

**A History of
George Edward Finlinson**
1869-1955



The year 1869 was an eventful one. It was in 1869 that President Brigham Young organized the first Young Women's Mutual Improvement Association; bicycles, lawn mowers and dynamite were modern inventions; the first patent for chewing gum was issued; the hoop skirt gave way to the bustle; the United States bought Alaska from Russia for an average of 2 cents an acre; the Atlantic cable was laid between the United States and France; the Suez canal was completed; the Women's National Suffrage Association was formed; the transcontinental railroad was completed with the driving of the Golden Spike at Promontory, Utah. On it were these words, "May God continue the unity of our country as this railroad unites the two great oceans of the world."

On August 18 of that same year, in Fillmore, Millard County, Utah, a baby boy arrived at the home of George and Susan Trimble Finlinson. He was the second child in a family of nine children and the first boy. His parents gave him the name, George Edward. He was born at the home of his grandparents, the Trimbles. The home was a "half dug-out". It was half underground and then built up with adobes. His father had built an adobe home in which the family were living when called with others to help settle Oak Creek in the spring of 1871.

The first home of the Finlinson family in Oak Creek was at the Walker's Flour Mill, which was located in the southeast part of town by the creek. George's father was given a corner lot on the main street of the town on which he built an adobe home. This house consisted of one room with a lean-to. While the finishing touches were being made on the house the family lived with Caroline Dutson, who lived on the adjoining lot to the west. Caroline's home was made of lumber with no lining. The Dutsons had a child about the same age as George. They were small boys playing on the floor when George bit Caleb's nose. The only crop they could raise was sugar cane. Molasses was made from the cane and it was taken to other settlements and traded for grain. George would cry for "bread and manny" and Caroline's boys would cry for buttermilk.

Florence (Florie) Dutson Nielson worked off and on for George's mother. She said that George was an interesting child. He was never still. He was not mischievous but was busy playing stick horse and other things to amuse himself. He was bashful and would hang onto his sister Libbie's dress. At one time, when she was working at the Finlinson home, George cried every time he came to the table. Evidently he went through the same stages that the children of later generations go through. His mother had the children eat their "mush" before they could have anything else and he objected to the mush. His mother told him she bet Florie's brothers and sisters would be glad to eat mush, and Florie thought of her brother Bill who wouldn't touch it.

The United Order was instituted in Oak Creek from May until October 1874. George was then five years old. He remembered going to the town square, where his father kept accounts, to tell him to come to dinner. He said there were stables for horses and a Liberty Pole in the square. The family had the United Order records in their possession for many years.

It was the summer of the United Order that George started his schooling in the old adobe schoolhouse. Ida Pease was his teacher. There were two teachers in the school, the other being Rebecca Dutson (Jacobson). Ida Pease was born in Newark, Rock County, Wisconsin, December 22, 1855. She was a sister of Cornelia Roper, wife of Harry Roper. In July 1933, Ida came from her home in Arizona to pay her last visit to her old hometown, Oak City. She was then seventy-eight years of age. She visited with George and his wife and George sang to her, "It's Just a Little Street Where Old Friends Meet". Ida said that her mother was the first lady

schoolteacher that taught a full term without being run out by the boys.

George continued with his schooling and received all that was given in the schools of Oak Creek. They were graded by "Readers", the fifth reader being the highest at that time. One year everyone in the school had measles. Harriet Lyman (Lovell), who was in George's geography class, recovered first and came to see George. In those "good old days" a child having measles was not to drink water. Drinking water might make the measles "go in". George felt like he could drink Roper's well dry. Ropers were neighbors on the north and across the street. They had a "pocket well". This well was just a hole that they ran water into in the mornings and used out of it during the day. Finlinsons carried their water from this well.

