty son-of-a-bitch that is the cause of all this. “Pick up that gun and defend yourself.” Scott threw his hands in the air and just stood there. Moen looked at him for about a minute, got off his horse, picked up the gun and slapped Scott Bruno's ears, kicked his rear and got on his horse and left to go down to camp. Scott had a pair of what we used to call stove-pipe-chaps-leather chaps. I turned Scott around and unbuckled them (they used to buckle in the back and pushed him over- he fell easy as he was scared. I took hold of the bottom of the chaps and shook him out of them, kicked him, and told him to get down the canyon, and he took off on a dead run. They all left their horses tied to the corral.

Moen went down to camp where he and Jim wrapped a flour sack around Jim's wrist as it was bleeding. They got a gentle mare from Clause Clawson and Warren Allred for Jim to ride and the rode to Orangeville, Utah, to a doctor. The doctor took the slug out of Jim Mickel and held it up and said, “Here's the slug, who fired it?” Moen Kofford then said, Jim Burns fired it and he's dead!” They then went out to George Kofford's place known as Paradise Ranch.

The sheriff's body lay in the corral until it got daylight, then they went and got him and took

him to town. Later when the posse came after Jim and Moen they didn't know the trail off of Reeder into Joe's Valley and they asked Warren Allred and Clause Clawson, who were friends of Jim and Moen, to show them the trail off Reeder Ridge, but they refused. Later, after they held up for some time, two fellows by the name of Nad Olson and Sam Caldwell put them in a covered wagon and took them out into western Utah to Deseret, where they tamed some horses and left the country. They split up and before they left they agreed to meet at a certain place in Texas at a set date. I never did find out exactly when or where it was to be but think it was supposed to be about three years later. Jim got there, but Moen never came. Why we never knew, but they were never apprehended.

While they were hiding out in McCardy Canyon, Sid Swasey lead a posse out to find them. He knew where they went and when they rode up on top of the ridge, they looked down into the canyon and they could see Moen. Sid said, "There's you men, I'm going back. I've showed you where they are, now I'm leaving." As he turned to go he looked back and the posse was right behind him. The head man from back East said, "An army couldn't dig them out of those rocks."

One point of interest was that many years later, in the corral where Sheriff Jim Burns was shot and killed, wild oats grew up all over in the corral except the one spot where Jim Burns fell when he was shot. It would not grow there and someone wrote or carved in a quaking aspen, "Here was fought the battle of Brewer's Run." The old bunk where they slept was made out of quaking aspen trees and can still be seen. I saw it a few years ago.

MOEN KOFFORD AND JIM MICKEL STORY
(Elaine Bolster)

(from Koffords, Quay Hansen)

Moen Kofford's disappearance and the ever increasing lies promoted by his enemies were extremely distressing to Moen's mother, brothers, and sisters and their children. His patriarchal blessing supports the family story of his innocence. I feel this whole story should be made available to all of Moen's relatives for their knowledge, comfort, and as a defense against the further spreading of untruth or exploitation of our uncle.

As I have asked before with the other histories I have sent some of you, please xerox this for your brothers and sisters and children and make it available for copying by nieces, nephews, grandchildren and other relatives as they may show interest and wish it.

If any of you know of additional incidents of Moen's early life, will you please let me know of them. I see no need for repeating the lies and misconceptions that have been circulated about him since the family lost track of him.

Recently I have been able to get a copy of the patriarchal blessing given my great uncle, Nels Molen Kofford, in 1879 when he was seven years old. Much maligning gossip has been said about Moen. This blessing refutes such stories and supports his character and the version of his life the family has always claimed. I would like to explain this as much as I can at present by statements from the blessing, the story as I understand it from family members, and my own commentary and conjectures. (Elaine Bolster)

In the mid 1950's, Leolette Christensen, my father's cousin, told me she had been clerking in a Spring City store the day Fred Mickle brought the sheriff's body into town. This was the first I had ever heard of a Sanpete Sheriff being shot or of Moen Kofford being accused of the shooting. In the late 1960's my three aunts, Mary, Eva and Venice, daughters of Moen Kofford's oldest brother Charles, told me more of it. In 1979 and 1980, I wrote up what I knew of the story and checked it with Venice, the youngest and my last surviving aunt, and with Edith Mickle Schofield, daughter of Charles Kofford's daughter Hannah. Hannah had married Fred Mickle and had lived all her childhood and married life in Spring City. These persons would have heard the story from Fred and Pete Mickle who were on the hill when the shooting occurred. What Fred and Pete Mickle did not personally witness was told them by Moen and Jim Mickle.

