

Interview with
POWELL JOHNSON STRATTON

December 1968

**VOICES OF REMEMBRANCE FOUNDATION
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**UTAH TECH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
ST. GEORGE, UTAH**

#1968-119

Utah Tech University provides access to its collections as an unaltered, authentic historical record to aid in the research and understanding of history, while acknowledging their impact on various peoples and groups. Some collection materials are reflective of past cultures and prejudices, including images or words that are inherently offensive, insensitive and harmful. The University does not support, condone or endorse these harmful ideas, behaviors or attitudes, and they do not reflect the official opinion of the University. Rather, the University embraces a culture that prioritizes diversity and inclusion, as demonstrated in the University's Mission, Core Themes and Values.

Final editing was completed in 2009.
For permission to use any part of this transcript contact:

Special Collections and Archives
Utah Tech University Library
Holland Centennial Commons 330
Utah Tech University
St. George, UT 84770
(435) 634-2087
specialcollections@utahtech.edu

INDEX

	Page
Blindness	8, 15
Caring for Wife	15
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, The	7
Cooper Rest Haven	15
Cottonwood Trees	6
Courtship	12
Dancing	11
Elberta Peaches	15
Farming	6
Floods	6
Hernia Rupture	9
Irrigation	6
Lightning Strike	10
Molasses	7
Peddling	7
Playing for Dances	12
School	5
Sickness	9
Singing	11
Slack, Anna (Stratton) [daughter]	14
Stapley, Afton [daughter]	14
Stapley, Aileen [granddaughter]	14
Stapley, Ray [Afton's husband]	14
Stratton, Carl [son]	13
Stratton, Charles "Charley" [brother]	9
Stratton, Clel [son]	14
Stratton, Elizabeth "Lizzie" [sister]	9
Stratton, Elwin [son]	13
Stratton, Emily Amanda (Gardner) [mother]	5, 7, 8
Stratton, Frank [brother]	8
Stratton, Harriet Louise Blake [second wife]	12
Stratton, James Albert [father]	5, 8

Stratton, James Albert, Jr. [brother]	8
Stratton, Larue [son – twin to Loren]	14
Stratton, Loren [son – twin to Larue]	14
Stratton, Mariah [sister]	9
Stratton, Mary [sister]	9
Stratton, Minnie [sister]	9
Stratton, Mrs. [first wife]	9, 10, 12
Stratton, Perces Higby [sister]	9
Stratton, Powell Johnson	5
Stratton, Robert [brother]	9
Stratton, Ruth (Hepworth) [Ciel's wife]	14
Stratton, Will [brother]	9
Testimony	16

POWELL JOHNSON STRATTON

Powell Johnson Stratton was interviewed in December 1968 at the Cooper Rest Haven in St. George, Washington County, Utah by Fielding H. Harris, a representative of Voices of Remembrance Foundation. He related his personal history of living in various parts of Utah.

FH: Would you please give your name in full?

PS: [My name is] Powell Johnson Stratton.

FH: [When were] you born?

PS: [I was born] May 20, 1883.

FH: Where were you born?

PS: I was born in Virgin [Washington County] Utah.

FH: What was your father's name?

PS: [His name was] James Albert Stratton.

FH: What was your mother's [full] name?

PS: [Her name was] Emily [Amanda] (Gardner) [Stratton]

FH: Can you tell us something about your early life?

PS: I went to school in Virgin and completed the eighth grade. I went to Cedar City [Iron County, Utah] and started high school, [but] only went one year. We were farmers. My father was a farmer and I followed after him. I [farmed] all the [rest of] my life.

FH: How about [your education]; did you enjoy [school]?

PS: I enjoyed the school as far as I could [go]. We were poor people and we couldn't take advantage of things that we would have liked to.

FH: That was [a fairly] good [education] for a man in your day, though.

PS: Yes. I got along [very well] there.

FH: [Did] you have to go back to the farm to work?

PS: Yes, I went back to the farm to help my father.

FH: Did you have any adventures in your life or was all of your life an adventure?

PS: It was an adventure [at] different times as I went through life.

FH: Was farming in Virgin a hard life?

PS: Yes it was, because we didn't have any [equipment] to work with. It was nothing like it is now. Everything had to be done the hard way.

FH: [Inaudible]

PS: Yes.