After Ida Pease, George's teachers were Frank Young, father of Lucy and Olive Taylor of Delta, Utah, Hyrum Eldridge, Peter Anderson, Charlie Rawlinson, Mary Lyman, Angus Vance and O. A. Bates. Frank Young whipped his own boy and said if the other boys didn't behave, he would whip them too. Peter Anderson led one of the boys by the ear, which frightened George. Hyrum Eldridge went out on the street in the evening with his accordion, walked up and down, playing and singing. Mac Webb came out of his home with his lasso rope and said he was going to lasso the tune. When Mary Lyman taught, she took her babies to school and had the students tend them while she taught. Millie was the baby when George went to her school and he wheeled her back and forth in the baby buggy to keep her quiet.

The first Sunday School George attended was held in the Old Grist Mill. He was baptized 16 September 1877 by C. H. Jensen and confirmed by Platte D. Lyman the same day.

While visiting at their grandparents' home in Fillmore, Libbie and George had their pictures taken on tin-type. He wore a suit his grandfather had made. The photographer told them to look for the little white mice, which (thank goodness) never came out. George always remembered the incident because he was deceived.

One of the first tasks that was given to George to do was to herd the crows out of the corn. A favorite pastime was to follow the men around when they were breaking the oxen to work. They tied the oxen's tails together so they couldn't look around and break their necks, fastened on the yoke and tied them to posts to teach them to pull. He liked to watch Jonathon Partridge shoe the oxen. Jonathon lived where Esdras now lives. In the yard east and across the street there was a windless that was used to string the oxen up so that none of their feet touched the ground. They put two half shoes on each foot.

At the early age of eight years, George started to ride the range. His father asked someone to look after him. He and Abe Roper were sent to "May Party" to get a milk cow. George's legs were so short they only reached half way to the stirrups. Coming home the horse threw him off. He was so scared he dared not get on again. He tried to get Abe to ride her but Abe was scared too. They both rode Abe's horse home.

George's father started in the cattle business with a few head of cows and ten head of range cattle. These were put on the range in the summer and fed corn fodder in the winter. They didn't raise any hay at this time. George started to keep a record of the cattle when he was eight or ten years of age. He had a name for every head. The herd was gradually increased to eight hundred head. When they were brought in off the range, George could identify each one without looking at the brand and knew which ones were missing. He was asked at one time how he could tell the cattle and he answered, "Do George Anderson's children look like Jens Anderson's children?" At the age of twenty years, George had full charge of the cattle.

When in his teens, George went to Gunnison, Utah to help take some steers to sell. The steers sold for three and one half cents per pound. George had the largest steer in the herd. It weighed nineteen hundred pounds. It was a Roan Derm that he had bought from the Dutsons when it was a calf. While in Gunnison, he stayed at a hotel. He was bashful and scared and didn't dare ask for the things he wanted to eat. He envied the fellows who were at ease and seemed not at all backward in asking for what they wanted.

After the cattle were delivered in Gunnison, George went with George W. Nixon, a very close friend of his father, to Chester, Sanpete County, to get four thoroughbred Hereford bulls. They were yearling calves and cost five hundred dollars. They hauled them to Gunnison in a wagon. On the way over, they went by the Manti Temple. That was the first time he had seen the temple.

Another time, George helped deliver one thousand head of young steers to Juab to be loaded on the train. They camped one night along the way and someone had to herd the cattle all night. George's horse was scared by the train and ran to Leamington. George's father was in Leamington and was very concerned to see the horse coming home without its rider. George Nixon told George he could ride to Holden in the baggage

wagon and then could take a horse to get home.

At one time, while riding the range for cattle, looking through his field glasses, he spied a buggy stuck in the mud on the road going from Oasis to Fillmore. He went to see what the difficulty was, and to his surprise, found it to be David O. McKay, who at that time was head of all the Sunday Schools in the LDS Church. He was being taken to Fillmore on church business by someone who had a balky team. George got his lasso rope and pulled them out by the horn of his saddle.

