

READ, HIRAM WALTER

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READ, HIRAM WALTER, born at Jewett City, (Griswold) New London County, Connecticut, July 17, 1819; son of Caleb and Mary (Leffingwell) Read; educated at Oswego Academy and Madison University; baptized into the fellowship of the Baptist Church at Oswego, New York, March 11, 1838; ordained to the Ministry and began his pastoral work at Whitewater, Wisconsin, 1844; served as Chaplain to the Wisconsin State Senate and attained a reputation as a successful evangelist.

Early in 1849, under the direction of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, he started overland with his wife for California; on reaching New Mexico he was so impressed with the importance and destitution of that field that he asked and obtained the consent of the Society to remain there as the first Protestant missionary in that Territory; appointed Chaplain at Fort Marcy, near Santa Fé, by resolution of the Post Council of Administration, July 16, 1849, and served until he was dropped from the list pursuant to a general order of the War Department affecting Chaplains, dated March 15, 1852. Under orders from the Department Commander he visited all the army posts in New Mexico to preach to the soldiers; in March and April, 1851, he traveled 950 miles on horseback on a journey from Santa Fé to Franklin (El Paso), Texas, and return.

Established the first school to teach the English language in Santa Fé, acquired a thorough knowledge of Spanish, and distributed many Bibles and tracts printed in that language, which he read to the natives; because of her ill health he

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brought his wife back to the States late in 1851, but returned to New Mexico to continue his school and mission work; while there he was captured by Indians, threatened with death by fire, but was graciously saved.

In March, 1854, he left Albuquerque, New Mexico, with Andrew B. Gray and traveled under the protection of the Texas Western Railroad survey party via Tucson to Fort Yuma, arriving there in May; returning from California to his family in the East he labored for the American Home Mission Society and the American and Foreign Bible Society; for a time he settled at Falls Church, Fairfax County, Virginia, where he founded the Columbia Baptist Church and helped in many revival services; appointed Clerk at \$1,200 per annum in the First Comptroller's Office, Treasury Department, July 3, 1861, but was given leave from time to time to assist soldiers in the field and Army hospitals; captured by Confederates at Savage Station, Virginia, June 30, 1862, and confined as a prisoner of war at Richmond on July 5; paroled at Aikens Landing, Virginia, September 21, 1862, and exchanged for Reverend W. F. Broadus, a noted Baptist Minister of Fredericksburg, Virginia, who had been captured by Union troops.

Resigned his position in the Treasury Department when he was appointed by President Lincoln as Postmaster at Tucson, Arizona Territory, on August 25, 1863; accompanied the Arizona Territorial officials across the plains and through New Mexico;

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offered prayer at Navajo Springs, A. T., December 29th, when the American flag was raised to signify the establishment of civil government in Arizona, and read, in Spanish, a proclamation to that effect.

Arrived at Fort Whipple, A. T., with the Governor's party, January 22, 1864; his appointment as Postmaster was changed to Prescott on June 19th, after that place, rather than Tucson, was decided upon as the seat of the new Territorial Government; appointed Deputy United States Marshal to take a special census of the 3d Judicial District (afterwards Yavapai County) Arizona, which he completed in May, 1864, with a total enumeration of 1,088 persons; listed himself in the Census as married, family in Washington, D. C., resident in Arizona 3 months, occupation, Misister and Postmaster, property valued at \$150; organized the first Sunday School in Arizona at Prescott, August 11, 1864; invited by Concurrent Resolution adopted by the 1st Arizona Legislature on October 3, 1864, "to hold Divine service in this building each Sabbath during the session"; served as Postmaster at Prescott until May 18, 1865.

Remained for a time in California and then located at Hannibal, Missouri, where he devoted himself to the work of an evangelist; his labors extended to eastern cities and many of the larger towns of the country; during his ministry he baptized nearly 1,000 persons and led thousands more to Christ who were baptized by others; became Pastor of the Baptist Church at Virginia City, Nevada, January 1, 1880, and remained until he preached his farewell sermon on February 5, 1882; according to a Virginia City newspaper he left there on February 10th, for Tucson, Arizona, to accept a new assignment; that he visited Prescott is shown by extracts from the Prescott Courier:

June 17, 1882 - - Rev. W. H. Read, who came to Arizona, in 1863, with the "government outfit," is, we learn, in attendance at the Baptist conference, and will at 7 o'clock, Saturday evening next, speak to the boys from the porch in front of Judge Fleury's residence, West Prescott. His discourse will undoubtedly, be on the ancient times here, when it took two green-back dollars to purchase a pound of Government crackers from the civil officials, who drew the crackers out of Uncle Sam's commissary. We recollect Mr. Reed. He preached the first sermon and, if we mistake not, took the first census in this part of Arizona.