The date of the shooting is stated in the book "History of Sanpete and Emery Counties" by W.H. Lever. It is on pg 72

Patriarchal blessing:

Recorded Nov 9, 1879. Spring City, Sanpete Co., Utah Territory

A patriarchal blessing from under the hands of James M. Works, patriarch, upon the head on Nels Moron Kofford: son of Paul Earnest and Fanny Kofford. Born in Spring City, Sanpete Co., Utah Territory, March 6-1872.

Nels Molen Kofford was always called "Moen" as far as I can ascertain. Spring City Ward records are sketchy until about 1881 and Moen's birth and blessing are not recorded there. In the Ward record of members he is listed as #683 Nels Molen Kofford, son of Paul Kofford and Fanny Myrick, Born 6 March 1872.

Early Ward clerks were notorious for writing names as they first heard them, frequently mis

spelling those with which they were not familiar. The scribe for this blessing had a similar difficulty.

Blessing:

Nels Moron, I lay my hands upon your head at this time to pronounce a father's blessing upon you that shall be a comfort unto you for the Lord hath his eye upon you for your good.

Comment: Moen was to need this reassurance of the Lord's watchfulness and of his comfort more than most persons do.

Blessing:

and it is said suffer little children to come unto me and forbid the not for of such is the kingdom of God: And you shall be baptized and become a member of the Church and kingdom of God;

Comment:

Spring city Ward record of members gives Nels Molen Kofford's baptism date as 1880. The ordinance was performed by J. Frantzen

Blessing:

and you are already a natural born citizen of the church and kingdom of heaven

Comment;

Moen's parents were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints, so when Moen was born he was considered a child member. He had not been born in the covenant as Paul and Fanny were sealed St. George temple the 12th December 1879.

Blessing;

and you have claim upon the Almighty for protection from evil influence and from evil designing men.

Comment;

Moen grew up to be a good man, honest, upright, straight forward, and sober. He was the kindest and most considerate of my mother's uncles. He had an amazing number of friends. These qualities may have made some men of less understanding feel inferior and perhaps jealous. They may have appeared as weaknesses and vulnerable areas to bullies or conniving persons (evil designing men) who look for ways to manipulate others without regard to what may happen to their victims.

As my mother Marilla Kofford, was recovering from diphtheria at age seven, Moen brought her a small wagon full of candy. She could be pulled around in the wagon until she regained her strength and ability to walk again. Then she could use the wagon as a toy.

Mothers sister, Hannah K Mickle, spoke of Moen as her “adored uncle”, and as “the grandest man that ever lived.” She frequently recalled the time he brought a doll to her school room and left it on her desk so she would find it when she came in.

Blessing:

and you shall receive the priesthood in due time of the Lord.

Comment;

As yet I have been unable to determine what priesthood Moen held nor when he was ordained to it. At age twenty two, I would expect he would have been ordained as a priest in the Aaronic

priesthood as a minimum, provided the family's enemies had not connived to deny this to any of the Kofford family. In some other blessings I have read, "due time of the Lord" must be after this life.

Blessing:

and be endowed with power from on high to go forth and bind up the law and seal up the testimony with regard to this generation.

Comment:

I do not understand what this means, but I feel it is work to be accomplished in the hereafter.

Blessing;

Though you may be surrounded by your enemies and be cast into prison and even have the sentence of death passed upon you

Comment;

In the summer of 1894, Moen age 22; and the three Mickle boys, Pete, the oldest; Fred, age 20; and Jim age 19; were herding sheep on the hills east of Spring City. Several other herds were in the area. Five sheep from another herd were found in Moen and the Mickle herd.

The hills around Spring City were not fenced. Sheep could roam and graze where they chose. If their shepherds failed to keep adequate watch over them, some of the sheep could stray and get lost or even be killed. (note: Many scriptures refer to sheep's need for shepherd's.) If other shepherds found lost sheep and cared for them, they could be identified by the brands painted on them after shearing in the spring. They could be returned at any time the owner asked for them, or could be separated out after all were rounded up in the fall and returned to their lower privately fenced pastures. While this is theoretically possible, there are many many stories of quarrels over the ownership of cattle and other range animals. "Evil designing men" sometimes used the tendency to quarrel about ownership for their own purposes. They could drive a few of their own sheep into another herd and before the other shepherders knew they were there, would accuse their rival shepherds of stealing the sheep and so cause them trouble.