FH: Did you have any trouble [with] floods [from the Virgin River]?

PS: We had a lot of trouble from floods. There were times [when] some people lost everything they had in the floods.

FH: Did it affect you very severely?

PS: No, [floods] didn't affect us at all. My dad picked his farm and [he] planted a bunch of cottonwood trees right above his farm around by the [Virgin] River. The river ran right around his farm [and] the cottonwood trees protected his farm. He had about fourteen acres of land and he farmed every inch of it.

FH: Was this irrigated farming?

PS: Yes. It was [very] good farm land. Those trees grew up and protected his farm.

FH: That was a [very] good thing to do.

PS: Of course, we had to work [fairly] hard. There were six boys counting me and six girls. There were twelve children in the family. That created a lot of work out there. We had to have a lot of [food] out there to raise all of us children.

FH: That took a bit of food on the table!

PS: Yes.

FH: That was a total of fourteen [people] in the family. Did you [grow] everything you used yourself?

PS: We tried to. We [grew sugar] cane and made molasses. We would take [the] molasses north [to] the farm country of Cedar [City] and trade it in for clothing, flour and [items] like that to get along with during the winter.

FH: [Did] you haul it up there and sell it yourself?

PS: Yes, with the team.

FH: That was a big trip.

PS: Yes, we would be gone about a month.

FH: What time of the year would you go up north?

PS: We would do that in the fall. We would make [the] molasses, load it and [haul] it away.

FH: Would you get [this] done before winter set in?

PS: Yes, we would do it before [the weather was] too bad.

FH: Did you have church activities in Virgin?

PS: Yes, we had a good church. We all belonged to the Mormon Church, [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.]

FH: Were you active in the church?

PS: Yes. I was and have been all of my life.

FH: Were you ordained a deacon at the age of twelve and went on up to Priesthood?

PS: Yes, right up to Priesthood.

FH: Did you attend Primary and Sunday school? Was there a religion class there?

PS: Yes. My mother was president of Primary and first counselor in —

FH: [In the] Relief Society?

PS: Yes. She was a [very] active woman.

FH: [Did] she enjoy church and teach you children how you should live your religion?

PS: Yes.

FH: Good.

PS: We were all acted to her interest too.

FH: [What do] you remember about your father?

PS: My father was a hard-working man. He paid his tithing as good as anybody ever could, but he would never go to church. He would never go to church. He always paid his fast offerings, tithing and any responsible thing that came up that he was supposed to pay; he would pay that. But it seemed like he didn't want to go to church.

FH: He just wouldn't go to church.

PS: Mother was a regular church goer.

FH: Was she the one [who] engineered this for the family?

PS: Yes.

FH: What you remember about your mother?

PS: After she had six or eight children, she went blind all at once. It came on that quick. I was just a [boy] and would lead her out to the outhouse because there wasn't any [inside plumbing]. I would lead her out there and back every time she needed to go. My health wasn't very good when I was a [boy] so my dad wouldn't let me [work] on the farm. Instead, I would stay home and take care of my mother. I had more answers from her than the farm until I got well. Her eyesight came back — just as quick as it went.

FH: Did they ever find out [the cause]?

PS: No. They didn't find out why because there were no doctors. They had one doctor for the whole river [area].

FH: How long was she blind?

PS: She was blind for about three months.

FH: My goodness! I bet that was a glorious time when she started to see again.

PS: Oh yes! [Inaudible] My brothers and sisters are all gone now except for me and my youngest brother. The first boy was named after my father, James Albert Stratton and the next [child] was Frank Stratton. The next was Charley, or was it "Lizzie," Elizabeth? After "Lizzie" was — I think I got ahead of my story a little bit. Charles [Stratton] came after "Lizzie" [Elizabeth Stratton]. The next

[children] were Minnie and Mariah [Stratton], the two girls. Then there was Robert [Stratton] and he was born just ahead of me. After that was Mary and Will [Stratton] and he is still alive. The next one was named Perces Higby Stratton. She was my baby sister.

FH: Do you know if they lost any [children]?

PS: No, not until they were all married off. [Most of them] are gone. There are just the two of us left.

FH: Where is your brother [who] is still alive?

