

Family Group Record - 245

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Husband Elijah Reeves DEWITT-638				
Born	18 Feb 1868	Place	Big Cottonwood, Slk, Utah	LDS ordinance dates
Christened		Place		Baptized
Died	19 Oct 1956	Place	St. Johns, , Arizona	Endowed
Buried		Place		31 Dec 1890
Married	31 Dec 1890	Place	St. George, Washington, Utah	Sealed to parents
				BIC
				Sealed to spouse
Husband's father			Abel Alexander DEWITT-24	MRIN: 19
Husband's mother			Margaret Miller WATSON-25	☒ Deceased

Wife Sarah Wilmirth GREER-639				
Born	30 Mar 1872	Place	Kopperl, Bosque, Texas	LDS ordinance dates
Christened		Place		Baptized
Died	4 Jul 1957	Place	St. Johns, Apache, Arizona	Endowed
Buried		Place		Sealed to parents
Wife's father			Americus Vespuccius GREER-3422	MRIN: 1292
Wife's mother			Polly Ann LANE-3423	☐ Deceased

Children List each child (whether living or dead) in order of birth.	LDS ordinance dates	Temple
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1	Sex M	Elijah Greer DEWITT-1630		
Born	25 Mar 1892	Place	Eagar, Apache, Arizona	Baptized
Christened		Place		Endowed
Died	27 Jan 1918	Place		Sealed to parents
Buried		Place		
Spouse				
Married				
			Place	Sealed to spouse

2	Sex M	Gilbert Irvin DEWITT-1631		
Born	28 Apr 1896	Place	Greer, Apache, Arizona	Baptized
Christened		Place		Endowed
Died	17 Jan 1899	Place		Sealed to parents
Buried		Place		
Spouse				
Married				
			Place	Sealed to spouse

3	Sex M	James Vance DEWITT-1632		
Born	25 Apr 1901	Place	Eagar, Apache, Arizona	Baptized
Christened		Place		Endowed
Died	11 Jan 1975	Place	Phoenix, Arizona	Sealed to parents
Buried		Place		
Spouse				
			Lola ADAIR-1637	MRIN: 569
Married			19 Nov 1922	Place
			Luna, Catron, New Mexico	Sealed to spouse

Select only one of the following options. The option you select applies to all names on this form.

- ☐ **Option 1 -- Family File** Send all names to my family file at the _____ Temple.
I will provide proxies for: ☐ Baptism ☐ Endowment ☐ Sealing
The temple will assign proxies for ordinances not checked.
- ☐ **Option 2 -- Temple File** Send all names to any temple and assign proxies for all approved ordinances.
- ☐ **Option 3 -- Ancestral File** Send all names to the computerized Ancestral File for research purposes only, not for ordinances. I am including the required pedigree chart.

Your Name	
George D. & Gwenevere D. Hulse	
Address	
1622 W. Argon	
Mesa, Arizona 85201	
Phone	Date prepared
(602)964-3817	18 Aug 1996
Your relationship to the husband and wife on this form	
Husband	Wife

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Husband		Elijah Reeves DEWITT-638	
Wife		Sarah Wilmirth GREER-639	
Children		List each child (whether living or dead) in order of birth.	LDS ordinance dates Temple
4	Sex F	Helen DEWITT-1633	
	Born	18 Jul 1904	Place Eagar, Apache, Arizona
	Christened		Place
	Died		Place
	Buried		Place
	Spouse	James Vernell DUNCAN-1638	
	Married	21 Jun 1926	Place Tempe, Maricopa, Arizona
			MRIN: 570
			Sealed to spouse
5	Sex M	Wallace Barnett DEWITT-1634	
	Born	27 Sep 1906	Place Eagar, Apache, Arizona
	Christened		Place
	Died	29 Nov 1971	Place Whiteriver, Arizona
	Buried		Place
	Spouse	Lorene PLATT-1639	
	Married	28 Aug 1934	Place Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah
			MRIN: 571
			Sealed to spouse
6	Sex M	John Paul DEWITT-1635	
	Born	21 Apr 1913	Place Mesa, Maricopa, Arizona
	Christened		Place
	Died	8 Dec 1943	Place Mesa, Arizona
	Buried		Place
	Spouse	Marjorie JOHNSON-1640	
	Married	8 Dec 1943	Place Mesa, Maricopa, Arizona
			MRIN: 572
			Sealed to spouse
7	Sex M	Americus Alexander DEWITT-1636	
	Born	19 Nov 1916	Place St. Johns, Apache, Arizona
	Christened		Place
	Died	11 May 1921	Place
	Buried		Place
	Spouse		
	Married		Place
			Sealed to spouse



