

Richard Dallin Westwood: Sheriff and Ferryman of Early Grand County

BY JEAN M. WESTWOOD

ON FEBRUARY 17, 1889, RICHARD DALLIN WESTWOOD, twenty-six years old, left Mount Pleasant, Utah, bound for Moab, a settlement in the far eastern edge of what was then Emery County. He was looking for a piece of farm land on which he could build a home for himself, his young wife, Martha, and their baby daughter, Mary Ellen.

It was just ten years since the first permanent settlers had moved into "Spanish Valley" by the Grand (Colorado) River in the southeast part of the territory. The valley had long been part of western history.

Mrs. Westwood lives in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Above: Richard Dallin Westwood, ca. 1888. All photographs accompanying this article are courtesy of the author.

Indian “writings” are still found on the rocks. Manos, metates, arrowheads, stone weapons, and ancient bean, maize, and squash seeds have all been frequent finds throughout the area, attesting to early Indian cultures.

The Spanish Trail through here was used first by the early Spaniards as a route from New Mexico to California.¹ Later it was used in part by Mexican traders, trappers, prospectors, and various Indian tribes. The first party traveling the entire trail apparently was led by William Wolfskill and George C. Young in the winter of 1830-31.²

In 1854 Brigham Young sent a small expedition under William D. Huntington to trade with the Navajos and explore the southern part of Utah territory. They used this route. The next year Young called forty-one men under Alfred N. Billings to found a mission among the Ute Indians in the Elk (La Sal) Mountains. They built a fort of native stone, a stockade, and a corral in Spanish Valley. They found a good climate and rich soil. But after losing three men to Indians, they left after only one summer.³

The Elk Mountain or Sheberetch band of Utes had their home base in what became the Moab area. They had joined Black Hawk in his war raids on the central Utah valleys, where both Dick’s and Martha’s parents lived, and had brought back cattle stolen in those raids. Winter range was great in the river basin, and the high Elk Mountains provided good summer feed. Black Hawk eventually gave up and began to move his tribes to the Uintah Reservation in 1867. But the superintendent of Indian affairs for Utah, F. H. Head, had to make a separate peace in 1868 with the Elk Mountain Utes. In 1870 his successor, Bvt. Col. E. J. Tourtellotte, complained that “The Elk Mountain Utes . . . are the most wild and disorderly Indians of this superintendency.” During the reign of J. J. Critchlow at the reservation in the 1870s the situation gradually improved, but over half the Indians still left the reservation in the summer months. After the White River uprising in 1879, Colorado Utes ended up on the Uintah Reservation as well. Many years would pass before they finally settled down to complete reservation life.⁴

¹LeRoy Hafen and Ann Hafen, *Old Spanish Trail: Santa Fe to Los Angeles* (Glendale, Calif.: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1954), p. 68.

²Fawn McConkie Tanner, *The Far Country: A Regional History of Moab and LaSal, Utah* (Salt Lake City: Olympus Publishing Company, 1976), p. 37.

³Phyllis Cortes, ed., *Grand Memories* (Grand County, Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1972), p. 8.

⁴Floyd A. O’Neil, “A History of the Ute Indians of Utah until 1890” (Ph.D. diss., University of Utah, 1973), pp. 57, 75, 81, 96, 110.

In the mid-1870s attempts to use the valley by cattlemen Crispin Taylor and George and Silas Greene (local historians debate which came first) failed. Taylor and two nephews escaped, losing their cattle, but the Greens were apparently killed by the Indians.

Others came—prospectors and ranchers, who brought small herds of cattle, seeking range land—willing to brave the chances of Indian raids. In 1877 a mulatto, William Granstaff (called Nigger Bill) and a trapper named Frenchie moved into the old Mormon fort. Each laid claim to part of the valley. John Shafer and C. M. Van Buren brought in cattle and built a cabin about eight miles above the present site of Moab. Walter Moore arrived in December 1878 and bought out the Frenchman's claim, staying the winter in the old fort.

In 1879 the Mormon church sent A. G. Wilson and George Powell (who had previously brought in some cattle and looked over the valley) down from the Castle Valley area of Emery County, with their families, to begin a settlement near the river. Jeremiah and Lorenzo Hatch and William A. Pierce and their families moved up from the San Juan country.

The new pioneers brought farm tools and seeds as well as cattle. Mrs. Wilson brought some peach pits, which she shared with the other settlers as they came in, beginning the fruit industry that became as characteristic of early Moab as cattle and mining. George Powell planted the first grapes, the roots of which are still producing grapes today. In 1881 Orlando Warner brought fruit trees, ground cherry seeds, and the roots of wild yellow currants. Renegade Indians continued to harass them all, particularly the outlying cattle ranchers. From time to time the settlers in Spanish Valley and up and down the river would have to move into the old fort, often for weeks on end.

A mail route was established in 1879 from Salina through Green River, Spanish Valley, La Sal, and on over the Colorado line to the gold camps, serving the two hundred people on the route about once a month or every six weeks. The settlers needed a name for their main settlement so they could apply for a post office. They chose the name Moab, meaning the far country. In 1880 the area became part of newly formed Emery County. In 1881 the Emery Stake of the LDS church organized a ward in Moab with Randolph Stewart as bishop. He moved from Huntington to Moab in the late winter. His wife, Sarah, was midwife for the new settlement and for years was both doctor and nurse. She raised her own herbs, spices, and medicines, as well as melons, apples, grapes for raisins, and hops to make yeast.