PS: Willy Stratton [lives] in Hurricane [Washington County, Utah]. I was president of the Third Quorum Builders for five years. Then I [became] a ward teacher in the community. I [did] that all of the time [until] I became a family teacher. I never did get in on that because I was never home. I had to do a lot of work on the outside after I was married. I did a lot of work and it was mostly with the sheep.

FH: [Were you] away from home?

PS: Yes. Whenever I would come home I would take up my old trade and work again. That was about the only thing I could do.

FH: Were you were [very] active?

PS: I was [very] active in anything I undertook all the way through, even today. I am still active in the church.

FH: [Do] you enjoy that?

PS: I do enjoy that very much. I have had so much sickness.

FH: Is that right?

PS: Yes, I have had a lot of [sickness].

FH: Can you tell a little about your sicknesses?

PS: The worst I had was a hernia and they have taken that out. I was in the hospital for three weeks on that account because I wasn't getting along as well as I was supposed to. The doctor came in and said, "I think I will let you go home in the morning". That was Saturday night. He said, "You can go home tomorrow morning about nine o'clock". Around nine o'clock the next morning my wife was there. She was holding my hand and I took my hand away from her because I could feel a [very] warm feeling going down into my stomach. I took my hand away from her hand and a nurse came along. The nurse said, "Powell, what is

wrong?" I said, "Raise up that short shirt and it will tell you the whole thing." So she did and [the stitches] had broken loose and I had my entrails in my hand, like this.

I held it there until she got the doctor. On his way [to my room] he fixed up a shot for me. He knew I had to have a shot. That was on Saturday morning; it was nine o'clock and I was supposed to be going home. I never got out of there; I couldn't stand [or] couldn't see anybody until Tuesday at four o'clock.

FH: [Did] they kept you under [sedated] all that time?

PS: I didn't know anything. They sent my wife home because they didn't know what was happening. They did tell her that they would have her back in time if something should happen to me. They never did have to send for her. She didn't come down because she felt so bad about it, she just wanted to forget it as much as she could. When she did come, I could talk to her and I was feeling a whole lot better. I was alright at last, but I had to stay in [the] hospital [for] six weeks. I was here in St. George.

Then I [was] struck with lightning. I was coming off of Cedar Mountain [Iron County, Utah]. I had been up there herding sheep. I had a horse down in one of the pastures down on Kolob [Mountain, Washington County, Utah] and I had to walk from Cedar Mountain down through there. Before I got there, I stopped overnight. It was nine or ten o'clock the next day before I got to where my horse was. They wanted me to stop and have lunch with them, so I went down to the home and waited around awhile and had lunch. After lunch I went down and got my bridle, as I had left my saddle and everything right there. I went down to get my horse. I got within thirty [or] forty feet from him and lightning struck the tree where the horse was standing under it. It struck the tree, split it all to pieces, killed my horse and knocked me down. I didn't know anything. They were watching me all the time from the house. It was rainy weather. They saw it knock me down, so they grabbed a quilt because they knew I would be full of electricity. They put me on the quilt and took me up to the house and put me on the floor. I stayed there for five days.

When I came out of it, my father and mother were there. They had come up twenty-five miles from home [to] see me. It seemed like I was never myself for a long time. It affected my brain or something. I couldn't make them understand what I wanted to say. I could [understand] what they said, but they couldn't [understand] what I said. I had to live that way for almost two years.

FH: [It] was a miracle you weren't killed outright.

PS: Oh, yes!

FH: You had some real problems in those days.

PS: Yes, I have had some [very] bad times.

FH: Tell about the brighter side of your life! What did you do to have fun when you were growing up?

PS: We had fun with a crowd. There were four large families [who] lived on the same street we lived on. We would all get together and have our fun on that street. We would have parties and picnics together. We would take a quilt with us and would have a good time

FH: How about dancing? Did you ever do any of that?

PS: I was a dancer from way back! [Laughter]

FH: [Did] you like [to dance]?

PS: [Laughter] All of the Strattons did! They were dancers and singers too.

FH: Did you sing too?

PS: I used to be a wonderful singer, but of late, as you can see now, my voice has changed. I am hoarse and cannot sing anymore.

FH: You are not quite as young as you were.

PS: No, I am not as young as I used to be! [Laughter] Up until my voice changed, I was as good a singer as I ever was.

FH: Did you ever do any other kind of music besides singing?

PS: I can play any [instrument] they hand me except the violin. I could not play that. I couldn't get next to that to save my neck! I could play the guitar, mandolin or piano.