Why would "evil designing men" try to bring trouble Moen, Jim, and/or the other two sickles?

Many shepherders frequently drink a great deal of hard liquor. The presence of non-drinkers among them, no matter how friendly, amicable, or quiet they were, could be an affront to the drinkers. Without such persons saying even one word, the drinkers would be reminded of admonitions to sobriety. If they were born into Latter Day Saint families, they might recall scriptures prohibiting drinking of strong drink and the lessons they had had about it. In effect, the non-drinkers would be a voice of conscience the drinkers did not want to hear and the drinkers might make the others the objects of their hostility. If they had become so drunk they had neglected and lost their sheep, it could have been doubly embarrassing to admit this to sober people who had found and cared for them.

Moen and Jim did not drink.

A second possibility as to why they were plotted against, is the Moen and Jim were each seriously courting girls. Their families expected this to result in happy marriages. Maybe one of the other shepherders wanted one of the girls for himself, and by discrediting his rival he felt he would have a better chance to get her. Or perhaps some one held a long time personal grudge, or simply was jealous, or was a family enemy due to Moen's brother Charles' activities in fighting polygamy.

Story:

On the afternoon of September 25th, sheriff James Burns of Mt Pleasant, Sanpete County, came to the

sheep camp to tell the boys they were accused of stealing sheep. The older Mickle boys, Pete and Fred, talked with the sheriff and thought they had settled the problem. They invited the sheriff and his deputy to supper and to stay the night in the camp. After breakfast the following morning, Pet and Fred went to the other side of the herd. Moen and Jim remained on the camp side with the sheriff and deputy.

A controversy must have broken out. We do not know what started it again. Aunt Venice said some of the family members had expressed to her that James Burns was an arrogant man inclined to overstep his authority. To me that sounded like he was a bully type—he would look for ways to push people around unjustifiably as much as he could get away with. With the four boys separated, maybe he saw Moen and Jim as more susceptible to his tyranny. We do not know the identity of the sheriff's deputy. Was it a permanent position or a relative or friend drafted temporarily for the occasion? Could it have been the accusing shepherd? An enemy of the Kofford family? Or someone with a personal grudge against Moen or the Mickles? Did he needle or goad the others into a quarrel.

Sheriff Burns arrogantly told Moen and Jim he was going to arrest them. Moen understood that unless the sheriff had a warrant, they could not be arrested if they were doing nothing wrong. He asked “Do you have a warrant for us?” Burns replied “I don't need a warrant to take in a couple of bare faced boys.” He drew his pistol, pointed it straight at Moen and fired.

Blessing:

the angel of God shall be there with power to deliver you.

Story:

Moen had his gun out. The Sheriff's bullet hit the trigger causing it to discharge. Both bullets ricocheted. The sheriff's returned to him and killed him. The bullet from Moen's gun hit Jim Mickle's abdomen, grazing it or causing a flesh wound. It was not fatal.

Blessing:

and scatter your enemies like chaff before the wind

Story:

The sheriff's deputy did nothing for him but left as fast as he could. Fred Mickle took the body down to Spring City. The deputy rode there before him to tell everyone Moen Kofford had killed the sheriff. This lie was put in the history books and has been repeated and enlarged upon by the enemies of Moen and the Kofford family for more than half a century.

The families of Moen's siblings rarely spoke of the incident. It was entirely too painful to recall. This left the younger generations of the Kofford families without truth as a defense against the increasing fallacy. My cousin, Claire Kofford, wrote me in 1981 that another of our cousins reared in Spring City, Gerald Erickson, had told him that Moen and the sheriff had had a shot out in the streets of Spring City. Charles Kofford's nephew, J. Frank Hansen, claimed little effort was actually put forth to bring the boys in for trial. He said there was evidence they were staying in the canyon between Spring City and Emery County the following winter. Whenever a posse was made up, they went in the opposite direction, as though they did not want to find them. Aunt Venice denied her cousin's Frank's story completely and said he should never have said it.