Each year a few more settlers came to the area, sent by the Mormon church, bringing in cattle, or prospecting for silver and copper. In 1883 Norman Taylor built a flat boat that ran on a cable across the Colorado River, ending the drownings that sometimes happened when settlers tried to ford the river. The Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad was completed across the northern end of the area in 1883. This ended the long cross-country treks from Salina with supplies. Halfway houses were established at Courthouse Wash between Moab and the rail stop at Thompson and at Cane Springs between Moab and the Blue Mountain area, now Monticello. It was still eight hours from Moab to the railroad.

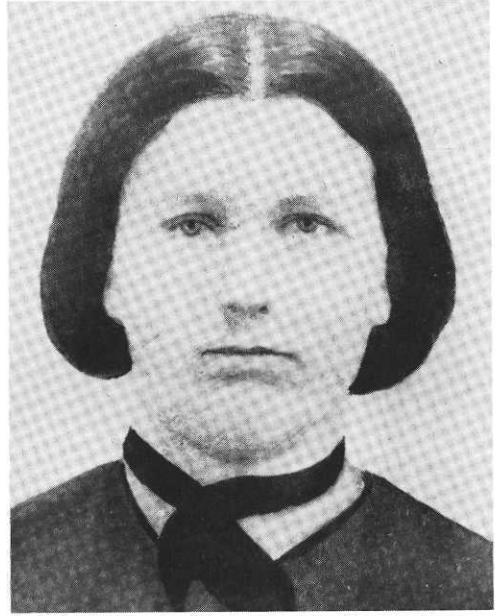
Only a small part of the land could be used for farming, that which was close to water from the creeks. But the warm climate drew many prospectors and cattle ranchers. There was both intermingling and conflict between them and the growing Mormon settlement at Moab.⁵

This was the settlement to which the Westwoods wanted to move. Many of the settlers had come from the Sanpete area, and friends and relatives of Dick and Martha were already there when he set out to find them a place in the valley. It was not the first time young Dick had moved, so he felt quite confident he could make a go of it.

Richard Dallin Westwood and his twin sister, Anthear, were born August 9, 1863, in Springville, to Richard Webley Westwood and Catherine Dallin. Richard Webley Westwood came from a family of actors in England who worked at various trades to supplement their acting income. As converts to the Mormon church, they set out for Utah via New Orleans. On the boat up river toward St. Louis a cholera epidemic broke out. Both father and mother died, and the children were left in St. Louis with an aunt and uncle. It took three years, until 1852, for them to get enough money to come to Utah. Philip Westwood and his sister Mercy Ellen wrote a play the children performed to help pay their way to Salt Lake. Mercy Ellen (Tuckett) acted in the old Salt Lake Theatre and then with brothers Philip and David formed a dramatic company that performed at Camp Floyd and eventually left Utah to perform in mining camps throughout the West.

Meanwhile, young Richard Webley lived in Springville with his aunt, Susannah Hurst, until he married Catherine Dallin, an aunt of sculptor Cyrus E. Dallin. Two older and five younger sisters were born to this couple, but Richard Dallin was the only boy. All through his life he was very close to his sisters and their families.

⁵Cortes, *Grand Memories*, p. 13-28.



Richard Dallin Westwood's parents, Richard Webley Westwood and Catherine Dallin.

When he was six the family moved to Fairview where his father was justice of the peace and ran the mail from Fairview to Thistle. They lived in the old fort and then in a two-room log house. His father acted in plays in Fairview and Springville, directing a play each year in Fairview to raise money for the Christmas fund. All the children helped in this. Richard Webley loved Shakespeare and acted in Shakespearean plays throughout Utah Valley. He loved both to read and write poetry. So the children appreciated literature from their early days, and all liked to act, sing, and dance.

When young Dick was ten his mother died in childbirth. She may have had a bad heart, for some of the older girls wrote of going out to gather herbs for her for heart medicine. The baby, Sylvia, lived only a month. The older sisters tried hard to mother the family, but a year later their father married Louisa Baker, who loved Richard Webley's acting and his handsome looks. She was not much older than his children and did not like them, so the family was broken up and the children farmed out.

Eleven-year-old Dick went to live with and work for neighbors, the Henry Fowles. When Dick was sixteen the Mormon church called the Fowles family to Arizona. He went with them to drive a team. After

three years he had saved enough to buy his own teams and wagons. For several years he freighted between Flagstaff, Globe, Wilcox, and Tucson, but he was homesick for his own family and Utah.⁶

In late 1886 Dick brought his teams and wagons back to the Sanpete area and began freighting from Mount Pleasant to Thistle Junction. In her autobiography Martha wrote:

The day he got home my Mother saw him coming. She said "Oh, there's little Dick," and ran out and grabbed him around the neck. He was driving a six-animal team, four mules and two horses. . . . He had two big wagons with the largest wheels I'd ever seen. When he left our house that afternoon, I dropped my sewing and rode with him out to Birch Creek, to his sister Matilda and my brother Hazard Wilcox's house. . . . Several days later they all came to spend the day with us. He seemed just like a brother to me, as two of his sisters had married my brothers. But in the fall of 1887 we started to keep company. He afterwards told me he had made up his mind I was going to be his wife that first day when he came back.⁷

Dick's father and his second wife had moved the justice of the peace office to Thistle, where they also ran the hotel and post office. Martha and Dick were married by him at his home.

The newlyweds lived with Martha's parents while Dick drove his express wagon between Spring City and Thistle, buying and selling chickens, ducks, eggs, and butter. But both wanted a place of their own, especially when their first daughter was born. Moab seemed to them a good place to go.

So Dick left for Moab, driving three teams with two wagons as far as Salina Canyon. Then the snow became so deep the teams couldn't pull the loads. He left one wagon and hooked all the horses onto the other. He had taken two loads of flour to sell and part of their belongings. He left one load of flour but carefully covered it with canvas. Several months later he went back for the other wagon, found the flour intact, took it to Castle Dale and sold it.

