

## William Frewin Hull

*Excerpts from the History compiled by  
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William Frewin Hull was born October 2, 1894 in Hooper, Weber County, Utah. His parents were Thomas Benson and Alice Frewin Hull. He was the third child, and the first son born in a family of 11 children, the last dying at birth.

The town of Hooper was located ten miles southwest of Ogden, Utah. Hooper had been the home of William's grandparents, William Gibson and Eliza Lowe Hull, who raised a family of six boys, all of whom became farmers and fruit growers.

William was always a solitary boy, quiet and bashful. He was fond of animals and usually had a dog tagging along behind him. He had a pet goat and enjoyed bird watching in the orchard. He loved to visit his

grandfather's blacksmith shop, where wagon axles, single trees and double trees were made. It is probable that William learned his skill and aptitude for mechanical things watching and helping his grandfather.

William started his education at the old North School in Hooper. A neighbor picked up all the children around in his covered wagon, taking them to and from school. William attended Sunday School at the Lakeview Ward Church. Nearly all of the Hooper community was composed of Mormon families.

In 1903, when William was nine years old, the Hull family decided to move to Canada. His father had heard marvelous stories from friends and travelers about wonderful land to be homesteaded there. Others, also, were keen to try their hand at pioneering in a new country. William's Uncle James went to Canada in 1902, and returned to Hooper with glowing tales of vast, glassy plains where 160-acre homestead plots were available for only \$10.00, if you improved upon the land within three years. So, Thomas sold his farm to his brother, Robert, packed up his wife, Alice, their children and worldly goods to embark on a new life

En route to Canada, the cows, horses and farm machinery went by freight train as did William's father. They arrived a week later than the rest of the family, who went ahead on the Canadian Pacific Railroad passenger line. Four families left Hooper at this time, and they arrived in a terrible snowstorm in May. The families had to stay at a hotel in Stirling for a while, until the men arrived to move them into big tents. Several children came down with scarlet fever and families were quarantined, but soon the men were able to look for desirable homesteads. Finally, decisions made and land chosen, claims were filed with the land office on adjacent parcels, 32 miles east of Lethbridge in the province of Alberta.

The next years were a rugged saga of rough pioneering. They built substantial homes and corrals, planted crops, planned lots and a town. Since the town grew up around the railroad water tank, it was named Taber after a railroad magnate. William's sister, Nellie, was the first baby born in the town in 1904. Three more children were born to the Hulls by 1911, bringing the number of children to ten, so Alice and Thomas needed all the space available in the six bedroom house Thomas constructed. It took three years of hard work to complete the family's living quarters, a square frame house with outbuildings. The only insurmountable worry was an acute shortage of water, since a well-drilling operation had not been

productive. This was a problem all the years the family lived in Canada. Water had to be hauled weekly from a well on a neighbor's place more than a mile away. Much of this area was being settled by Mormons and the family was active in the LDS Church there.

William went to school in Taber, where he learned to ice skate, playing hockey in winter on the town's ponds and rivers. Hunting was a long time tradition in the Hull family, both for food and sport. William inherited his father's love for hunting and the outdoors.

Perhaps the reason William was an excellent dancer in later years was the start he had in Taber. His father, together with a young relative, Walter Quibell, combined three of the original tent houses into the town's first dance hall, where William's two older sisters taught him to dance.

A highlight of William's youth during the Canadian years was an outing taken by his parents and their neighbors. The two families went on a railway trip, which included Banff National Park and the city of Calgary.

The Hull family finally, reluctantly, decided to leave Canada after nine years spent there. Most of the original families had returned to Utah when they gained title to their land, about 1906, selling at a profit. The Thomas Hulls came to miss the close group of relatives. When William's uncle, John Hull, wrote urging his brother to come to Idaho to help run a ranch in Almo, Thomas decided to make the move. The homestead was sold, and on November 6, 1912, the family boarded a train for the long trip back. William was 18 years old. Thomas and his family went to Almo to join John, but the ranch wasn't to their liking so they didn't stay.

Thomas Hull rented a house in the town of Burley, Idaho, later purchasing property called the Canal Side Farm. The family took up farming again, only this time on a much smaller scale than on the Alberta homestead. The farm in Burley consisted of 52 acres under irrigation, later increased to 92 with the addition of rental land. They raised sugar beets, alfalfa, and potatoes, with some wheat, oats, and barley. Four of the five boys were old enough to help on the farm by now.

Life in Idaho was pleasant. William began to make acquaintances and follow the usual pursuits of young men, including fishing and hunting along the Snake River. Sometimes he went on trips with his father by

horse and wagon that took several weeks to the Shoshone Basin south of Twin Falls, or to Hagerman Valley. William continued to work with his father and brothers on the farm until America went to war.