FH: How about the banjo?

PS: I was a little bit slow with that, but I could play the accordion and the harmonica and [inaudible].

FH: Did you play for some of the dances too?

PS: I played for practically all of the dances. I should say, I helped play for them. We would change off and dance some. We got along fine [with] music and the things like that. I was just one among the first.

FH: [Did] you have a lot of fun?

PS: I had a lot of fun and it was all clean fun.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

PS: They kind of let that go by quite a bit. As long as I kept up on my lessons, but as far as taking a book off the shelf and reading it, I never did that until I was married. Then I started reading to myself and reading to my wife and [children]. We got along wonderfully that way. After she passed [away], I lived alone in my old home [for] four years, going on five [years].

FH: Tell about your courtship and your marriage. How did you meet your wife?

PS: She lived in LaVerkin where I lived before I came here. I lived in Virgin. When the date of a dance came at either place, I would go and get her and we would associate together that way. When they would gather up to my place, I had two saddle horses, and I would go down and get her and bring her up and have an enjoyment at their dance. Then we would go back down again. It was the same at Rockville and Springville and all up the river. I would take her wherever I went. [These communities are all in Washington County, Utah.]

FH: How far away was LaVerkin from Virgin?

PS: [It was] six miles.

FH: You use to furnish the horse, go and get her and take her back home again. [Did] that work out good?

PS: Yes, we had a [very] nice time.

FH: Where did you get married?

PS: We were going to go to the [St. George] Temple to be married. We [were] all ready to go to the temple, but the temple was closed for about six weeks. We were married anyway and as soon as the temple opened, we [were] married right.

FH: You were sealed then.

PS: Yes, we got sealed. This wife I have [Harriett Louise Blake Stratton] now, we didn't have to go to the temple because she had been to the temple and had her husband sealed to her. I had my wife sealed to me so we didn't have to go to the temple because we had a verbal marriage for this life. That is the way we are carrying on right now, it is just for this life.

FH: That is the way it should be. This is the way to do. Did you go right to Virgin to live after you were married?

PS: I [lived] in Virgin when we [were] married and I bought a place in LaVerkin where she lived. We have lived there ever since. We built our home there.

FH: Is the home still there?

PS: Yes, it is still there at LaVerkin. It is rented. It is an eight-room home and it was in [very] good shape when we left. Anything we wanted to use was in that home. What made me come here was because I had dizzy spells and it wasn't safe for me to live alone. My [children] wanted me to come and live with them and I wouldn't do it. I wouldn't live with them because they had problems of their own and [their] families to take care of.

FH: It is a good to have a place like this [that] you can come to.

PS: Yes, it is. [Inaudible]

FH: [Is] he the oldest boy?

PS: Yes. He still [lives] in LaVerkin [where] he has a home and a farm. Every one of my [children] had a [very] nice home and a farm when they were taken away, left their lives. They have all been taken away [died] except the two boys and the two girls.

FH: Is that right?

PS: They all had nice homes and good [children]. Their children have been on [LDS] missions or [are] in college now.

FH: Name [your] children starting with your oldest son.

PS: His name was Carl [Stratton] and Elwin [Stratton] was next.

FH: Did he have a farm there also?

PS: He lived in Cedar City and [worked for] Utah Power [and Light Company] for thirteen years. Then he came down with leukemia, but he worked in that place every minute he could while he had leukemia. They never took a nickel out of his pay all the time he was in management. He was part of time there and part of the time he was in Salt Lake [City, Salt Lake County, Utah].

The next [child] was Anna (Stratton) Slack. [They] have a nice home and a nice farm. He works at a turkey farm and they live in LaVerkin. The turkeys are down in St. George a short distance away. He works with them most of the time.

FH: Who was after Anna?

PS: The next one was Clel [Stratton] and the next one after him was my youngest girl, Afton [Stratton] of Cedar City.

FH: Was the next one Aileen?

PS: No, that is my granddaughter.

FH: You don't have another one here, so that must have been one [who] died.

PS: Yes. I had one die, an infant.

FH: Was it a boy or a girl?

PS: It was a boy.

FH: Aileen is a granddaughter?

PS: Yes.

FH: [Did] Afton marry Ray Stapley?

PS: Yes, she was my baby.