ELIJAH REEVES DEWITT

18 Feb 1868 - 19 Oct 1956



ELIJAH REEVES DEWITT - WILMIRTH GREER

18 Feb 1868 - 19 Oct 1956

30 MAR 1872 - 4 July 1957

IRVIN DEWITT - GREER DEWITT

(Picture date, Fall, 1896)

ELIJAH REEVES DEWITT - Story by J. Paul DeWitt



Elijah Reeves DeWitt was an Arizona Pioneer in the true sense of the word. His Dad came to Arizona and settled on the Little Colorado River. Mother came from Texas in a covered wagon in 1878. Her folks had previously been converted to the Gospel in 1876.

I (J. Paul DeWitt) will now take a few excerpts from Mother's diary which tells of some of their experiences.

"...I began keeping company with E. R. DeWitt, in the winter of 1888. He lived at Springerville and used to come to see me in a big lumber wagon and we would drive 4 or 5 miles to go to a dance. We were married on December 31, 1890 at St. George Temple, traveling by team. It took about 2 months to make the trip. George Crosby Jr. and O. Bigelow and Elmira Marble traveled with us. We had a very pleasant trip. On our trip home when we camped between Holbrook and Winslow a horse from each of our teams was killed by the train. We moved our wagons up to Holbrook and left one wagon there and all went on in the other one. My husband returning later to get the other wagon. We spent the first 2 years of our married life with my father and brothers on the farm. We moved into town at Eagar in December 1891 and in March 1892 our first baby was born; we named him Elijah Greer DeWitt. In the spring of 1893 we homesteaded a place up at Lee Valley now called Greer. We would spend our summers there returning to Eagar for the winter. In 1895 my sister and her husband (Deuane Hamblin) came to live on the ranch with us. In April 1896 my husband was called to go on a mission to the Southern States so we sold the ranch for land in Eagar and built us a home and moved down there..."

Dad and Mother lived in Eagar for several years. In 1910 they moved to Mesa and engaged in farming. In 1913 they moved to Holbrook and stayed there for a short time and then moved to St. Johns.

In about 1924 they moved to Tempe so their older children could go to college. That three year period was the first and only time that Dad wasn't engaged in some type of farming or ranching. During that time he worked for the Salt River Water Users Association.

In 1927 they moved to Chandler and went into the dairy business. They worked in this business until 1932 when he sold out and returned to St. Johns. The remainder of their lives was spent in St. Johns except for some winters spent in the Salt River Valley.

Theirs was a life of service to others and to their church.

They were always known to the people of Apache County as "Uncle Lige" and "Aunt Wilmirth". When ever I go home people always speak of them in these affectionate terms.

I am real proud and happy to be a son of such a great couple, I hope that I and my children can follow the example which they set for us.

There were seven children born to Dad and Mother. Greer died while in the service during World War I and Irvin died as a small boy while Dad was on his mission.

“Lige” DeWitt and His Brothers Made History in the Early Days

A Former Arizona Ranger and Chief of Indian Scouts writes of
the “Judge” Who rendered Decisions when Arizona Territory had no Law.

Arizona Stockman, August 1953, page 12

This is the story of a man who started making Arizona history in 1879 and who is still living history at the age of nearly 86 years, hale, hearty, vigorous and alert. He is the last of the “bullwhackers” having freighted for years with oxen; he trailed sheep from the White Mountains to the valley near Phoenix; for ten years had the highest producing Jersey herd in the state; and as an earth moving contractor helped build every road, canal and dam in Apache county.

