

“The Nield Family History”

Compiled by Roy and Joan Brog

Excerpts from Their Children’s Life Histories

From Eva Lavaun Nield

I was born into the humble home of John William and Eva Claudia Allred Nield on May 10, 1902 at Afton Wyoming. Home was a three room house one mile west of Afton on Nield String, later renamed Nield Avenue. As the family grew with the following brothers and sisters: Lester, Laron, Warren, Lynn and Dean, Ellen, Genevieve, Glenna and Shirley who died at birth, so did our home room by room to accommodate the nine living children. It’s a good thing dad was handy with a hammer and nails, saw and boards. Not to feel sorry for myself, but so my posterity will understand how “financially strapped” we were; I received only a “sewing thimble” for Christmas when I was about 8 years old and I was grateful for that!

My dad was a good scholar, excellent in math, and received recognition for best penmanship in his class. Dad was a skilled farmer and ranch hand and an excellent carpenter. He built a home on the West Hills where they homesteaded the land and someone lived there during the summer months. Sometimes the whole family lived here, but much of the time Eva and Lester stayed there and milked cows. This homestead was two miles west from the ranch on Nield Avenue. Grandpa also built most of his children’s first homes.

Meanwhile back at the ranch on Nield String; water to drink, to bathe in, and to wash our clothes was dipped by bucket from the ditch nearby and carried into the house. I suppose this hardship made famous “the Saturday night bath.” Later on dad was able to dig a well closer to the house. A bucket was tied on each end of a sturdy rope and looped over a pulley and each time you pulled the full bucket up from the well, the empty bucket went down and captured another bucket full of fresh well water. We really got modernized when dad put a hand pump on the well.

We ate our meals, got dressed and undressed, and studied by kerosene light. We carried this light from room to room so we could see where we were going. Needless to say each time the lamp was moved we were to do so with extreme caution. We even heated our curling irons in the chimney of this lamp, or in the coals of a wood stove. A more modern gas lantern with mantles on it gave us more light and was safer, but we could only afford one of these.

At a young age I learned to milk cows and chore around the farm with my brother, Lester; however, I was more inclined to be the homemaker with my mother and Lester helped dad with the outside chores i.e. milking the cows. Our dad was busy hauling freight and mail back and forth from Montpelier to Afton.

My parents were strong in the gospel and made it possible for us to attend Sunday School, Primary, and Mutual. We had our family prayers with each child taking his turn. I grew with a strong desire to serve in the church.

My teen years were quite normal for the times; dresses, well below the knees, high top shoes, black stockings and long legged underwear. Dad was quite strict about the underwear. But once out of his sight, the underwear were rolled to above the knees so to expose our smooth and pretty legs for the dances. I was so lucky to be able to travel in “style” during my teen years! Both of my

grandpa's Allred and Nield had cars, a Buick and a Paige respectively. They were some of the first cars in the valley. My two young uncles, Ellis Nield and Legrand Allred, approximately my age, were able to drive their father's cars. They saw to it that Aunt Belva Allred, my dearest friend and I always had "first class" transportation to wherever we wanted to go. My dad was the first person in Star Valley to own a big truck. All of the folks came out to look the truck over, it was so big. We were really blessed.

Around Christmas of 1916, the dreaded "Influenza" got into the schools. It was so contagious that all schools and churches were closed until the fall of 1917. There were so many deaths, two and three taken in some families. My brother Lester and I were the only ones in our family to get the flu. We were isolated from the rest of the family and mother nursed us. She was very cautious and would wear a mask over her nose and mouth while caring for us in our room. Those of us who had the flu and recovered were called to help nurse at homes where several family members were sick at the same time. Seven of us girls were called to go to Auburn. Cousin Barbara Nield Viegel and I were called to go to the Hyde home for one week where the entire family was sick. I got so homesick that I didn't think I would ever make it. The Doctor and people didn't know how to cope; two or three people were dying every day. No funeral services were held because the disease was so contagious. Everyone who had to shop for groceries wore masks over the mouth and nose.

My mother was a very good seamstress, so she designed and made all the clothing we wore. When I was five years old, I remember mother getting us four children ready to have a family group picture taken. My dress was blue, my shoes a blue velvet top with black patent leather bottoms and white shoe laces and a blue ribbon in my hair. Ellen's dress, the same except hers was red. Lester's suit was black, Laron, a small baby, was dressed in a white baby dress.

From Ellen Jane Nield

I, Ellen Jane Nield Call Gaines, was the 3rd child and second girl and I was born 31 October 1905, in Afton, Wyoming on Nield street later named Nield Ave. Nield Ave. starts from Main St. in town and goes as far as the West Hills, where you turn to the right leading you to the town of Auburn.

