

## AN IMPORTANT WEAVER

*Alanson Norton* was born in Granville, New York on the 26th day of March, 1813, the son of Allen and Lucy Wilkinson Norton. Alanson had very limited educational opportunities but made the best of what he had. Like all children of his time in a frontier home, his studies consisted of reading, spelling, writing and arithmetic. Common textbooks in these subjects along with the Bible and Poor Richard's Almanac were the extent of his library facilities. He was eager to learn and an excellent student. As he grew older he took up other studies including French and German.

Sometime before 1836, Alanson had moved to Clymer, Chautauqua County, New York. Here at the age of 22 he married Sally Maria Freeman, who was born in Clymer April 24, 1817. They were the parents of seven daughters. In 1841 his father, Allen Norton died. This event left Alanson largely responsible for his mother, brother and sisters. His mother lived with him

until her death twenty-five years later. Alanson was a wool carder and clothier, in which occupations he was apprenticed at the age of 14. In his day the wool manufacturing industry was carried on in nearly every settlement to meet ordinary local needs. Alanson's work was to make the wool into broadcloth, fullcloth and varieties of flannels and dress goods. In this occupation he spent his summers, and, having had a good education for his time, he taught school in the winter.

In February 1843 he and his wife together with his mother, brother and two sisters were baptized and confirmed members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Like all converts in those days, Alanson and his family and the members of his branch were dominated with the desire to move to the headquarters of the Church. In the early fall of 1845 Alanson organized his branch for the journey, and in October set out with them for Nauvoo. They traveled overland until they reached the highwaters of Allegheny River where Alanson hired a flat boat, on which they floated four hundred miles to Pittsburgh. There they secured passage on a steamboat and arrived at Nauvoo on November 18, 1845.

In the spring of 1851 the family left Kanessville, Iowa as a part of the John G. Smith Company, and reached Great Salt Lake City on September 17, 1851. Alanson went to work operating a carding machine, but soon decided to move to Provo, at which place he arrived with his family in November 1851. Here Alanson took advantage of the opportunity to go into partnership with Shadrach Holdaway in setting up a wool carding mill on the north bank of the Provo River. From the beginning of its operation the mill proved to be a useful asset of the new community. The mill cleaned and carded the wool and made it into rolls, then the housewives continued the manufacturing process with their spinning wheels and looms. In 1853 the carding machine was moved to the city and installed in a two-room adobe building on what is now 5th West Street. In its new location the mill increased its output, and supplied rolls and batting to the homes where weaving became an important industry.

After three or four years in the woolen manufacturing business in Provo, Alanson accepted an appointment by President Brigham Young to operate a carding mill in Sugar House, south of Salt Lake City. In the spring of 1856 he moved his family to Sugar House to be near his employment, but returned to Provo in April 1858, two months before the arrival of Johnston's Army. Alanson continued in the woolen manufacturing business and re-established himself in the life of the community. In 1862 the family left Provo for Salt Lake City in response to a request from President Young for Alanson to take charge of his carding mill in City Creek Canyon. This location did not prove satisfac-

tory because of the difficulty of controlling the stream in the high water season. On this account the machinery was moved back to Sugar House. The next move was to the mouth of Parley's Canyon in 1863 where the new carding machinery was set up on the stream. The Norton family lived nearby in a Fort, built in the early days by Feramorz Little as a protection against the Indians.

Early in 1865 Alanson decided to try farming. He took his family to Coalville where he had procured some land two or three years before. In 1867 Apostle Lorenzo Snow invited Alanson to come to Brigham City and take charge of the woolen factory being constructed at that place. Alanson accepted the position and moved his family to Brigham City. His first important assignment was to go East and purchase machinery for the factory. With some thousands of dollars in a concealed belt he went to New York and other eastern points and made purchases. He supervised the installation of the machinery and then had charge of the factory for a few years. Heretofore the mills operated by Alanson in Utah were limited to wool cleaning and carding. The factory in Brigham City was equipped for the complete process of cleaning and scouring the wool, carding, spinning and weaving. This factory therefore gave Alanson the first opportunity since leaving New York in 1845, for carrying the wool manufacturing work through the complete process from raw material to finished product.

In 1872 Alanson resigned his position with the woolen factory in Brigham City and was employed to run a small plant of wool working machinery in Logan. He moved both of his families to Logan in the fall of 1872. At Logan Alanson met with a serious accident and suffered a broken leg. As a result of this setback and other difficulties, he gave up his work in Logan and returned to Brigham City in 1873. For the next few years he also engaged in farming. Early in 1877 Alanson moved his families, this time to West Jordan, south of Salt Lake City, where he operated another plant of wool working machinery. Here he renewed acquaintances of earlier days and enjoyed again for a brief time the association and counsel of President Brigham Young. In the fall of 1878 Alanson returned with his family to Brigham City. He was now over sixty years of age. Nearly all his life he had worked in the wool manufacturing business. Farming had been a secondary occupation for him. But now with the completion of the transcontinental railroad, goods were shipped in from the east in abundance, and local manufacturing declined. In spite of his age he was obliged to enter upon another occupation to support his numerous family.

—D.U.P. History Files.

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