In Moab he found work for his team and wagon. He bought a seventeen-acre farm within the Moab townsite for two hundred dollars. It had a small, partially built cabin on it. Later he found that this land had never been filed on, so he filed on it. He had to take hillside to make up the additional 123 acres required for a desert claim. Moab's

⁶Biography by daughter, Ruth Johnson, in Richard W. Westwood, Jr., ed., *Westwood Family History* (Provo, Ut.: J. Grant Stevenson Company, 1973), p. 249.

⁷Grace W. Morse, ed., *Autobiography of Martha Ann Wilcox Westwood Foy* (privately published, 1983). All the subsequent quotes and narrative of the personal lives of Richard D. and Martha Anna Westwood in the early Moab years use material or quote directly from this book.

best farm land was north of Pack Creek. The Westwood homestead was on the south side where most of the soil was thin, sandy, and rocky. Cattle found good grazing up on the mesas and in the forests, but as in many other areas of near desert the gramma grass became scarce as more cattle grazed on it. Also the creeks flooded whenever there were heavy rains in the surrounding mountains, and the irrigation dams frequently got washed out by floods.

According to Martha's story, when Dick sent word that he had bought a home she prepared to move. She took the train from Thistle to Thompson where she stayed the night. She then rode the stage to Moab, taking all day for the thirty-six-mile journey. The sand was so deep, she said, the horses could hardly pull through it. When they reached the Grand (Colorado) River a man was waiting with a rowboat and a team on the other side. They piled the freight on the back of the boat and left room for the two passengers to sit on top of a 100-pound coffee box. The load was so heavy water splashed into the boat. With one arm Martha held her baby and with the other held onto the coat collar of Mr. Tweedy, the other passenger, to keep from being thrown into the river. She wrote,

When we finally got across the river, I asked how far it was from there to Moab, and was told three miles. We traveled on, it seemed endlessly, until we came to the last house in sight. I asked when on earth we would ever get to town. Mr. Darrow, the stagecoach driver, said "We have already come through town and this is about the last house." I was then ushered into and made welcome by my brother John Wilcox and his wife Violet. Dick had found work for his team and wagon at Little Castle Valley and couldn't be there to meet me. It was May 1, 1889. The next day Violet took me to see my little house which was a quarter of a mile away, surrounded by tall greasewoods. When I saw it, I began to cry and asked if I had to stay there. . . . Never in my life had I felt so desolate and lonely.

The little cabin had half a roof and a floor all but four feet from the wall on one side, no doors and windows but openings left for them, and no chinking between the logs. She wrote that the sun and wind had full sway, day and night, also rats, mice, and other small animals.

Dick came home to move her in. He had bought a new cookstove, bed, cradle, table, six chairs, and a rocking chair, plus a tub and washboard, two brass buckets to carry water, and two iron kettles to cook in. She had sewed rags for a carpet and brought bedding, dishes, and silverware, plus two sacks of dried fruit. With these new possessions and the pride he showed in having furnished their first home, life did not seem so bleak.



*Richard D. Westwood and
his wife Martha Wilcox, ca.
1888.*

But in a few days Dick had to go back up to Castle Valley to work, leaving her alone with the baby, who luckily was a “dear good natured soul all her life.” Martha said that her little niece slept with her at night, but it seemed the long, lonely days would never pass. She went to church at the new meeting house and often stayed the night with her sisters, Mary and her husband, Herbert Day, and Ellen and her husband, John Oliver.

Early in July Dick came to take her up to Castle Valley with him. She rode a mule on a pack saddle with a feather bed strapped over it and carried the baby in her arms. She was the first white woman to go over Rimrock Trail, about which J. N. Corbin, editor of the *Grand Valley Times*, wrote in January 1897: “. . . after that final part where man and horse go down the so-called heavenly staircase, a rock trail steep as stairs the whole thousand feet, I would sign any petition to have a road built or an elevator put in.” At one place their pack horse lost her footing, rolled 200 feet down the mountain, and lodged in a cedar tree. Dick went down to cut her loose, then came back for Martha and the baby. She wanted to walk, but he told her the mule would make it all right and she did.

They had a good month together, but then his job at the ranch ended. Martha wouldn't go back up the mountain, so he got Will Shafer to bring her out in a rowboat down the river, along with Mr. and Mrs. Mat Martin, while he took his team out. She wrote,

That day and the first day I came to Moab were the first two times I was ever in a boat, and the first big river I had ever seen. It was a frightening experience for an 18 year old, who had lived a rather sheltered life until her marriage. We reached the landing in Moab at dark and walked up to Mrs. Martin's mother and father's place, the Gibsons. They wanted me to stay all night but I had heard they were rough people and was afraid, so Mr. Shafer borrowed a horse and I rode it up to brother John's to stay until Dick got home a few days later.

They had sold a cow which had been given to them at their wedding for \$16 before coming to Moab. Martha had spent \$8.00 of it on her feather bed, white bedspread, silverware, and flatirons. The other \$8.00 they now used for lumber for casing a window, front and back door, and finishing the floor and roof on their little cabin. John Oliver plastered the room for them, and they papered the walls. Dick built a brush shed in front of it for a summer kitchen and wove willows all around the sides. Then they had a housewarming. Martha said the Darrows and Gibsons had a long running feud, apparently over some cattle, but they all came to the dance. Cowboys came with the Darrow and Gibson girls. The house was so small they could dance only one square at a time. Gibsons and Darrows would not join hands or speak, but the dance went on just the same. The cowboys all kept their guns strapped on, and she was relieved when morning came and they all went home without a shooting scrape.