It appeared recently in the Apache County Independent-News as told by Joe Pearce. And Joe himself made plenty of history as he was the youngest of the famous Arizona Rangers; he served as Chief of the Apache Indian Scouts and now living at Eagar he loves to tell of the early days and the exploits of his friends while invariably forgetting to tell of the part he played in cleaning up the Territory of Arizona when it had become a haven and “robbers roost” for outlaws from all over the United States. Joe Pearce's story of “Lige” DeWitt plays up his friend as a lawmaker.

Few men who played important parts in law enforcement activities during the frontier days, remain in Apache county today. Some have moved, others have passed away.

This story concerns Elijah R. DeWitt, a man who at one time ruled over statutes where there were no written laws and rendered decisions when no laws were in existence. Apache county has never had a justice who exceeded him in common sense ability.

Elijah R. DeWitt was born at Big Cottonwood Ward near Salt Lake City on February 18, 1868. His first recollection of his father was when Mr. DeWitt returned from a mission to Arizona.

DeWitt's father had been called with several other men to go to Arizona as scouts and peacemakers to the Indians and locate places along the Little Colorado River where settlements could be made.

The family moved to Kanab, Utah and lived there until the parents made the move to Arizona in 1879. Several families made the trip which ended at Brigham City. Here the DeWitts and others lived until a move was made to St. Johns.

DeWitt's parents and family were clearing and burning brush on lots we had purchased when William Eagar, Round Valley pioneer, came and told us about the White Mountains and its abundance of clear running water and game. The families moved to Round Valley in 1879.

In the first days of Springerville and Eagar, court sessions were held in a Mexican house near the present Becker Mercantile site.

After Gustav Becker had blazed a trail to Fort Apache from Eagar and had a road cleared, Lige DeWitt, as his friends called him, submitted a bid at Ft. Apache for furnishing 50,000 pounds of oats and was awarded the contract.

He later filled similar contracts for farmers in Eagar, Springerville and adjacent towns. He was 17 years old at this time.

DeWitt was also awarded the contract in company with Heber Jarvis to carry the U.S. Mail from Holbrook to Eagar during the time when rough dirt roads, hardly more than a cowtrail was the only connecting route.

Later Lige was elected to office as Justice of Peace of Eagar. This meant that his jurisdiction covered all of Apache County, which was then considered one of the last frontiers.

DeWitt was a man who believed that the custom of the country made law where there was no written law. Many rustlers, forgers and robbers received a taste of real justice under the Eagar official.

He was a typical frontiersman; had owned both sheep and cattle and was therefore in a position to know about the many problems which came before him.

I had the honor of serving as an officer of his court while I rode with the Arizona Rangers and later as a deputy sheriff. The following depicts clearly the Law on the Open Range as practiced by Elijah DeWitt.

It was the month of May, shearing time for Stansell Greer near Big Lake. The snow-capped peaks of Mt. Baldy and other areas were glistening in the sun as Pat Trainor, rancher of Nutrioso, rode thru the area hunting for a cut of sheep.

Pat rode through a band of sheep and lambs belonging to Sansell Greer. The herder, Aulojio Apuramos asked Pat his reason for riding through his sheep.

Pat answered that he was hunting for a cut of sheep and "faith and be Gorie, I'm looking in your band for them".

"Get out of here," the herder yelled, picking up a stone and throwing it at the intruder.

The stone struck Pat on the side of his head, cutting a deep gash. Pat rode directly to the shearing pens near Big Lake where Judge DeWitt was in charge of the shearing.

The next morning Pat told the judge that he wished to file a complaint. Judge DeWitt decided that an assault and battery charge should be made.

Apuramos was brought before the judge and pleaded not guilty. When asked if he was willing to be tried before six Mexicans and six ranchers, Apuramos answered that he would.

It was not dinner time. The bit trout were flopping their tails high on Big Lake. The snowdrifts were sparkling in the sun.

Pat was seated on his sheep pelts and while the shearers were passing by, he motioned t them to come to him and said to each one.

"I am badly hurt and I feel that I shall die tonight. I wish that you would convict this Apuramos of manslaughter, as it will save the county the trouble of prosecuting him when I am gone."

Pat thought that if Apuramos was convicted of manslaughter the judge would give him a stiffer sentence. The Judge was not aware that Pat had asked for such a conviction.