June 24, 1882 - - Rev. H. W. Read will preach every evening of this week, except Saturday, in the Baptist Church, West Prescott. Prayer meeting previous to preaching. Sunday last Mr. Read preached at Whipple Barracks, at which place he was chaplain as early as 1864.

July 1, 1882 - - Rev. Read delivered an interesting lecture to a fair-sized audience last night, on his adventures in this Territory and New Mexico. He also gave an interesting account of his capture by the Apaches on the Upper Gila river, and subsequent release by Eskinya, chief of the Apaches. In the course of the lecture Rev. Read gave some

valuable hints in regard to the future action of this city, and the means to be taken to make it the metropolis of Arizona.

He did not remain in Prescott but located at El Paso, Texas where he was listed in the 1885 City directory as a "Bible Missionary"; the following is taken from a communication printed in the Austin Texas Baptist Herald of January 15, 1885, relative to the construction of a church at El Paso:

On my return to El Paso I proposed to immediately build the house. A meeting was called, at which dissatisfaction with the plan formerly adopted, was expressed. A new and more costly plan was presented subsequently, and pending the discussion of this, Bro. H. W. Read, a resident Baptist minister, proposed that if the Church would adopt the new plan, he would agree to go North and raise all the money necessary to build it, the Church authorizing him to do so. While my judgment did not approve of this, I could not oppose it for reasons unnecessary to give here.

It pained me very much to see the building of the house deferred, and for which we then had in sight the necessary money, but I acquiesced with the Church as heartily as possible. Bro. Read's proposition was accepted, and last August he went on his canvassing trip, remaining North until a few days ago. He succeeded in raising only about \$300 above his expenses. That he labored hard I have no question, but from some cause his trip was not successful.

In course of time he became known in El Paso as "Bishop" Read a title which it was said "he appropriated unto himself in order to exert a stronger influence as a missionary over the Mexican Catholics he was seeking to convert"; the announcement of his death which appeared in the El Paso Times of February 8, 1895, reads:

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"Bishop H. W. Read, who died Wednesday night will be buried this afternoon. Bishop Read was one of the old landmarks of El Paso. He was one of the first protestant ministers to locate in El Paso and in the early days he did good work here. Peace to his aged ashes."

Died at El Paso, Texas, February 6, 1895, aged 75; probably buried in Concordia Cemetery, El Paso.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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Parish, T.E. - History of Arizona, Vol. 3, pp. 196-97.

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Coan, C.F. - A History of New Mexico, New York, 1925, Vol. 1, p. 364.

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Adjutant General of the Army - Prisoner of War Records.

General Accounting Office - Old files.

Post Office Department - Appointment records.

The American Baptist Home Mission Society; New York - extracts from the Home Mission Record, 1849-52.

The Texas Baptist Herald, Austin, January 15, 1885.

The Prescott Courier, June 17, 3:1, June 24, 4:2, July 1, 1882, 3:1; August 9, 1893, 2:2.

The Arizona Republican, Phoenix, April 12, 1923, 1:5.

The El Paso Times, February 8, 1895 (obituary).

New Mexico Historical Review, Vol. 17, No. 2, April, 1942, pp. 113-147 (articles written by him and his wife in 1849-52, originally printed in the Baptist Home Mission Record).

The Arizona Miner, Prescott, March 9, 2:4 and 3:1, April 6, 3:1-2, May 11, 3:2, July 6, 3:1, August 10, 3:2, August 24, 3:1 and September 7, 1864, 3:1.

WANTED

1. Additional references to him in Arizona newspapers.
2. Did any other Prescott newspaper mention his visit there in June and July, 1882, or give a more extended account of his lecture on the night of June 30?