They cleared the land that fall and winter and in the spring planted an orchard, alfalfa, and a garden. Dick freighted from Thompson to Moab for their living. He also cut and hauled logs from the mountain and fenced their place on two sides, the other two had the mountains on the south and west as natural boundaries. That winter they got acquainted with Moab and really enjoyed themselves. Dances were the main amusement in town, and they went to most of them. During the Christmas holidays they "went to six dances that week. Our main transportation . . . was Jimmy, the mule. We had only one that was gentle enough to ride so Dick rode in the saddle and carried the baby, and I rode behind the saddle on a clean blanket. It didn't matter that our clothes were wrinkled as everyone looked the same."

Alma Lutz, Judge Taylor, and sometimes Dick called the dances during those early years. Alma taught them how to do the waltz, schot-

tische, var souvanne, polka, quadrille, Virginia reel, Scotch reel, and the French four. Billy Allred, Mark Walker, Dudley Wilson, and Angus Stock all played violins, Lester Taylor an accordion, and Alma Lutz used bones or clappers made from beef ribs. Because only one set at a time could dance in private homes, O. W. Warner built a dance hall at his ranch where two quadrilles could dance at a time, or four couples could round dance. Each family brought refreshments, usually cake and ice cream but sometimes box suppers to raise money for some public need. July 4 and Mormon Day (Pioneer Day) meant horse races, foot races, dramas, and speeches (which Dick helped direct). For these and Christmas and New Year's Day there were also big community dinners ending in dances.⁸

The second winter, Martha's sister, Mary, moved east of Moab to Wilson Mesa with her husband. Martha kept their children so they could go to school and also be company for her. The third winter, the whole Day family stayed with Dick and Martha while they cleaned their old house, getting ready to move back in it. When a diphtheria epidemic swept the town, Jimmy Day died. Martha wrote,

There were 19 deaths in three weeks. My husband went from house to house helping care for the sick, digging graves to bury the dead. Sister Mary also lost a little girl, one and a half years old. After they moved from our house, Dick moved in with them and helped care for them until all were well. We were not touched, somehow.

Then their lives changed. Grand County was created from part of Emery County on March 13, 1890, with the county seat at Moab, a total population of 541,⁹ and 3,692 square miles of brush-covered desert, broken canyons, warm valleys, the La Sal Mountains, and the Colorado River. The first county officers were appointed, but as soon as they got organized they held an election. On August 28 Richard Dallin Westwood was elected sheriff.

He had a large territory to cover and all kinds of troubles. A small settlement, later named Elgin, was over on the Green River. The main shipping point for cattle was up at Thompson, with the summer range nearby. Cisco, east of Thompson, was an alternate cattle-shipping point. Miners working the gold and copper discoveries in Miner's Basin in the La Sals and on the Colorado and Dolores rivers took their ore to Cisco in wagons to be shipped to the mills. Farmers hauled the

⁸Cortes, *Grand Memories*, p. 34.

⁹Deon C. Greer et al., *Atlas of Utah* (Ogden and Provo: Weber State College and Brigham Young University Press, 1981), p. 110.

produce from their orchards to Cisco and Thompson. At the mines they fought over claims. Isolated settlements and cattle ranches all through the county were subject both to rustlers and to the diminishing but still present Indian raids.¹⁰ Until Moab was incorporated in 1903 the county sheriff handled all the duties of the law in the town as well as in the county with only a deputy or two and sometimes a posse.

Moab itself went through a wild and woolly period. There was a saloon on each side of Main Street. Whiskey was brought in by the barrel and sold without restriction. Cowboys who had imbibed too much would ride up the streets shooting at one side and then the other or just for fun would hold up a local merchant. The dances, one of the town's main entertainments, often turned into brawls, as Martha had feared hers might do.¹¹

On the other hand, civilization was coming to the town. In 1887 the school board decided to build two schools, one in the lower valley and one in town for the eighty school-age children who had been meeting in tents and homes. A cowboy, Tom Trout, had purchased a town lot with money won in a horse race and he donated this for the town school. Today, the junior high stands on this lot. O. W. Warner donated one and a half acres in town to build a Mormon meeting-house, begun in 1888.¹² Dick was not at all religious—probably as a result of his broken home as a child, but Martha was and the building of the church meant a lot to her.

The famous Telluride robbery by members of the Butch Cassidy gang took place the year before Dick became sheriff. The gang used a network of trails through the county to move stolen cattle and horses from the La Sals, the Book Cliffs, the Yellow Cat mines, or the Arches area down to the Green River and on the Robbers Roost. There are still remains of two old cabins, one in Spring Canyon and another on Horsethief Point, said to have been the outlaws' way stations. Other outlaws herded stolen cattle across the Dewey ford upriver to the Dolores Triangle and over to box canyons at Gateway, Colorado. So the sheriff spent many an hour on the trail, usually recovering only part of a stolen herd.

There was no jail. When the "Brock Gang," apparently a local group of rustlers, were captured and sentenced to six months they served their jail terms in the Darrow Hotel on Main Street, really a

¹⁰Cortes, *Grand Memories*, p. 116-59.

¹¹Tanner, *The Far Country*, p. 148-50.

¹²Cortes, *Grand Memories*, p. 31.

large rooming house with a balcony across the front, operated by Ma Darrow, the only woman in town who smoked (a corn cob pipe). Oddly enough, this was also the Moab hotel where the Wild Bunch and other outlaws came to quench their thirst, enjoy a good meal, or stay the night. Another hotel in town, the Maxwell House, catered to more respectable travellers.¹³

Martha, who had joined the LDS Relief Society on arriving in town, lived for her church and longed for the kind of sheltered life she had known as a child. She hoped the respectable sheriff's office would bring them both a steady income and that kind of life. Instead,

There was no jail so the prisoners Dick arrested had to be brought to our little one room cabin. One time I had to feed and provide beds for five people for three weeks before they could have their trial: one woman, a boy 13, and three men. Sometimes when Dick was called away from home he would leave me to guard prisoners in the daytime and send Ervin Wilson, a deputy, to help guard them at night. I had a curtain around my bed so I could get into bed without being seen.