There were two log cabins, one on each side of the street next to what we have always referred to as the West Hills. My sister Eva, brother Lester and myself were born in the log cabin on the right side of the street. My parents bought the land where Lynn Nield and his families live at the present time. They built a small rustic house finishing 2 bedrooms, the dining room and kitchen. Later Dad built another bedroom. This was my home until I got married.

There were six more children born to this family, most of them from 18 months to 2 years apart. The last baby, a girl, made 10 children. She was a still born baby. We named her Shirley. Our dear Mother had the "patience of Job." She was always cheerful and a good friend to us four sisters (daughters) as well as a wonderful mother.

My dad homesteaded land on the West Hills and built a nice 2 room log cabin. In June each year we took our milk cows to the pasture in the West Hills to graze. We loved this time of the year after a long 9 months of winter. Eva, Lester and I would go over to milk the cows about 6:30 p.m., stay all night in the cabin and then milk the cows in the morning. We would take the milk home in our horse drawn buckboard early enough to have it picked up by dad's Uncle Jim Nield and he would take it to the creamery.

From Genevieve Nield Leavitt _____

I was born September 10, 1908 at the home of my parents. I loved my home on this farm, where we rode horses, drove cows from the pasture, roamed the fields and went boating and swam in the old pond, down in the meadow.

We children always looked forward to having the thresher men come in the fall. They would come to thresh the grain. There would be ten or twelve men for dinner and supper for about three days. Mother would set a long table and really put on a spread, then it was time to take up the woven carpet and clean and put fresh straw on the bedroom floor, then turn the rug over and tack it back down. We would also fill the straw ticks again and all we kids would pile on it and ride down the big straw stack.

We girls helped mother wash, iron, churn butter and clean the house. The boys helped dad in the fields and take care of the animals.

From Von N. Leavitt (Genevieve's oldest son) _____

The Nield family was always a close family and had great love for each other. Everyone would always go to Grandpa Nield's (John W.) home each Christmas and Thanksgiving. On Christmas, Grandpa would put a pigs tail with baby powder on it, in a box and give it to a different Grandchild. Each year we would all wonder who would get the "BIG SURPRISE" this year. All the grandkids would each draw names and exchange small gifts. We always made most of the Christmas tree decorations, like paper chains of different colors, popcorn ropes and strung cranberries.

From Dean A. Nield _____

I, Dean A. Nield, the youngest of nine children, was born to John W. Nield and Claudia Eva Allred in Afton, Wyoming August 28, 1925. I also was born of Goodly grandparents, the Niels from England, the Stocks from Capetown, South Africa, the Allreds from England, and the Parkers from England, which makes me 100% English. They settled in Utah and Idaho and then Star Valley, Wyoming.

I grew up on Nield String, one mile west of Afton, on a good farm. Dad provided well for his family. He taught us the value of hard work. He had a good farm of about 280 acres, with milk cows, pigs, chickens, geese, and horses.

We had as much as anyone in Star Valley. About my first 8 years, no one in Star Valley had electricity, plumbing or running water in our homes. We had coal oil lamps or lanterns which we took to the barn with us to milk, and to our outdoor privy about 200 feet from the house. We bathed in a round galvanized tub set in the middle of the kitchen floor with water heated on the kitchen cook stove. We had a bath every Saturday night, whether we needed it or not. We all bathed in the same water, heating it up a little each bath with water from the tea kettle. We threw the water out the back door. When Spring came there would be large mounds of ice.

Mother made our clothes and knitted our mittens. We would send to Montgomery Ward for shoes, socks and a leather cap which came down over our ears and button under our chin. (Called an aviator cap)

Our clock hung on the wall and was wound up by a key. Our phone hung on the wall and we rang the numbers by hand. There were 15 on our line.

We had a big, pot belly Motorola heater in the front room and it would get red hot while at the same time the ice would freeze in the bed rooms.

It was my job, at age six, to keep the wood box behind the stove full of wood. Dad would bank the fire with green quaking aspen so the fire would last part of the night.

Dad would always get up before anyone and build a fire so the kitchen would be warm when Mom and the kids came out of the bedrooms, which were so cold, ice would freeze.

Dad always cooked a hot breakfast every morning, which always consisted of meat, potatoes and eggs. The eggs were cooked in the grease from the meat. The grease was then saved to make soap. All this took place before we went out to milk at 7:00 a.m. at the beginning of a 12 hour day of work.

Mom would always have a big dinner ready at 12 noon, which consisted of meat, eggs, potatoes and vegetables from our garden, when in season, and fruit. Then for super, we had eggs, hot bread and milk. A real treat was oysters. We would then sit around the kitchen stove with our feet in the oven. Life was hard and simple, but I loved every minute of it. Life was good.

These excerpts were accessed online at FamilySearch, 7 Nov 2015.