Twelve jurors were summoned; each taking his seat on top of the pole shearing pen.

Pat's testimony was brief:

"I was out a cut of sheep and was hunting for them and found the band of ewes and lambs with no herder in sight. I rode through them and found the herder and he struck me with a rock, and I am paying for it with my life."

The jury retired to a towering spruce where the limbs were bending low, an attractive location for deliberation.

When the jurors returned and were asked for their verdict, they answered that they had convicted the defendant of manslaughter.

"Gentlemen", the judge stated, "Your verdict is not consistent with the complaint. I shall ask you to retire and render a verdict as to the defendant's guilt or innocence of assault and battery."

The jury finally returned and gave a verdict of guilty on the charges, Apuramos was fined \$10 and the cost of the court. The bill was paid in full.

Apuramos then turned to the Judge and filed a complaint against Pat charging trespass. The Judge asked Ted Wiltbank and Benjamin Brown, who had just visited the camp, the ruling in invading a band of sheep on the open range.

They answered that a range right had been established among sheep men that no man had a right to enter a band of sheep on the open range and it would be considered making gross violation of established range rules.

Following some deliberation a trial was again held with the same jurors summoned. Apuramos told his story of the trespassing and when the jurors handed in their verdict, Pat Trainor was convicted of the crime.

Judge DeWitt told Trainor that although there was no written law concerning the matter, custom did make the law.

After Trainor had paid the \$10 fine, Judge DeWitt told those present that he was making a rule covering cowmen and sheep men. He said that from now on no drifting cowboy shall ride out into private cattle pastures; neither shall they roundup, jam and disturb cattle wantonly on the open range without first obtaining permission from the owner.

Elijah R. DeWitt established many rulings during his period in office. The following story is one of the reasons why I have endowed Elijah with the title of "The Law West of the Rio Grande."

One day two men drifted into Magdalena, N.M. and proceeded to forge stockmen's manes to checks and cashed them at Becker-McTavish Merc. Co.

They were apparently adept along their line as after taking in several small sums from various cowmen, they slipped out and found their way to Springerville, where they quietly opened their hand by forging checks with Joe and Gregorio Baca's signature.

Gustav Becker, owner of the store, filed a complaint in Judge DeWitt's court and two John Doe warrants were placed in my hands.

The Judge asked me to return the men who had slipped out of town and gone to Holbrook. I hooked up two fast saddle horses to a buggy and sped after the criminals. I overtook them three miles east of Woodruff.

I read them the warrants and they openly refused to submit to arrest declaring that I was making a false arrest.

I then showed them my star which read, Arizona Rangers no. 134. That ended the controversy. After relieving them of their 45s, I assure you I was much relieved.

When we returned to Springerville Gustav Becker was desirous to have the men punished without delay.

A complaint charging misdemeanor was filed on the basis of obtaining money by false pretense.

Judge DeWitt and myself were called to pass on the handwriting of the checks. We agreed that the two men had written them. Judge asked them their names and they wanted to know if he wanted their Texas or Arizona names. The judge answered that he wanted their Texas names.

The taller man said, "Well, I was born on the Pecos River and they call me Pecos."

The other man said, "I was born on Red River and I answer to the name of Red."

The judge said, "I find you guilty as set forth in the complaint. When the men failed to retaliate, he continued. "I sentence each of you to serve six months in the Apache country jail: I fine each of you \$300 and upon your failure to pay said fine, you shall serve six months each.

He continued by saying that he would punish any man committing crimes West of the Rio Grande and fleeing to Arizona for refuge.

"I'm giving you a taste of justice for your misbehavior in Magdalena," the judge said. "I trust that I have given you a sentence sufficient to satisfy all parties concerned." The case was settled for good.

Elijah DeWitt presently resides in St. Johns where he raises chickens and a garden each year. He is still going strong despite his 86 years. His mind is keen and the true stories he can relate would make any writer happy.

(SARAH) WILMIRTH GREER DEWITT - Wife of Elijah Reeves DeWitt - The Story of an Arizona Pioneer in her own words.