Convicted prisoners were taken to Salt Lake. Martha says that most were just turned loose, as they had no money to pay their fines.

In the beginning the county had no funds to pay the officers' salaries, so they were paid with county warrants. When the warrants came due and there was still no money in the treasury, the Westwoods had to stand the expense of feeding the prisoners in addition to receiving no pay. In 1892 the county purchased a lot with a house on it from Oren D. Allen on what is now the northwest corner of Main and First North. They used this as a courthouse and built a small jail, in which to hold prisoners until trial.¹⁴

After four years Dick decided he just could not feed his growing family on nonpaid warrants, so he resigned. In the next five years four men tried the office in his place.

Meanwhile, Dick and Martha had lost a baby boy at birth. Ella, as they came to call the firstborn, was four years old before Kate was born in 1892; then Ruth was born in 1895 when Dick quit as sheriff. When Ruth was five weeks old he got a contract to get out logs for two houses, one for the Westwoods and the other for the Bransons. Over the next four years he also freighted, fenced his seventeen acres, and built a new house of three rooms, plus an attic for bedrooms, using his

¹³Ibid., p. 30, 45-46.

¹⁴Grand County Courthouse Records, Moab, Utah, recorded deed and plat of town. Also Cortes, *Grand Memories*, p. 50.

share of the logs. He planted ten acres of new orchard to add to the one and one-half acres they already had in orchard. He left Martha to tend it while he took a summer contract building mountain fences. She also had a big garden and five acres of alfalfa to tend while he worked then and later again at the sawmill. Sometimes she would take the girls and camp out with him for a few weeks up in the mountains away from the summer heat.

Dick rented a large, already-producing fruit farm for several years and picked, packed, and freighted the apples from it to Thompson, taking the culls to feed their pigs and to dry for home use. Apples rode better in the wagons to Thompson than other fruits, but as early as 1896 O. W. Warner—from whom Dick was renting the orchard and who had brought in and sold or given away thousands of fruit trees to get the industry going in the valley—shipped three hundred crates of peaches. Peaches and other fruits such as grapes bruised too easily and usually were better for drying or canning than for sale until better roads were built. Bishop Randolph Stewart developed a peach that would not bruise so easily, still named the Stewart peach.¹⁵

The Westwoods' first surviving son, Neil, was born in 1898, just after their new house was finished, and another daughter, Grace, was added in December 1900. Times seemed to be better, although there was never enough to keep their growing family fed and clothed as well as Martha would have liked, especially because Dick was always giving away food or clothes or even bedding to those he thought were in real need.

To add variety to their entertainment, Dick formed a "home dramatic" acting company, including Frank Shafer, D. A. Johnson, Malissa and Zola Stark, some of the Taylors, and others. Martha said they took Neil and then Grace along in the baby buggy to rehearsals and got someone to sit by them during the plays themselves. In 1901 the town had an epidemic of scarlet fever. Their two eldest, Ella and Ruth, were very sick, so they were quarantined all winter. So many were sick by spring that school was stopped in April.

Dick was a sociable fellow who liked a drink, a cup of coffee, and a cigarette. Family stories say that he was baptized as a child in a cold creek. One night in Moab, in his cups, he and a friend took the local bishop down to the creek and baptized *him*. For this he was excommunicated.¹⁶ His family finally had him rebaptized after his death.

¹⁵Tanner, *The Far Country*, p. 192.

¹⁶Interviews with daughter Ella and granddaughter Zona Cato.

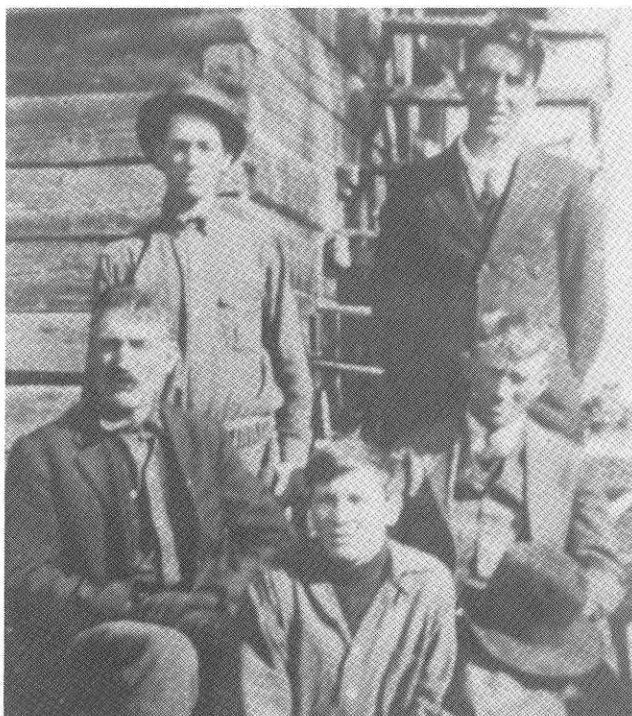
The *Grand Valley Times* records that he was appointed road supervisor in November 1899, and he oversaw a great deal of street work in Moab. He also acted as a deputy or posse member intermittently during these years. On March 3, 1899, he was in a posse that went on a twelve-day trip into the San Rafael country after horses stolen from Andrew Tangren. They had a two-hour battle with the outlaws with a hundred or more shots fired on both sides, as far as known without damage. Out of ammunition, the posse returned home. A second trip in a few weeks brought home eight horses and one mule. Later articles detail trips by saddle horse to Loa to testify against Jim Hawkins, alias "Silver Tip," charged with assault with attempt to murder.

