

James Pearl Vandiver

Written by his daughter, Loree Vandiver Lee



Young James Pearl Vandiver

In February 1952, Dad came to Rigby and visited me for a week or two. This was the last good visit we had and I took advantage of it to ask him many questions about his relatives in Missouri. I also asked him questions about his parents and about the different places he had lived during his life and wrote down his answers. This gives me a brief outline of where he spent the years of his life.

James Pearl Vandiver was born 14 November 1876, on his parents' farm in Knox County, Missouri, about 5 miles south of Knox City. He was the sixth of his parents' eleven children. Early in 1890, Dad's parents sold their farm in Knox County for \$20 per acre and bought a 200 acre farm in Adair County for \$15 an acre. This was in the Wilson Town area and was where Dad's parents spent the rest of their lives. Dad was 13 years old at the time of this

move to Adair County.

Five years later in July 1895, when Dad was about 18½ years old, his father was killed. Dad then helped run the farm. Later, he bought a farm for himself at Love Lake in Macon County and went back and forth between the two places still helping run his mother's farm.

Dad was about 25½ years old when his mother died of cancer. Following her death, he sold the farm at Love Lake and he and his brother, Willis, together bought the home place from the other heirs giving \$30 an acre for it. Willis soon sold out to Dad and went to California for two or three years. Shortly before his marriage, Dad sold the farm that had formerly belonged to his parents and bought another one of 160 acres located about a mile east of Wilson Town. This last farm was where he lived until he left Missouri about seven years later and is the farm where his five oldest children were born.

Dad and Mother were married April 1, 1906, when Dad was about 29½ years old and Mother was about 22½. A Reverend Hallowell performed the marriage ceremony in the Woods' home also located in Wilson Township. They moved immediately to the farm Dad had recently bought and there established the home where his children were born in rapid succession, four little boys and then me – Willard, Clifford, Merrill, Herschel, and Loree. They lived about 4 miles from Gibbs, the nearest little town, almost too small to be called a town, but their mailing address was Hurdland, 10 or 12 miles away across the county line in Knox County.

I really don't know what considerations brought about the decision to leave Missouri. It must have been decided before I was born. The farm was sold to Charlie Fast and the move was made in March 1913, when I was 3 months old. From the standpoint of financial prosperity, this would seem to be the first of several unwise choices Dad made.

The Vandiver's did not go directly to Idaho from Missouri, but first joined Dad's brother, Steve, and his family who were at that time living 10 or 12 miles west of Spokane, Washington. Dad and Steve together went to Mountain Home, Idaho and each bought a farm there, but they were soon dissatisfied there. I think there was a problem of not enough irrigation water. At any rate, they were there less than 2 years. Both of them traded their farms at Mountain Home for places in Camas County. I think the farm Uncle Steve got southwest of Fairfield was a pretty good place, but not so the one Dad got. One of my older brothers has told me that Uncle Steve tried his best to talk Dad out of making the deal, but Dad went ahead anyhow. He seemed to think that with enough hard work he could make something worthwhile of it, but no amount of hard work could make it productive. I don't know how he could have hoped to make a living for his family from it. Later, he bought additional land that we called the Madden place and the Gridley place and with these two places, he was able to raise enough hay to feed the livestock that provided us with the necessities.

We had lived there just a little more than six years when Dad faced the greatest tragedy of his life in Mother's death.

The difficulty of Dad's situation can hardly be overstated. I think perhaps Dad was the only person in the world who would even have undertaken to carry on as he did. He was facing life on a farm on the edge of nowhere with a family of motherless young children. In addition to the newborn baby, there was the little 2 year old boy, a little girl not yet 5, another 8½ (myself), and boys ages 10, 11, 13, and 14. He faced the grief and heartache and everyday difficulties of his life with a courage and determination few people possess. The central purpose of his life was to provide and care for his family. The problems and trials, if not resolved were at least endured and somehow the years passed and the children grew up.

In 1931, ten years after Mother's death, Dad had disposed of his property in Idaho, moved to Greenacres, Washington, and bought a 5 acre fruit tract near his brother, Steve. Only



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his youngest son, Willis, went with Dad to Washington. His daughter, Mae, stayed in Fairfield until the end of the school term. I had started teaching school by that time. Merrill was recently married and the other boys were working one place or another. The years slipped by. His family grew up and married and Dad was not longer young. World War II came on and with it came another personal grief for Dad. Clifford was killed March 10, 1945, in the Philippines.

At one time, Dad got a little piece of land above Newman Lake, Washington, and built a one room cabin on it where he lived for a while. Then he came back to Greenacres until September 1945, when he moved to Post Falls, Idaho, near Merrill. The passing years had taken their toll and Dad's health was no longer good. In 1938, he had a serious heart attack and never again regained his former health and strength. He began at length to feel that he no longer wanted to live alone and wanted to come back to Fairfield where Mother had died so long before. It was as if he had a premonition of his coming death and wanted to it to be in Fairfield. Sometime early in 1953, when he was in his 77th year, he got Merrill to bring him from Post Falls to Fairfield where Mae lived and it was in here home that he spent the last weeks of his life.

Although in failing health, he was up and about and had walked up town and back the last day that he lived. When he failed to get up as usual on the morning of September 13, 1953, Mae investigated and found him in a coma. The doctor diagnosed it as a massive stroke and a few hours later he died. We buried him beside Mother in the old Manard Cemetery where I'm sure he would have wished to be.

All of us felt that the Lord was kind to him in not prolonging his life after he had reached the point of no longer being physically able to live independently. He had lived a life of deepest integrity and had faced its trials with a courage that arouses in his children a profound respect and admiration. Although there was much hardship in his life, he had the satisfaction of living to see the accomplishment of his greatest purpose, the rearing of an honorable family.



James Pearl Vandiver - Age 60