George was blessed with a vigorous body which he attributed to the purification of his blood every spring by sagebrush tea that his mother insisted that he take. Much credit should be given to the molasses that was such an important part of his diet, it being rich in iron, and the protein in the peanuts that he loved so much to eat. One thing that really bothered him was to see anyone eat bread and milk with a side dish of jam or jelly. The object was to eat as much bread as possible. The milk and jam were to aid in getting it down. To have both milk and jam at the same time was extravagant and not necessary.

In spite of his good health, George was stricken with Tularemia and was confined to the house. Tularemia is a fever caused by a deer fly biting a diseased jackrabbit and then biting the human being. He was ailing almost all summer about 1935. It was very hard on him to be confined. He had Esdras drive the cattle back and forth on the sidewalk in front of his home while he watched through the window.

Abe Roper was a great pal to George. Each year a few days before the 4th of July, they took pack horses and went up Ox Canyon to get snow. For many years they provided the people of Oak Creek with ice cream for the 4th of July celebration. At first they made it in a gallon bucket. They would whirl it by the handle until the ice cream was mush ice; it was then sold and another batch was made. Abe sometimes sucked part of the egg white so the ice cream wouldn't be too rich. In time they were so prosperous they bought a four quart freezer. One year they sold thirty dollars worth of ice cream, charging five cents a dish.

At the time Frederick R. Lyman returned from his mission, all of the townspeople went to the "point" about four miles north of Oak Creek to meet him. The boys rode their horses and the rest went in wagons. They lined up on each side of the road and when Fred arrived on the scene, they all shouted, "We welcome you home, Brother Frederick R. Lyman". On the way home the boys decided to have a race and George won. He was riding a horse named Old Nig.

The Sunday School sponsored a "May Day Ride" each year. John W. Dutson was the superintendent of the Sunday School. They usually went to the canyon in the morning and back in the evening and the celebration ended with a dance in the schoolhouse. May Party Springs got its name from this outing. One May Day, especially for the occasion, George and his friend Caleb Dutson had new suspenders their mothers had made for them. The suspenders were made of blue denim sewed with white thread. The boys were really pleased to have the new suspenders.