Then on May 26, 1900, Sheriff Tyler and a posse member, Sam Jenkins, were killed forty-two miles above Thompson in the Book Cliffs. Along with Sheriff Preece of Vernal, they had been out three weeks looking for cattle rustlers. A year earlier, searching for Tom Dilly, a cattle rustler, Tyler had shot a rustler he thought was Dilly in the head. Instead, he had killed "Flat Nose" George Curry, a leader of the Hole in the Wall Gang. Harvey Logan (Kid Curry) had sworn to avenge that death.

Learning that Dilly was out after more cattle above Thompson, Preece and Tyler led their posses there and then split up to search for the outlaw. Tyler and Jenkins found what they thought was an Indian camp. Leaving their guns and horses with Deputy Day, they approached the camp. Seeing cowboys, they exchanged hellos, turned back toward their horses, and were shot in the back. Day got away and found Preece and his four men. They then went to Thompson and wired Gov. Heber M. Wells who sent men from Salt Lake to assist the Moab, Price, and Vernal posses in finding the outlaws.

Dick Westwood was called to form the Moab posse. Although the governors of Colorado, Wyoming, and Arizona jointly instigated an intensive manhunt, the Westwood group stayed out by themselves for thirty-two days, until they finally lost the trail in the White Mountains near Rawlins, Wyoming. Dick was appointed in absentia as sheriff to fill the vacancy caused by Tyler's death. The *Times* commented:

The appointment of R. D. Westwood to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Jesse Tyler will give general satisfaction throughout the county. Westwood has been with Tyler in many of his trips after criminals and was formerly sheriff of the county and has always been ready to be at the front when men are required. The posse he is with on the trail of the murderers of Tyler and Jenkins was the first to start and have been on the go ever since, while the other posses have returned from the chase.



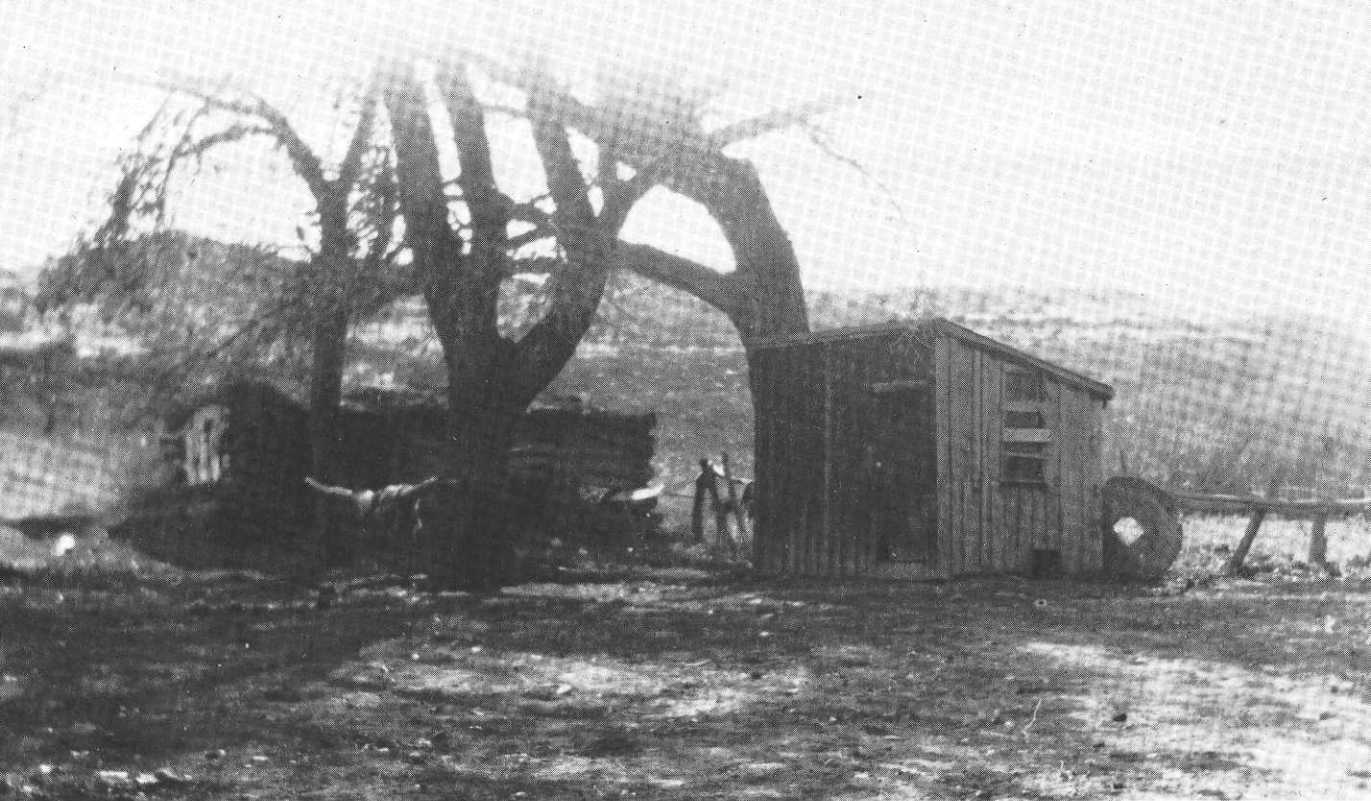
Left to right: *standing are Neil Westwood and Joseph H. Johnson; seated are Richard D. Westwood, Vere Westwood, and Charles Cato, ca. 1920.*

He reluctantly took the appointment. Although the county raised his salary to \$800 a year, it was still hard to keep his big family. In October he was out with a posse again, chasing three young men who had held up the train at Cisco. He returned home to oversee the shipment of over two thousand boxes of apples to the railroad from his own and other valley orchards. He was called back to Loa to testify in a second trial of "Silver Tip" for cattle rustling. When the jury returned a not guilty, that ended it; he refused to run again.¹⁷

Meanwhile, in August 1900 Samuel King, who had built a ferryboat at Dewey, contracted to build a river road up to Dewey. In 1902 the Grand River Toll Road Company of Provo, headed by Reed Smoot, gave Dick a contract to repair the road and put in toll gates. J. H. Webb and Emil Boren had just hit a gold strike on Wilson Mesa. Prospecting started in areas all up and down the river. Over the next ten years Dick Westwood was often recorded as shipping gold from the Dolores area.