When William arrived in Idaho from Montana, through the United States port of entry from Canada, he was a Canadian subject. At age 21, he signed a declaration of intent, making him a U.S. citizen again, when he dutifully foreswore allegiance to King George V of Great Britain, and swore allegiance to America. This document also required the signer to declare that he was not now practicing, nor did he ever intend to practice, polygamy.

In 1917, during World War I, all young men William's age were required to register for the draft. Because of the country's need for farmers, William was first classified 1E-exempt, but by the time he was 23 years old, his reclassification read 1A. William was inducted into the army and ordered to report to the National Hotel in Burley on August 7, 1918. At this time, the town of Burley was holding huge celebrations of fanfare and farewell for the boys off to war. William, shy by nature, felt unable to face this kind of send off, so he traveled by bus with Arthur Lowe to Long Beach, California, to report for basic training.

Private First Class Hull, serial no. 915-99, Company A, 12<sup>th</sup> U.S. Infantry, journeyed by troop train (under blackout secrecy) to Norfolk, Virginia. Much of his army life was spent on guard and patrol duty. William also worked as a supply clerk, issuing uniforms.

Company A had received overseas orders, rations, and was awaiting transport to France when the armistice was proclaimed. The soldiers were kept at the dock in readiness for a time, and then went to New York City, where William marched down Fifth Avenue during the parades celebrating the end of the war. William was disappointed not to see France. Young William was mustered out of the army in September 1919 at Camp Dodge, Iowa, almost a year to the day that he went into service. William loved drills and marching formation, and, in later years, participated in Veteran's Day parades, stepping off once again to the stirring "Stars and Stripes Forever."

From the army, Bill, as he was called now, returned to his parents' farm. Since he was the oldest son, he was the only one allowed to handle horses. Thomas always said Bill was the only one who could cultivate a straight row. Bill had a little, white horse called Buttons because of the fancy glass buttons on the horse's bridle. One side button showed a picture of a flag, and the other, a girl. On Saturday, which was the

day Alice went shopping, Bill would be the one to take her to town, driving the buggy and Buttons. Bill had been home from the army for about a year when he met Etta Ottley. He had a date to take Annie Lewis to a dance, and Annie asked if he would mind if her cousin from Elba came along. As it turned, Bill didn't mind a bit. In fact, before the evening ended, he secured a date with Etta to go to Chataqua the very next afternoon. Soon Annie was past history and Bill and Etta were dating regularly. During these early courting days, Bill rode the white horse to Elba, sometimes not returning for several days. This was a long ride over dirt roads, a distance of 32 miles.

The romance wasn't headed straight for the altar, however. After Bill popped the question, the engagement lasted four years. Etta was ten years his junior, and not quite as ready to settle down as Bill was. Also, she had experience several critical illnesses during this period.

Bill used to say, "get on the right side of a girl's mother, and you will have it made with the daughter." Perhaps he was working on this theory some of the time. Etta maintained that he was certainly a favorite of her mother, Abbie Ottley. In any case, courtship times were fun, whether dancing, driving to silent movies, or spending the day with friends in the City of Rocks, a favorite picnic, watermelon bust, and rock climbing place. In 1924, Bishop Goodmanson of the Burley Second Ward church asked Bill if he would like to go on a mission for the LDS Church. Bill refused, giving as his reason that he hoped to be married shortly.



The advent of the automobile was beginning to change peoples' lives everywhere. Bill discovered he liked to tinker with cars more than he like to farm so he took a job at a Conoco service station. Poor old Buttons was replaced by a Model T Ford.

Eventually, the marriage date was set. Bill and Etta drove to Brigham City, Utah, where they spent the night with relatives. They were married June 30, 1925 in the LDS temple in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Bill Hull invented the first tent camper thirty years ahead of its time. He took his new bride to Utah on a month-long honeymoon and he modified a tent to fit onto his Model T Ford. They camped in Bryce and Zion National Parks. The bridegroom's Model T had mechanical problems while on the honeymoon, which were solved with ingenuity. When the gas line didn't provide fuel fast enough to go up steep hills, Bill simply turned the car around and backed up.

When the William Frewin Hulls returned to Burley, they began their life together in a small, rented brick house on Albion Street. Later they moved to Main, to a wood frame house. Bill found a better job working as a mechanic for Spencer's Garage, and planted a lawn in his spare time. Bill and Etta enjoyed being with Bill's brother Ray and Ray's wife, Sadie. There were dances, cards, outings, and shows, but the best times were spent at the Arcadia dancing to the music of Hosey Stout. In those days, dance cost ten cents each or a dollar for an entire evening.