I was born in Kimball, Bosque County, Texas, 30 March 1872. My father was Americus V. Greer, familiarly known to Northern Arizonians as "Uncle H." My mother was Polly Ann Lane. When I was four years old two Mormon Elders visited our home. They were Henry G. Boyle and John E. Page. They preached at our home and taught the Gospel to my parents, who were converted and joined the Mormon Church and came to Utah in 1875, going to Salt Lake City where my father's sister, Willmirth East, was living. About this time my uncle, Edward East, was called to help settle Arizona. My parents decided to go with him, as my father's brother, Thomas Greer, was already located in Arizona. My mother being in poor health, we spent the winter at Payson, Utah, coming to Arizona in the spring of 1878, and locating at Springerville.

My father homesteaded land four miles above on the Little Colorado River, where he started a little Mormon colony. There was soon a nice little town, which my father named "Amity," meaning friendship. Three years after this my mother died, leaving my father with a family of six children to raise alone in a pioneer land. The oldest, a girl, was fifteen, and she was a mother to we children.

When I was thirteen years of age my two older sisters married and moved away. I was left to take

care of the home and my three brothers, who were younger than myself. The youngest, O.P. Greer, of Mesa, was two years old when mother died.

Our home was a two-room log house. When we had everything in readiness to build, all the neighbors for miles around came and laid the logs up on one day, mother preparing dinner for the crowd. In the living room was an old fashioned fireplace with an iron rod across the front, where an iron pot could be hung, in which I would put beans or other vegetables, and sometimes a stew of beef or pork, and father would keep it cooking and when we returned from school our dinner was all ready. The winters at this time were quite severe, snow often falling two feet on the level and drifting from four to six feet deep. The wind blew almost constantly during March. My father used to sing "Hop light, ladies, your cake's all dough, never mind the weather so the wind don't blow." He loved company and would have his friends stay all night. Especially he loved to have them eat with him and many times as a child I have entertained leading men of our state and county, as they made their trips over the state at election time. Also, the leading men of our church, when visiting the Ward, would always stop with us. I remember one time when Jesse N. Smith, who was President of the Northern Arizona Stake, and John Hunt, who was Bishop of the Snowflake Ward, in company with Apostle Francis M. Lyman, stopped with us. It happened to be my fourteenth birthday. Brother Lyman placed his hands on my head and said, "Little sister, I promise you that you shall live to have as many birthdays as you desire." Many times in my later life I have thought of this and it has been a help to me.

My father used to go to Albuquerque for our supplies, as that was the nearest railroad. It would take one month to make the trip. We used to have quite hard times getting food stuff. Many times I have made bread from grated corn, by taking corn just before it was hard, and making a grater by punching holes in a tin pan. This would taste real good. We also used to grate potatoes and wash the starch out of them, and then use it to starch our clothes. These are only a few of many inconveniences we had, but in spite of it all we were happy and had ample time to enjoy ourselves, in the old-fashioned dance and other amusements.

We used to be greatly alarmed on account of the Indians, as this was when Geronimo, the great Apache Warrior, was on the war path. The men used to have to stand guard all night. Large bands of Indians used to pass through the valley, but they never bothered us. Our greatest trouble was from out-law white men, who would steal the cattle and cause trouble in many other ways; but as civilization advanced, our troubles grew less, and we were contented and happy.

In 1890, I was married to Elijah R. DeWitt, who was also from a pioneer family, his folks coming to Arizona in 1878. We traveled by team to St. George, Utah, to be married in the Temple, three other couples going at the same time. It took six weeks to make the trip. The first two years after my marriage we lived with my father, as I did not like to leave him and the boys alone. Then my oldest brother married, and father died, so we homesteaded a ranch up on the head-waters of the Little Colorado. My husband spent the winter building a house and plowing. We moved in the spring. He had made the house as homelike as possible, by making shelves for a cupboard, a homemade bedstead and several stools for chairs. It wouldn't look like much to a bride nowadays, but to me it was home and we were very happy.

My first baby was just three months old at this time. I used to go with my husband to get our fencing. He would chop the poles and bind them together, then I would take a horse and drag them down to the wagon, while the baby slept under a pine tree.