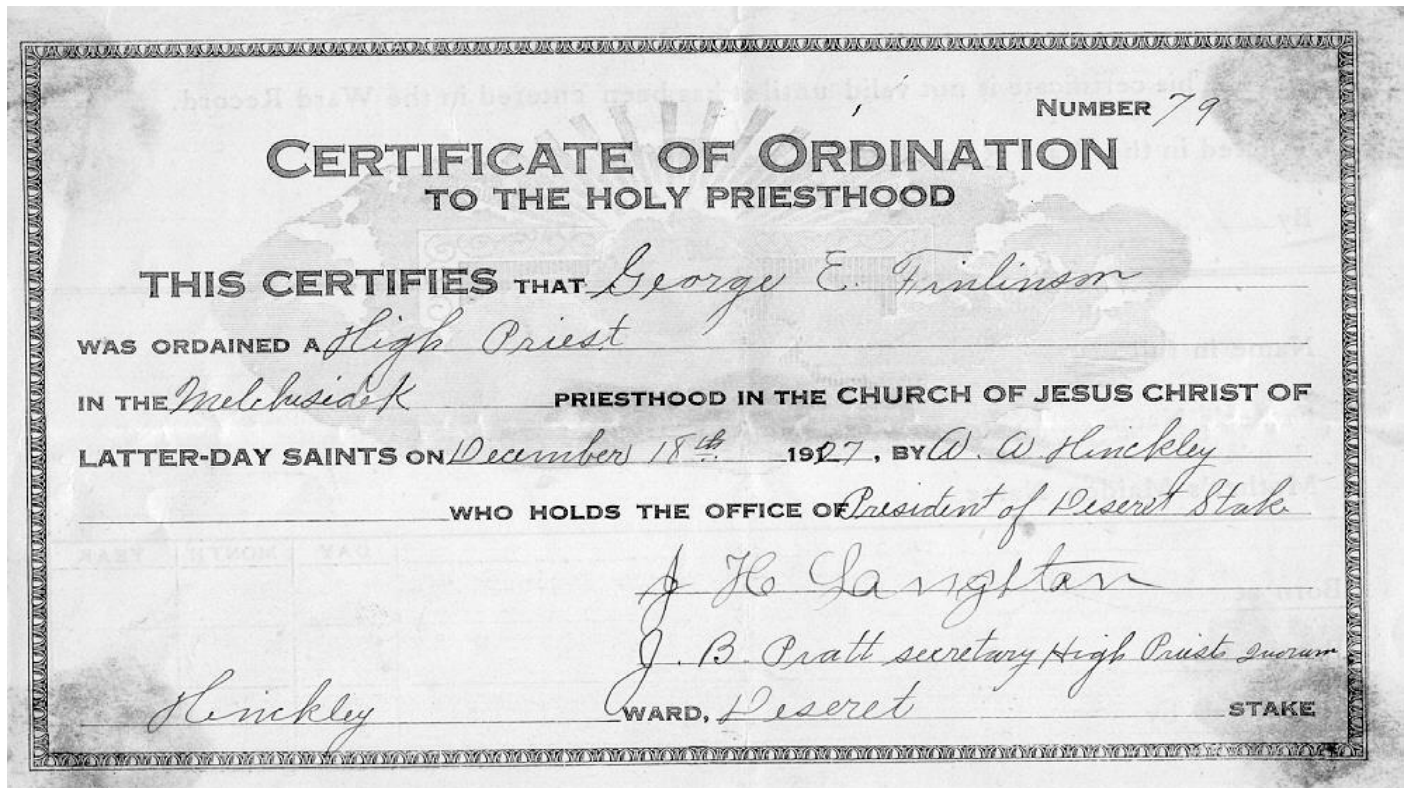
George went to high school in Fillmore, Utah, in 1891. He was twenty-two years of age. He lived with his grandparents and was there about five months. His grandfather, Edward Trimble, was a tailor and made many suits while George was there. His grandmother, Elizabeth Lennox Trimble, always served three kinds of bread; white, graham, and rye. This was a custom she had in England. The family had mush every morning for breakfast. The mush was put in a bowl and a hole made in the center of the mush and this was filled with butter and molasses. The mush was dipped into the molasses and butter then eaten. While at school, George was called upon to give a stump speech. Someone was kind enough to tell him one and this is what he said, "Great is the width and great is the length ----- of a potato patch". Another time he sang, "Down by the Brook at the End of the Lane", a song his Uncle Joe Trimble had taught him.

On October 9, 1895, George was married to Mary Caroline Roper, daughter of Alvin and Martha Lyman Roper, in the Salt Lake Temple. John R. Winder performed the ceremony. They started their housekeeping in the south room of his parents' home, where they lived until after Amy was born. A three-room adobe house, a half block south of his parents' home was built. They lived there until about 1909. A new home was then built to accommodate the growing family, which now numbered eight. This home was located a little north and about a block east of the former house. George made the adobes, which were used to line the new frame house. The adobes were made by mixing the proper proportions of clay, water and sand and put in molds to dry.

When Martha was a baby. George and his brother-in-law, Lorenzo T. Lovell, were logging in Partridge Canyon. George was getting the logs for lumber for his new home. George was pulling a log to dog it together

with a dog chain when the ax that was in the log came out and George fell backwards down a very steep canyon. He threw his arm back to catch himself and fell with all his weight on his arm, breaking the bone. It happened about four o'clock in the afternoon. He rode to town on the running gears of the wagon and his brother Joseph took him to Fillmore in a buggy to see the doctor. It was 3 AM when they arrived in Fillmore, and by that time the arm was badly swollen. Doctor Duckworth set the arm, but he continued to have severe pain in his wrist. Sometime later, Mary, his wife, remarked that his arm didn't look right. His wrist was out of place and the doctor hadn't noticed because of the swelling. His arm was crooked from then on. He worked most of the time with one hand while his arm was broken.

