

John S. Crosby: Two Autobiographical Sketches

John S. Crosby wrote two separate autobiographical sketches during his lifetime. The first, and more complete document, was written in 1949. It primarily relates events from his birth to the conclusion of his mission in 1907, focusing on education. The second sketch also emphasizes education and was begun on a Book of Remembrance Personal Record Sheet. It is incomplete.

Autobiography of John S. Crosby¹

My life began in Bunkerville, Lincoln County, Nevada, April 11, 1880. When first married my parents came to Panguitch, from St. George. Jesse W. Crosby my grandfather, was called to St. George by Brigham Young, primarily, I understand, because he was an expert molasses maker. So from the time my father was twelve until he was a young married man he lived in St. George.

About this time there was much being said and done in the Church about the United Order. My grandfather Edward Bunker, wanted to start an Order. He selected the spot where Bunkerville now stands, and asked my parents to join him. Which they did.

The order only lasted a few years and then broke up. But in that time it had accomplished much.

¹ The original manuscript is dated 15 February 1949.

The climate in Bunkerville was too warm in summer for my father to stand. He gaulded² where ever his skin rubbed on other parts of his skin. Making him very uncomfortable.

The United Order now being gone, he decided to move back to Panguitch. If I am properly informed, at the time of leaving Bunkerville my father was the most prosperous man financially in the town. He had made a thousand dollars in a mining venture. With this and his savings he started a mercantile business which was prospering. Besides he had a good farm, and horses and cattle. He was their school teacher most of the time. And Nevada as now paid their teachers rather well.

Father was my first teacher.

My sister tells me, our family moved to Panguitch the May after I turned eight.

Though only eight, I remember Bunkerville well. Of course while my Grand Parents lived there Mother insisted on going back often. When I was sixteen I spent part of one winter there.

In Panguitch I was a fat roolly-polly who caused as much trouble as most. At least that has been the verdict of some who knew me rather well.

The first school I remember going to in Panguitch, was to John Miles in the Lower School House. A very strict man he was, but for me, I probably never had a better teacher. If you were after information, he had it. And if you weren't after information, if you stayed in his school you would get it any way. Because work you must. And disturb you must not. He had a way of making you understand it.

From John Miles I went to the Panguitch Stake Academy. A very definite mistake. The first teacher I had in the Academy was no more religious than John Miles, and had nothing like his ability.

I don't recall how many years I went to the Academy, but I guess as long as it ran. Some of my teachers were a Miss [undecipherable], Sister James D. Heywood, John C. Swenson and others. I believe my Father.

After the Academy broke up, I have gone to school to my Father in the upstairs of the Blue Pine Hotel and in the upstairs of the Myers and Henrie Store, now the Picture Show. I have gone to George Dodds in the upstairs of the Blue Pine Hotel and in the bottom of the Myers and Henrie Store.

In the old Tabernacle I went to Mahonri M. Steele Jr. Above the Clark Shoe Store, now the barber shop, I went to Billy Wilson. In the Old Saw [mill?] I attended Kate deLong's school.

The last year I went to school in Panguitch, was to D. Alvin Buck, in the upstairs of the Garfield Exchange. He was a little man and near sighted. Of that fact some took a little advantage. I with the others. I remember having been informed by one boy that he missed social science one day. That caused me to think of trying it. I missed the class all right, but not unknown to the teacher. When I returned he said. "John sit over on that bench." I responded, "I wont do it." He weighed no more than a hundred thirty. I a plump hundred sixty five. His face flushed plenty but he held his head.

I was lucky. There were some very good girl students in the school. They stood for proper behavior. I wished for their good will. They were getting cute. They nodded their heads. Indicating very clearly that they thought I ought to get over on the bench. A thing I did.

In a couple of days I asked Mr. Buck to change my seat. He did. I caused him no more trouble. I may have disturbed a little but after that I was definitely cooperative.

Toward the close of school Mr. Buck wanted to have a debate. The subject, Resolved that "Improved Machinery is a detriment to the Laboring Man." I was given the affirmative. My father and the editor of the Panguitch Progress, put some reading material in my way. I prepared my talk well. And gave it to the barn six or eight times. And out loud.

When I got up before the boys and girls, I was aware that they weren't the barn. I went almost blind and couldn't say a word. Just why, I have no idea, but I turned a spit on the floor. A thing I tried regularly not to do. The school just roared with laughter. That broke the spell. I proceeded with my argument. My assistant in the debate was unprepared. Neither was the assistant to the opposition prepared. Therefore just two of us carried the debate.

There were two girls and a boy for judges. By the way my opponent was a girl. At the conclusion they got together and gave the decision to my opponent.

The boy came to me after ward and volunteered, "John you won the debate easily. But the girls decided to give it to Ada because she talked longer." Right to day I feel I won that debate hands down.

That fall I left Panguitch and went to Beaver, to the Beaver Branch of the Brigham Young Academy. When it was discontinued as a Church school it was called the Murdock Academy.

When I first thought of going to school I had Provo in mind. I expected to make the Foot Ball Team. I believe now I could have made the Foot Ball Team in any College in America. I could run the hundred yards in $10\frac{2}{5}$ seconds, and in shape weight a hundred eighty five pounds.