FH: Who did Clel marry?

PS: Clel married Ruth Hepworth.

FH: Do those [who] are living have good families?

PS: Yes. Clel had a good family and is still alive. He has a nice family. The boy that died —

[END OF RECORDING ONE.]

PS: — he was a twin to Larue. Larue and Loren [Stratton] were twins. They only had two girls apiece.

FH: Both of those boys have died?

PS: Yes, they both died. Larue's wife got married again but the other one has never married again.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

PS: I bought a house and a farm and [grew] fruit. My main crop was fruit, Elberta peaches. We put up a fruit stand in the summertime and that is where we worked

for twenty-two years. We made a good [living] until my wife came down with [inaudible] and she went blind. She was blind for sixteen years and I had to take care of her. That took me off of my job and my responsibilities. To tell the truth, I had a hard [time] dealing with it.

FH: That was a lot of rugged [work] for you to try and take care of your fruit, your home and your wife too.

PS: I made good money on my fruit, but it seemed like everything was taken away from me. I had to take her to Salt Lake [City to] the LDS Hospital. I was there for a long time. It took almost everything I had made on my farm to pay off her [hospital] bill. It was quite a deal.

FH: How long ago was it that she died?

PS: She died in 1965.

FH: [Did] you take care of her for sixteen years?

PS: I had to take care of her for longer than that because she had a nervous breakdown for three years before that. I had to take her out of the country [area] because she couldn't stand the sound of anything. I took her up there every morning. I had a couch and I put her on it. I would sit off to the side and she would go right to sleep and when she woke up she would feel better. I would then put her in the car and take her home.

FH: How long did you have to do that?

PS: [For] three years — I had a [very bad] time of it. One of my friends in Hurricane said, "I don't know how you stood up under that kind of work and looked and acted as good as you did."

FH: You must have had an iron constitution. [Laughter]

PS: [Laughter] I loved my wife. I loved her very much and I took care of her like anybody would take care of a woman.

FH: You finally moved to St. George to the Cooper Rest Haven and you met a lady here. Do you want to tell about that?

PS: I was here going on nine months and we haven't been married very long. We have been married just a short time. We blended in with each other and loved each other right from the start. We still do and we get along wonderfully [well] so far. I am going to try to get along with her [until] one or the other of us has to go.

- FH: With all of this experience you have had facing these hardships of life, it has certainly made you qualified to give counsel and advice to all those [who will] come after you. Would you like to give them counsel and advice? Maybe you would like to bear your testimony in conclusion.
- PS: I have a good testimony. I have had a testimony ever since I was interested in this church work. I have had a testimony [inaudible]. I am the only one in this place [who] is qualified to administer to the sick. I have been called on several times to help administer to them. That gives me a whole lot of satisfaction and I will say it. They call on me most every time someone is sick and has to have anything like that; they always call on me.
- FH: What about counseling your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren after you? Would you like to leave some counsel?
- PS: In regard to my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren and all, they have all patterned after their mother more than they did me. In fact, my wife, their mother, was a very active woman of the church and so was I. It seems like a woman has more of a drawing disposition to the children than a man because he is working out a lot. My wife was nice in every way. I have born my testimony many times. I do believe and know Joseph Smith, the prophet of the Lord, and I know through him we have reaped a good deal of interest in the church in different ways. I fully enjoy and believe that he and other members of the church have been able to give good advice in the church which I have taken good advantage of and do all that I can in regards to their thoughts and their way of living.
- FH: In other words, you have followed the advice and counsel of the leaders of the church as much as you could.
- PS: Yes.
- FH: Do you feel like your children are following in that path?
- PS: They are. Every one of them is doing [well]. That is one thing I am proud of. The way my children have taken a hold and doing everything they can to make good men and good women of themselves. I would say to my children to take advantage of every chance and opportunity they have to build up the church and the church of Christ. If I was talking with them I could really tell them some things.
- FH: This is something they will be able to listen to later.
- PS: They all know how I feel. They know that I want them to do their best and to do [all] they possibly can for their own special good. They understand it and they

know I am a true and honest Latter-day Saint myself. That is what they are, every one — true Latter-day Saints.

FH: Is [this] what you would like carried on for generations to come?

PS: I sure would. To carry on all through my life and theirs.

[END OF RECORDING TWO. END OF INTERVIEW.]