We soon had the place fenced and planted to potatoes and other vegetables (also grain), which were hauled across the mountains to Fort Apache where there was a Government fort. The men would often get caught in a snow storm and be gone for weeks sometimes, building log pens and storing their grain until spring. I remember at one time when my husband was gone, I awoke one morning to find the snow three feet deep. I did not know how I would make it, as I had pigs and chickens to feed and a cow to milk. I put on a pair of my husband's overalls and boots and ventured out. The first thing, I found a cow had walked over the top of the cellar and was in there eating potatoes. After getting her out I went to milk the cow and found the snow had been so heavy that the shed had broken down, falling on each side of where I had the cow tied, thus saving her. When my husband returned home, he made a sleigh, and we had sleigh riding for about three months.

During the summer we would make butter and cheese, which we would trade in the neighboring towns for fruit and molasses. I used to drive a team over a rough mountain road to get groceries, going down one day and back the next. Now over the lovely graded roads with an automobile the trip is made in one hour. I thought nothing in those days of riding or driving a wild horse, but I cannot make myself drive a car.

In visiting my old home this summer, I find things greatly changed. There are several nice lodges and also Ranger Stations. The Presbyterian Church has a large log church built where they hold their conventions, as many as one hundred and fifty people attending and spending the summer months.

When my second baby was two years old, my husband was called to go on a mission to the Southern States. We sold the ranch and moved to Eagar, Arizona, where we lived for twelve years. We then moved to St. Johns, where we lived until 1925. Elijah built a three room house in Eagar before he left on his mission.

While Elijah was on his mission, their second son died and she had to suffer the loss alone. During the two years her husband was gone she had no money, but enough to eat, and was happy to have him serving the Church. She tells of going out in back of the house and finding a venison, ham or other part of a deer. Whenever it seems that they needed some meat this would happen, and she would know that Jacob Hamblin had been there, leaving the meat without ever waiting to be thanked. Such was the spirit of help and cooperation among the pioneers. At one time she sold a calf, the only one they had, for six dollars to get some money to send to her husband, that he might buy some material needed for his missionary work.

When Elijah returned from his mission they took up their life in Eagar, where they were both very active in the affairs of the Church, a practice which she continued as long as she lived. She was president of the MIA and Elijah was a counselor in the Bishopric. Both were talented and many were the plays, musicals and other cultural pursuits they were responsible for.

In 1910 they sold out and moved to Chandler, Arizona Willmirth driving a team all the way, before any of the modern roads were built. She afterwards said that driving a wagon over the Fish Creek Hill road was what turned her hair gray. In Chandler she helped her husband clear and plant a farm, located at what is now Nortons Corner, four miles south of the town. They sold this place two years later and moved to St. Johns, where they lived for the next ten years, and where their children grew up, and where their first son, Elijah Greer died in 1918, a victim of World War I. They also lost their youngest son, Alex, in 1921. Aunt Willmirth, as she was known to all the young folks of the town, was one of the most loved persons in St. Johns. Her home was always open to them for candy pulls, Tamale parties, or anything they desired. She was always faithful to her Church duties.

We then went to Tempe to send our children to school, remaining there for three years. We then moved to Chandler, Arizona, engaged in the dairy business, staying there four years. We returned to St. Johns in 1932. Willmirth died July 4, 1957, having lived just long enough to take care of her beloved husband as long as he needed her. He was seriously injured when hit by an auto and for the last years of his life was unable to care for himself. Her love and devotion to him was an inspiration to all who knew her. About a year after his death she made the remark that "life is not sweet anymore, with papa gone. I wish I could go to be with him," She died that night.

She helped her husband develop a home in a rough and hostile country, following him uncomplainingly wherever he went. Her son Jim says of her, "I never heard my mother speak in anger. In all the trials and tribulations of life she was always serene and cheerful. She never had a fine or modern home like we all take for granted now, but she never complained, and wherever she was she made her house into a home. She was truly a great pioneer."

I have seen much of the growth and development of Arizona and have noted with pride her advancement along educational lines, having seen many log school houses grow into beautiful high school buildings. In many ways I feel that it is a good place to live, and I can say in the words of the song:

"I love your sunshine, honest I do,
Arizona, I'm wild about you."