George was very active in church and community affairs. He was ordained an Elder by David McKee, November, 1890, and C. A. Memmott ordained him a Seventy, September 8, 1907. On December 18, 1927, Pres. Alonzo A. Hinckley ordained him a High Priest. He went Ward Teaching in the days of "Teacher's Trials"



and got in on many of them. His partners were George Dutson, Simeon Walker and Eddie Lyman. He told Eddie Lyman that he would rather not give the lesson at Antone Christensen's home because there were so many in the family. He taught the intermediate class in Sunday School for twenty-five years. Mamie Lovell Wells said that was the best class she was ever in. While George was teacher, every member of the class learned the Articles of Faith. For many years he was assistant teacher to Antone Christensen in the Seventies Quorum. The classes were held in the home of Annie C. Anderson while Sunday School was in session. If there was money to be collected for the ward or town, whether it was for a new amusement hall or getting money for Santa Claus, George was always on the committee. Because of his ability to mix with people and having a way of his own in influencing people, he could get money from individuals that no one else could. He said, "If you approach folks in the right way, they will do almost anything for you".

In about the year 1897, George was called to work in the MIA. Collier Lovell was the president and he chose George to be a counselor. This position he held for two years. It was while Collier was president that the first issue of the Improvement Era was published and George had every volume from that time on. One night when coming home from riding on the range all day, he decided in his mind that he wouldn't go to mutual that night. He did go, however, and was asked to be president. For a day or so he wished he had stayed home, but that feeling didn't last long. He went about to do the best he could. His counselors were J. Lee Anderson and Edd Dutson with Joseph L. Anderson as secretary. Sometime later, Peter Nielson and Lorenzo T. Lovell were his counselors. George served as ward president for fifteen years. At the Millard Stake Conference August 8,

1912, the stake was divided making the new Deseret Stake. George was chosen as Stake Superintendent of the YMMIA of the new stake and Millie Lyman Lovell was chosen as president of the YLMIA. George held this position until September 29, 1928, making thirty years of continuous service in the MIA. He had held the position long enough and thought it best to let someone else take over while the organization was in good condition. There was a party given in his honor along with Alonzo A. Hinckley, retiring Stake President of the Deseret Stake and his counselor, Willis E. Robison. George was presented with a nice fountain pen and ever sharp pencil.

The years spent in the MIA were filled with interesting experiences. At one time he rode horseback over the mountains to Scipio to attend an MIA convention. It was January, and the snow on the summit was two feet deep. Going over he saw lion tracks in the snow. Carl Robbins and George Monroe of Scipio came back with him to get cattle. George told them about seeing the tracks, and as they neared the summit, they saw lying by a big rock in the sun, three lions. The men were within thirty feet before the lions noticed them. As soon as the lions saw the men, they ran. One was full-grown and the other two were younger. When George reached Oak City, he immediately told Fred Lyman about seeing the lions. The next morning Fred with John Nielson and Leo Lyman set out to hunt the lions. The men tracked them to the head of Fool Creek Canyon but never saw them

For several years the Deseret Stake MIA sponsored outings in the Oak Creek Canyon. There were many BYU professors that came to lecture and to entertain. Many of them were entertained in George's home. The following is an excerpt from a letter George received from President Hinckley after the outing in 1913. "I came away expressing to you my deep appreciation of the able manner in which you managed your canyon outing. I pronounce it a genuine success and greatly to your credit."