The *Times* called for a new ferryboat at Dewey in a February 3, 1903, editorial, as the old one was dilapidated and could not handle the

¹⁷Tanner, *The Far Country*, p. 162-64. *Grand Valley Times*, search of all records, specifically March 3, April 4, 1899, June 1, 8, 29, 1900. See also L. L. Taylor, Grand County commissioner, in publication of *Utah Peace Officer's Association*, fall 1949.



The Westwood homestead at Dewey, Utah.

new mining traffic. Rising ice wrecked the old boat, and on March 22 Westwood was awarded a contract by the Grand County Commission to operate a new ferry at Dewey. He also contracted to build a new road between Dewey and Cisco.¹⁸

When Dick was repairing the road the first year, the Westwood family stayed at Dewey five and a half months. Martha ran the post office and the halfway house, cooking for both the road crew and the transients at twenty-five to thirty-five cents per meal. The family went home to Moab for the school year and for the birth of another son, Vere. The following year they stayed in Moab and Dick farmed the Warner orchards and farms.

When he got the ferry contract and the contract to build the new road, they moved back up to Dewey where they remained for the next twelve years—until the suspension bridge was built across the Colorado in 1915. In order to work the mining claims that Dick kept hoping would give them more money, they sometimes sublet the ferry. Two winters they moved to the pump house up at Cisco until the ice went out. One winter they rented a little log cabin on an island in the middle of the Colorado River. Two more children, Ida and Anna, were born in those years.¹⁹

¹⁸*Grand Valley Times*, February 3, March 13, 22, 1903.

¹⁹See Morse, *Autobiography*, for story of years at Dewey. Also taped family interviews and Westwood, *Westwood Family History*.

At first, to have enough students so the school board would hire a teacher, Martha enrolled herself and four-year-old Grace. When the mining nearby caused the population to grow, a new school was built on the other side of the river. Nevertheless, the Westwoods sometimes boarded other children to keep the enrollment up during the cold months. Martha served on the county school board for two years, one year as chairman, traveling on occasion to Moab and other areas to carry out her duties. She continued through all the years, with the help of her girls, to run the boardinghouse at Dewey, feeding all those who came in on the stage or the wagons hauling ore or produce or just travelers going through. Dick was a school trustee for the district from 1911 until 1914 and was elected justice of the peace in 1914.

The oldest girls were sent down to Moab to board for high school, one year each, and finally Martha went down one winter and took all the children, leaving Dick at the ferry by himself. Dick and Martha had grown further apart as the years went on. Although he still loved her dearly, he would not become a "good" Mormon, and he was always restless at home farming or running the ferry too long at a time.

Kate and Ella grew into young women and were both married from Dewey. Martha sadly missed them, for they had helped her with the boardinghouse and even managed it when she was away. She had taught them to be good housekeepers, to sew both clothes and fancy linens, and to make hats; and Dick had fostered in all the children a love of reading, reciting poetry, and putting on family skits.

Dick's drinking grew heavier in their early years upriver. Each day he would have the stage driver bring him a pint of whiskey from Cisco. When Martha finally wrote to an attorney about a divorce, Dick saw the letter and, curious as to why his wife was writing an attorney, read it. Realizing at last the extent of his wife's distress over his drinking, he quit and never drank again.

In spite of his long years of hunting down outlaws, Westwood trusted people. He was always lending someone money, a horse, or sacks of potatoes and corn. Often, the loaned items were things Martha needed to keep the family fed and the boardinghouse going.

Equally characteristic of the man was his fearlessness. One time in the later Dewey years, the family went across the river on the ice to eat New Year's dinner with friends. When a thawing wind came up, they hurried to reach the river before the ice went out and stranded them. They found water already a foot deep all over the ice. Dick ran across to make sure the ice was still solid underneath, then called to Martha to

drive the team across as fast as she could make the horses run. Just a few minutes after they got home the ice went out. When the children went back to watch the ice jam, they found their father in his ferryboat working the ropes without a thought for his life, making the jam push him and his boat up on the bank so it would be saved. The Moab ferry was wrecked by the same ice jam.

They had homesteaded a farm at Dewey, pumping water from the Colorado for their crops. When they moved back to Moab in 1916, after the bridge was built and the ferry quit running, they brought their herd, forty-five head of young cows. They had few other worldly goods. The old house in Moab needed lots of repair, and some of the orchard was dead. They still could not make a living from these seventeen acres, but it was where they wanted to live, at least in the winter.

After four years they sold the Dewey farm and bought a dry farm at old La Sal where they moved the cattle and the children—even some of the married ones—and stayed summers for six years. They lost most of the cows to rustlers, made only one good crop, and wound up a thousand dollars in debt. So they gave up and traded the dry farm for a Moab town lot on which Dick promised to build Martha a better home.

They moved back onto the old farm, sharing it in later years with son Neil and his growing family. Some of the children moved away as they married, but most of them stayed in Moab. They all tried to help out their parents, and after Dick's death three of them did build Martha her house in town.