On the cold day of February 26, 1930, Bill's first child, a daughter, was born. She was named Thirza after Etta's youngest sister. In March of that year, Bill was offered a position at the C.L. Lind Garage in Twin Falls, and the family of three moved to a rented house on Main Street. It was a happy time. Bill's sister Nellie lived in Twin Falls, and the two families visited often. Etta made friends easily and the Hulls' social circle was soon enlarged, even though they didn't go dancing as often as they had in Burley.

At the end of a very hot summer in 1931, on September 23, a second daughter was born. Named after a daughter of a good friend, she was called Theda. Theda was born at Etta's parents' home in Elba, Idaho. Three weeks later, the Hulls moved into a white frame, two-bedroom house they purchased on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue West and Trucker's Lane. The house, on a corner lot, cost \$1200, and the monthly payments were \$12.00.

Troubles began about this time for Bill and Etta, just as they did for virtually everyone when the depression

years became a grim reality. Bill found that he could not meet the mortgage payments on their house. Fortunately, a brother-in-law was able to help, assuming the 4% loan so they were able to keep their home. The Hulls never went hungry, even though Bill's wages were 25 cents an hour paid by the job. There often were many beggars at the door looking for handouts. Bill always believed that if he had food it was meant to be shared, so they never turned people away.

Bill was off work for a time at Lind's after a car he was working on slipped from the jack, pinning his leg under the car and breaking his ankle. During this time, Bill and Etta learned that their eldest daughter had a heart murmur. There were many medical bills and worries over the years because of Thirza's health.

Bill was an excellent, conscientious mechanic. In 1933, he took a job with the new Buick garage, owned by Miles J. Browning. Mr. Browning installed and paid for a telephone at the house so that Bill could receive calls and pick up disabled cars for the garage at night and on weekends. This meant welcome, extra income. Bill read auto manuals and mechanics' magazines to teach himself all he could about new developments in the automotive field.

Bill looked like a patrician Roman. He had the prominent nose of the Hulls. His eyes were blue, he had a fair complexion, went bald early and weighed around one hundred and fifty pounds all of his life. He wore glasses to read with and admitted to false teeth. Bill was particular about haircuts and he liked well-fitted suits. He was undemonstrative, and seldom expressed affection.

Bill enjoyed remarkably good health. He drank eight glasses of water every day, and he believed in walking a lot. He deplored white "baker's" bread and refined sugar. He liked chocolate in any form. Two things he would never eat were bologna and angel food cake.

Bill sometimes took the family to his dad's place in Burley to visit relatives, usually on a holiday. His dad would come to the house from wherever he was working outdoors, and the nearby families would gather to visit. The men traded stories about hunting and the women tried to visit among themselves about domestic matters. This wasn't easy because the Hull men folk all talked at once and their voices would get louder and louder, each one determined to be heard above the others. Bill's brother, Albert, was popular with the children because he could juggle oranges. Alice just smiled, listened, and rocked to and fro in her rocking chair, her feet not touching the floor since she

was so tiny.

One winter Sunday, Bill and family went to Wilson Lake, which was frozen and cleared for skating. Sleds were loaded into the car, and from some secret hidey-hole in the cellar, Bill produced a pair of black leather, much worn ice skates.

No one in the group was a good skater. They probably assumed that Bill would, as usual, be a non-participating audience. This time they were all in for a surprise. Bill put on his skates, ventured onto the ice, and really skated! He made figure eights, went backwards, glided on one foot, carved smooth circles, and then took Thirza and Theda on their sleds far out onto the ice. Bill's friends, and even Etta, were amazed and admiring. Since he never boasted about himself, no one realized that a boy growing up in Canada lived on skates.

After moving from 2<sup>nd</sup> West, they lived for a short time on Fillmore Street before finding the kind of house they had always wanted at 504 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue North. Bill was reluctant to get into any kind of financial debt, but Etta persuaded him to buy her dream home.

Bill wasn't much of a fisherman, but he loved to hunt, often going with Brother Art and Art's sons, Chad and Gene. The nephews had hunting dogs, but Bill never owned a bird dog. He was a good shot, careful and particular about handling game and guns.

As Bill grew older, automotive techniques changed, and work became increasingly difficult. In 1964, he retired from the work he'd known all of his life. During the ensuing months, Bill carved fine gun stocks, watched the champagne music of Lawrence Welk on television, and read his favorite magazines: Outdoor Life, Sports Afield, and Field and Stream. There were still deer hunting trips, and right up until the day he died, Bill continued to mow his lawn with an old push mower. Neighbors hired him to maintain their yards. On July 16, 1966, he went to work, but returned early after leaving a note which read, "I'm not feeling good; will have to quite." Bill died that afternoon at home. He was 71 years old, and was buried in Sunset Memorial Cemetery in Twin Falls, Idaho.