Blessing:

and you shall be like the three Hebrew children that were cast into the fiery furnace, but came out without even so much as the smell of fire about their garment.(see Daniel 3)

Fact:

Moen was entirely physically uninjured. His finger could have been no where near the trigger when the sheriff's bullet hit it. He had faced a sentence of death, the angel of God had delivered him,

and his enemies were scattered before him. Not only the broken gun but the word of the Lord as given in his patriarchal blessing prove his innocence to the honest in heart.

Blessing:

You are also a descendant of Jacob through the loins of Joseph that was sold into Egypt

Jacob's blessing on his son Joseph: (Genesis 49:22-26)

22 Joseph is a fruitful bough even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall.

23 The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him and hated him:

24 But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel;)

25 Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb;

26 The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

Story;

Moen and Jim left Sanpete. Moen never returned, and thereafter was completely “separated from his brethren”. It is said Charles Kofford's wife's oldest brother, Hemming Hansen, carried the boys to Emery County in his wagon covered by a tarpaulin. They did not stay in Emery. We're uncertain where Moen went. His brother Charles heard and believed he went to Arizona and died there after caring for some persons who were ill with small pox. Other relatives thought he went to his sister Cecilia in Canada. Still others felt he changed his name, married, and raised a family in Nevada or California.

Comment:

Why did Moen leave Sanpete and not come back again? The ruined gun would prove his innocence in a honest trial. In the mid 1920's the pistol was in the possession of his brother Abner and his descendants probably still have it. The shooting was a frightening and unhappy experience, but an honest trial would clear him.

Moen had reason to fear he would not get an honest trial. He knew his brother Charles would not agree to doing wrong and covering up human mutilation (possibly murder) in Spring City in order to protect ecclesiastical authorities. (see C.E. Kofford History by E. Bolster, Note 2) Charles became a non-participating member of the LDS Church. He would not associate with persons who would do or approve such things. He tried to prevent further such incidents and remove their basic cause. The bishop treated Charles as a non-member enemy, practically ostracized his family, and soon kept no further membership records for Charles. Charles had attended a Bishop's court, and although no decision was made, the Bishop let the whole town believe Charles was ex-communicated. The Bishop may have felt if he made a decision, Charles would have asked for a Stake High Council hearing and eventually a hearing by the first Presidency. This would have undermined the Bishop's position and that of the Apostle who advised Charles to do what he considered wrong.

The knowledge of the injustices dealt Charles and his family and the fact that the attitudes toward them may have extended to Charles's parental family also, could well have caused Moen to fear Spring City justice far more than an unknown world.

Blessing:

and you shall be crowned with glory, immortality and eternal life, at the head of your posterity in the Redeemer's kingdom.

Comment:

This makes me feel Moen probably did go somewhere we know not of and rear a family. He may have gone into a settled area and married a woman there and stayed. Or he and the girl may have gone into a wilderness area where he could not easily be found. And, like Lehi, and his family, started another “branch running over a wall”. This seems hard to conceive in this day of almost instant communication, so many methods of fairly swift transportation, and modern devices for detection. Could a family or group really exist any where without the rest of the world knowing of them? A few months ago, a mountain man escaped from an Idaho prison. His whereabouts are still unknown. The June 1986 Ensign tells of a group of Latter Day Saints on a Pacific island the Church forgot about for years. Such incidents make me feel there could be other islands or a valley on any continent with peoples of whom we are unaware-- places possibly thought uninhabitable at first consideration, such as the wildernesses of northern Canada, desert regions in Nevada or Mexico, or even the rocky canyons of Southern Utah.

Moen's posterity would not be as numerous as Lehi's. He started some twenty five hundred years later. As Lehi took the brass plates with him, Moen could have taken all the Latterday scriptures with him. If he held the expected priesthood, he could have administered all necessary ordinances and ordained others to do them. He could have reared God fearing children, taught them, blessed them, and received divine guidance, revelation, and inspiration on their behalf, as well as his own.

Blessing:

This blessing I seal upon your head in the name of Jesus our Redeemer. Even so. Amen

Comment;

As I read this blessing, I keep thinking that only an exceptionally good person would get the promises of the Lord's comfort and protection given Moen. I also wonder at its brevity. Was this all the blessing to be given to Moen? Or was it just enough to support his family's claim of his innocence in the most dramatic incident we know of his life. Were blessings about the remainder of his life given to him in a later blessing or inspiration to his own heart? In any event I would very much like to find and meet some of Moen's posterity and learn what actually happened to him after he left Sanpete.



Moen Kofford