Between 1916 and 1925 Dick served four terms as deputy sheriff under W. J. Bliss and Heber Murphy. Murphy resigned in 1925, and Westwood once more became sheriff to finish the term, serving to the end of 1926. He was then sixty-two years old. When Joe Johnson, deputy sheriff and town marshal, fell from a horse and was killed in December 1927, Dick took over, agreeing to stay on as deputy to Sheriff John B. Skewes and as town marshal only until the next election.²⁰

By this time Grand County had grown to nearly 1,800 people, with much of the growth in the Moab area. It was still isolated, although the roads had been improved out to the railroad. Farming, raising cattle, and mining remained the three legs of the economy. There was a community church and the Mormons had built Star Hall, a recreation center and theater, next to their church.²¹

²⁰Grand County Courthouse Records; also *Times Independent*, successor to *Grand Valley Times*.

²¹Cortes, *Grand Memories*; also McConkie, *The Far Country*.



*Richard D. Westwood,
standing second from left, and
other family members, ca.
1920.*

The character of the town and the area had not changed much from the early days. There were still wide, dusty streets in the small business section and farms throughout the valley. There was still plenty of lawbreaking and even cattle rustling, but the main outlaws were bootleggers. Joe Johnson said that when they raided stills Westwood would always ask one of the others to taste the evidence to be sure it was alcohol. He did not want to be tempted to start drinking again.

Dick's family remembers when he took a crew up above Cisco to raid a bootlegging camp. The bootleggers had worked all night and then gone to camp to sleep. Westwood waited until they were snoring and then had his crew take the distributor caps off all their cars, break up the still, and empty all the liquor except a couple of bottles for evidence. They went into camp, guns drawn, and caught all the bootleggers asleep in their BVDs. One managed to reach a gun, but no one was hurt. They caught them all.

On September 6, 1929, two bandits, Delbert Pfoutz and R. H. Elliot, were arrested by Sheriff Skewes and Deputy Westwood at the Moab Co-op store for the robbery of the B. W. Hector road camp at Klondike. They had been followed to Moab by Hector and LaDue Williams, who had reported the robbery to the sheriff. Meanwhile, the actions of Pfoutz and Elliot in the store had aroused the suspicions of R. J. Reid and Ralph Miller. While Miller was wrapping their purchases, Reid slipped out of the store to get the sheriff. The two bandits and their car were searched before they were taken to the jail. No gun was found, but some .32 caliber cartridges were, plus loot from several robberies. Because of the cartridges the prisoners were searched again. It was afterward learned that Elliot had the gun concealed under a wide belt buckled tightly about his body. Miller and Reid thought Pfoutz had had the gun in the store, so he was searched more thoroughly.

Westwood and Skewes agreed that the two prisoners were dangerous and still might have a gun, so they would take no chances and go together or with another person whenever they took in food. At 5:30 P.M. Westwood took food to the prisoners in company with J. W. Johnson. One of the prisoners asked for some cigarettes. No one will ever know why the aging deputy returned alone with them or why he left his gun in the sheriff's office. He was gunned down.

The two bandits never did agree on their stories. What is known is that the cell was unlocked and that Elliot shot Westwood three times—through his right shoulder, his right side below the ribs, and through the left arm into the body, striking the heart. Dick apparently lived for two or three minutes. The prisoners escaped. Pfoutz was seen going south through the courthouse lot and later toward the cliffs south of town. Elliot went east along the street north of the courthouse.

It was nearly dark when the crime was discovered. Every man in town wanted to be in the posse, but it was too dark to track them. Guards were posted all night on every road out of town, and Friday morning the manhunt started. Pfoutz's tracks were followed down the Colorado five miles. There he had improvised a raft from a log and started to float down the river. A man on horseback went back to Moab for a motorboat. Skewes and four men raced it down the river, watching closely along the banks as they went. Ten miles down the river they captured Pfoutz on a knoll a short distance from the stream.

In the meantime, posses had been scouring the surrounding hills for the other man. About 2 P.M., V. R. Johnson, on the road to Monticello, saw a man on foot a mile below Blue Hill, holding up his hand for



Richard D. and Martha Westwood with their granddaughter Mildred Double, 1929.

a ride. Some of his fingers were missing, matching Elliot's description. Johnson raced past him toward Monticello. At Cane Springs he met Albert Beach, driving a truck toward Moab. They came back together and again passed the fugitive. Beach then got off the truck where he could keep Elliot in sight—he only had a .22 rifle—while Johnson drove on two miles to where armed guards Len and Arch Stocks were stationed. The four drove up to Elliot, who meekly surrendered. He had lost his gun when he fell in the night while trying to scale the cliffs south of town.

On September 26 the two men were charged with murder and taken to Price to await trial. In the middle of November they were returned to Moab, where feelings ran high. On the evening of November 16 the prisoners were left alone to eat dinner. The front door on the jail and also the gate on the high fence around it were locked. When the sheriff returned ten minutes later they were gone. No one knows how they got the key.

Tracks showed they had escaped to the hills north of town on foot. Sunday morning the trail was taken up and followed to Wilson Mesa. Again it got too dark to track. But Monday morning the fugitives were found at the old Gardner Ranch twenty-five miles east of Moab and returned to face trial. Both men were found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment.²²

When the fugitives were captured the second time, Neil Westwood, Dick's son, was there. He had sworn to shoot them on sight, and no one would have stopped him. But he could not pull the trigger. His father, whatever troubles and joys he had otherwise in life, had stood for law and order. Neil could not take the law into his own hands.

²²Lamont Johnson, "Manhunt," *Startling Detective*, March 1941, See also *Times Independent*, September 12, September 19, September 26, November 21, December 5, December 12, 1929.