But I never did play foot ball. It was stopped in the Church Schools as too dangerous. I had to be contented with track and basket ball. But track was a real event. I wasn't the fastest man in the state in my time. But I made the Clydes and the Percherons look at my back. I did run first in Provo on the hundred and two twenty, the year I made the track team there. I ran with Horace Whitney the day he made the State Record that stood for a long time.

When I went to school at Beaver it was poorly equipped for buildings but for me, at least, it had the best teachers in the state. Up to now, I say I never saw better teachers. They had to make no apology for their information, and had every thing else to go with it.

Ernest D. Partridge, my principal, was head of the Mathematics Depart [ment] in Provo when he got killed in a train wreck. Rhinegard Maesar had much of his fathers ability and that is saying a lot. Mamie Olarton, when she died, was head of the Training Department at the B.Y.U. Can you see how fortunate I was?

As I look back, the four years in Beaver, is the green, profitable strip of my life. I was a school pet, Which athlete is not? I liked a good wholesome time. I did for me a lot of good hard school work.

For four years I was President of my class. I had four opportunities to give the presidents address. I had experience presiding in what Church organization we had. For a year or two I was a Stake Missionary and traveled over most of Beaver Stake. I cannot think how a school could offer a young man more opportunity to grow. I am thinking now, I don't know what I would change if I could.

From Beaver I went to the Brigham Young University. During the first Semester I was working on the Rail Road on the Lemington Cutoff. I needed a little money to help out.

I went to school after Christmas in 1903. I was doing very well I feel, but in March of that year my Father died. I can't but feel, that was too bad for me. Had he lived I am sure I would have gone ahead and secured my degree. I went back to Provo in 1904 and completed a semesters work.

In the fall of 1904 I had an offer to teach school in Overton, Nevada. I also had an offer to teach school in Panguitch, Utah. To the trustee in Panguitch I asked, "How much will you give me? The reply was, Thirty five dollars." I said, "I wont take it."

The offer I had from Nevada was, eighty five dollars. I went to Nevada.

While in Overton I got a letter from Bishop James B. Heywood, asking me to go on a mission. I accepted the call and went on October 11, 1905.

I was called to the Eastern States. My head quarters were New York, N.Y. My labors were in New York City for about six weeks. Then I was transferred to South West Virginia. Here I labored for almost two years. I now know I was sent to West Virginia with Conference President, in the mind of my Mission President. The last year I was out I was President of the South West Virginia Conference.

There are a lot of things I can say about my missionary experience. I guess I had as varied experience as most. I held street meetings, hall meetings and cottage meetings. I pole vaulted, turned hand springs, and hand springs. I sang and preached. I did every thing I knew how to make friends. I payed my way when I had to. If I got to tell them my story, I believe I never had to pay. And didn't think I owed them any pay. If I didn't get to tell my story, I felt it all right to pay.

I have heard some say their mission was the happiest part of their lives. Not so me. It was two years of good hard work. I feel now that I never spent a more profitable two years, but they were far from funny. I will take the four years in Beaver for mine. In the mission field I couldn't be normal as far as women were

concerned. The least awkward move and you would “set their tongues to wagging worse than a lambs tail in play time.” The Smoot investigation was on. At school I could talk to any girls I could get to listen.

The year I was conference president in South West Virginia, we baptized fifty three persons, more than twice as many as were baptized in any conference of the Eastern States Mission.

When I returned from my mission in 1907, I was made Stake Clerk, a position I held for almost ten years.

Beginning about 1909, I taught school for five years in Panguitch. Then I quit for about ten years. In 1923 I began again and have taught continuously since then, This being 1949.

I don't know how much good or harm I have done.

I told the people of Escelante when I ran for County Attorney, if elected, I would qualify and draw the salary.

In school I have at least qualified and drawn the salary.

Personal Record Sketch of John S. Crosby³

As a boy I attended my Fathers school in Bunkerville. Then I attended the district schools in Panguitch. As a young man eighteen I went to the Beaver Branch of the Brigham Young Academy at Beaver. Later changed to the Beaver Branch of the Brigham Young University, and still later to the Murdock Academy. I graduated from the Beaver school.

³ The original manuscript is in the possession of Arthur Crosby, Panguitch, Utah. It is undated.

I then went to the Brigham Young University one year. I was going to school there when I was called home because of my fathers illness. He died soon after I came home. I stayed home and tended the farm that summer. The next winter I attended the Brigham Young University the second semester. I went to Beaver in the autumn of 1898 and graduated in the spring of 1902.

The winter of 1904 and 1905 I taught school in Overton, Nevada. While there I received a letter from Bishop James B. Haywood, Bishop of Panguitch, asking [2] me if I could take a foreign Mission. I accepted the call and reported in Salt Lake City October 11, 1905.

My call was to the Eastern States Mission. Head quarters were in New York City. I labored in New York City about six weeks and was then transferred to South West Virginia. In the fall of 1906 I was made conference president of the South West Virginia Conference. The year I was president of the South West Virginia Conference we had twice as many baptisms as any other conference in the Eastern States Mission. I baptized only three.

While in the mission field I defended polygamy so much that I became thoroughly converted to monogamy.