

CHAPTER I. PARENTAGE.

Ancestors- "The Cummings Memorial"- Isaac Cummings- ^{my} Father's parents join the Church- Life in Nauvoo- Two brothers drown- The Prophet becomes a Mason- The exodus- Father's parents die martyrs- Crossing the plains- Pioneer experiences- Mother's antecedents- *Illustrative Anecdotes*

We all like "to point with pride" to our ancestors, and to learn of the great and good things that they did; but we take less interest in the mistakes they made. The greatest lessons of life come to us thru the mistakes we make. History is generally kind in burying the bad unless the evil is great, whether this is wise or otherwise.

In a large volume, "The Cummings Memorial", by Rev. George Moor, our family is traced to an Isaac Cummings, the first American immigrant, who lived in Ipswich, Mass. before 1641. Many of his descendents became prominent in civil, military, and religious affairs in New England.

No direct connections have been made with the European ancestors, so far as the writer knows, but it is believed that we are descendants of the Cummings family who were very influential in the government of Scotland for many generations, two of whom were stabbed by Robert Bruce whom they opposed in those turbulent times of long ago. They were driven out of Scotland and took refuge in England, where they were not so prominent, having lost all their property and positions in Scotland.

My father, Benjamin Franklin Cummings, was the son of James Cummings by his third wife, Susannah Willard Cummings, and was born 3 March 1821 in Farmington, Kennebec Co. Maine. His parents had ten children, five sons and five daughters, all of whom lived to maturity. Each of his first two wives had one daughter before dying, and the last wife had eight children.

Like most New England people of that time, they depended chiefly upon agriculture for their support, tho my father later became a carpenter and mill wright. He took little interest in religion as taught by the different churches, and used to contend with their ministers. He believed the Bible but knew that it was not generally taught correctly.

In 1837 he heard some L.D.S. Missionaries preach and was favorably impressed with their doctrines and was baptized with all the family who moved to Nauvoo, in 1840 where they lived until the exodus, in 1846.

While living in Nauvoo they became very well acquainted with the Prophet Joseph, and I have heard my father repeat many of his teachings and describe his personal appearance, all of which seemed to have impressed him very much. My grandfather, James Cummings became one of his intimate friends, and, being a master Mason, officiated in conducting the Prophet thru all the degrees of Masonry.

To his surprise and pleasure, the Prophet seemed to understand some of the features of the ceremonies better than any mason, and made explanations that rendered them much more beautiful and full of meaning. It was evident to grandfather that he knew more of what was given in the Temple of Solomon than did the masons who claim that their ceremonies originated there.