He missed only two Union Meetings, which were held monthly; all the while he was Stake Superintendent. His family was quarantined for diphtheria the one time that he missed and the other time was when he was a registration officer. He went rain or shine, blizzard or mud. When roads were too bad for horses and buggy, he went horseback. He traveled around the stake, visiting every MIA, with Oscar A. Kirkham. They both sang and Brother Kirkham did the accompanying on the piano. Later on, George had a car in which to do his traveling. He attended every June Convention held in Salt Lake City, and many relatives and friends said he would never have to go to the Celestial Kingdom as long as he could go to June Convention. He was personally acquainted with the General Authorities of the Church and many of them called him "George". They gave him the title of "Cowboy Superintendent"! His attendance at Stake Conferences was one hundred percent until the year he was released and he was confined to his home with neuritis. That was the third time he had ever been sick in his lifetime. He had one sick spell when Esdras was a baby.

On the first of March 1903, George was given a Patriarchal Blessing by Patriarch John Ashman. Among other things he was told that his mission was to preach the gospel, but more especially, to preside in the midst of Israel. About the year 1915 a call came for the Seventies to go on missions. At a special meeting for Seventies, George was asked by the visiting General Authority if he would go on a mission if called and George said, "Yes." In a few days a call came but was followed a short time later by a release. The release stated that his services were needed more at home among the young people of the church.

Many a sick person was cheered by George's visit and his song. He loved music and especially did he love to sing. He always came back from Salt Lake with two or three new songs to learn. Many of his friends hearing new songs would get copies for him. His brother Jeff sent him a number of songs from the Northwest while serving a mission there. George could not read the notes but was taught the songs by someone who could. His brother, Ray, helped him learn many songs and his daughters were able to teach him melodies after they were old enough to take piano lessons. He memorized all of his songs and he had one for every occasion. George sang in the Oak City Choir for fifty years and more. He sang under the direction of George L. Dutson and all the time that Edd Dutson was the leader.

In the spring of 1933, Don L. Anderson made a wager that George couldn't sing for an hour without stopping to talk between songs. The bet was a pound of peanuts. One of George's weaknesses was peanuts. George took him up on the wager and there were so many people wanted to hear him sing, it was decided to hold the affair in the church house. People came from the surrounding farms and some came from Delta. He sang for an hour to a packed house. He was accompanied at the piano by his daughter Melva and his good

He Has Rhythm



George E. Finlinson . . . He knows a song or two.

Songster, 68, Knows 65 Melodies

'Old Black Joe' Still
Has Thrills for
Oak City Resident

Tribune Intermountain Service
OAK CITY—George E. Finlinson has been singing "Old Black Joe" for the past 62 years . . . and he isn't tired of it yet.

Just why, the 68-year-old Oak City resident is unable to explain, but he says perhaps it is because he knows 64 other songs which provide a variety in his daily "crooning menu."

Mr. Finlinson learned most of his songs . . . which include something like 11,000 words . . . while riding the range, and sentimental ballads are his favorite. One month he provided entertainment for 35 Millard county gatherings.

A year ago he won a wager. A man bet him he couldn't sing for an hour without an intermission. He sang for 65 minutes, never "talked" a word.

Another time he was asked how far it was to Leamington, 11 miles from Oak City.

"With my horse on a gallop," he said, "it is 18 songs and a couple of bags of peanuts."

He loves to dance and is an active churchman, being for 16 years president of Deseret L. D. S. stake Young Men's Mutual Improvement association.

friend Willie Jacobson. The group then went to the amusement hall where dancing and visiting were enjoyed and, last but not least, a huge sack of peanuts was devoured. He sang thirty songs.

George was interviewed by a Salt Lake Tribune feature story writer, and his picture and a write-up about him appeared in one of their Sunday papers in 1937. The headlines of the article were, "He Has Rhythm, George E. Finlinson.... while riding on the range, and sentimental ballads are his favorites. One month he provided entertainment for 35 Millard County gatherings.

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George was dance manager for twenty years. Part of that responsibility was to keep the lamps filled with coal oil, the wicks trimmed and the chimneys clean. Candles were whittled and the shavings were scattered on the floors in hopes the wax might make the rough floor more smooth for dancing. The school benches were lined around the walls of the building. These benches or desks made excellent beds, with the aid of coats, for the children when the time came for the children to be sleepy. The parents always took their children with them. It was no small task to get the children sufficiently awake to walk home after the parties. One night the lights were all blown out and the door closed and George and family were halfway home, when George's wife Mary asked, "Where is Amy?" George walked back to the schoolhouse and found her sound asleep on her desk bed.

Alvin Roper played the fiddle for the dancing and was very often aided by George with his harmonica. Different ones chorded on the organ. The fiddler was paid for his services but the accompanist played for free. Sometimes George's girls in their tender years were pressed into service.

When eighteen years of age, George started calling for quadrilles. This he continued to do for sixty-two years. One winter all the young folks in Oak City were taught to dance the quadrille. He loved to dance and participated until about his 80th year.

He was a great entertainer with stories as well as with songs. Fred Lyman said he would rather hear George tell about going to a circus than to go himself. He loved sports of all kinds. While acting as Superintendent of the Oak City YMMIA, he was also serving as Chairman of the Millard Stake Athletic Committee. He was the Champion at throwing the shot-put at these meets.

As much as George loved to sing, dance etc., these were just secondary interests in his life. George loved to work. He worked from daylight until after dark, usually eating his evening meal at 10 PM. He took great pride in his work, especially in "stacking hay". His grandsons have jokingly said, "Grandfather judged a man's character by his haystack." His hands were gnarled and like rasps. On one of his visits to Salt Lake City when Esdras was with him, he needed to get a check cashed. After several unsuccessful attempts, they went to Montgomery Wards. The clerk there said he couldn't cash it but he would get the manager, which he did. The manager shook hands with George and turned to the clerk and said, "Cash this man's check. Anyone with hands like that, is an honest man." He never liked to wear new Levis. He rubbed some dirt on them so they would look like they had been worn.

George didn't do a lot of traveling but did make two trips to California with cattle and went three times to Lyman, Wyoming. The last time he went to Lyman was to attend a celebration at which Fort Bridger was dedicated as a state museum.

In the summer of 1933, he went to San Juan to visit his sister Libbie's family. His daughter Lucy and her husband, Evan Christensen, made this trip possible. He had a grand time. The relatives quit everything they were doing and entertained him royally. George sang every night to relatives and their friends. He went to the Natural Bridges, Bluff and the ruins of the Cliff Dwellers. When the rest of the party were enraptured by the coloring in the rocks and hills, George would say, "I can't see a thing a cow could eat." Marvin Lyman expressed a desire that someone take Uncle George's report of the visit down in short hand when he got home. He made a second to San Juan in 1949 when Libbie's family was in charge of the annual Finlinson family reunion.

Before the schools were consolidated, George was a Trustee of the Oak City schools. He helped hire the teachers and they came to him to be paid.

After his father died 12 April 1909, George and his four brothers Joseph, Joshua, Leo and Ray, carried on their cattle business and farming operations as the Finlinson Brothers. Sometime before this, their brother Jeff had bought some land of his own in Leamington. These brothers were very loyal to each other and were never heard to talk about each other or complain at the other's dealings. George being the eldest was the general organizer. When they each had grown sons, it was decided that the thing to do was to divide the property and each one go on his own, which they did. He was the tallest of the six boys; this he attributed to standing up at the table when he ate while growing up.

At the age of eighty years, his health began to fail. The last two years of his life his five daughters took turns staying with their mother to help take care of him. He passed peacefully away February 8, 1955, at his home in Oak City, surrounded by all nine children. He was eighty-five years of age. His brothers and sisters Elizabeth Lyman, William Jefferson, Margaret Ann Lovell, Joseph Trimble, Joshua, Rachel Nielson, Leo and Ray Finlinson.

This history was written by his daughter, Angie Finlinson Lyman. Pictures added 2017.



Aug. 25, 1946