

*A life sketch of*

# John Atkins Hymas

and

# Mary Ann Pitman Hymas

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John Atkins Hymas was born September 1, 1839 at Raleigh, Essex, England. He was the third child of William and Mary Ann Atkins Hymas. He had four brothers and three sisters: George, William Alfred, Sarah, Susan, Benjamin, James and Mary Ann. All the children were born at Raleigh except the youngest girl, who was born after the family moved to Hockley.

When the family lived at Hockley, John's father was in charge of a farm there and John assisted his father with the farm work. His education was limited, but because of his desire to learn, John became a good reader and writer.

In the year 1853, a missionary of the Latter-Day Saints Church was holding a meeting at the forks of the road in England, and as he began to sing, a group of boys and girls near by went to listen to him. John was in the group. He was 14 years of age at this time and he was so impressed with what he heard that he anxiously told his mother all about it and asked her to go to the next meeting with him, which she did. After this, John attended many meetings and became very interested in the Gospel and he became converted. Henry Kemp baptized him a member of the church May 21, 1854. Later his mother, father and his brothers and sisters, with the exception of his brother George, also became members of the church.

It was John's desire to come to America, so he earned and saved money for the trip. When he was 16 years of age he left his home and family and went to Liverpool and set sail on the ship 'Caravan', February 18, 1856. The ship landed at New York on March 27<sup>th</sup>. During the voyage, John was very lonely, but he met some people on the ship by the name of Brown who told him that they would do what they could for him.

During the first afternoon, while on the streets of New York, some children gathered around him and made fun of his talk and clothing. He told the Browns that evening that he was sure he would not like the Yankee people. The next morning he and Mr. Brown went to Long

Island in search of work. John secured a job at a market for five dollars a month. Mr. Brown was unable to find work and he asked John to borrow three months pay in advance and loan it to him. At the end of this time, Mr. Brown was to mail the money back to John and John was to go and live with the Browns. John worked hard for three months to pay off the loan, but at the end of this time, he did not hear from the Browns and never did hear from them. He quit his job expecting to go with Mr. Brown, and he was disappointed and worried as he had no money and no job.

John soon met an Englishman who belonged to the church and told him his story. He took John to his home. This man and his wife were willing to share what they had with him. The man was a shoemaker, but had very little work. They took passage on a boat up the Hudson River. The Englishman had a fiddle and a concertina and while he played the fiddle, John played the concertina and they thus entertained the passengers. After they had played for some time, the hat was passed and some money thereby obtained for their support.

At Newbury, they secured work on a farm for a man named Gillis. At this farm they cut hay with a scythe, but this was rather hard work for the shoemaker so he soon quit and started to up his trade making shoes. John however went right on working, as he needed the money. This work was very hard, as he had to work by the side of the farmer and sometimes he got so tired he could hardly keep going. To make things worse, Mr. Gillis found out that John was a Mormon and he said that 'he would rub Mormonism out of him with a piece of fat bacon'. This only made John stronger in the faith, and when he left the farm, he was still a good 'Mormon Boy'.

After leaving Newbury, they went to Iowa where they worked for the railroad. John hauled cars of dirt and the shoemaker hauled water. One day while at work, John received a letter from his brother, William, telling him to meet him at the Post Office on Sunday morning at nine o'clock. This made John very happy for he had been so homesick. It was surely a happy meeting for the two brothers, and John was glad to hear of his home and the people he loved.

For two years, John and William worked together and received oxen and a wagon for part of their pay. They then left Iowa City and began their journey westward. Before starting the trip, they put all their money in one purse and William carried it, but when they needed money and he reached for the purse - it was gone. They were sure no one had stolen it and

remembered there was a place that it could have been lost, but it was too far to return and look for it. They decided they must continue on their way.

Council Bluff, Iowa was their next destination and here they both secured work. Soon William was sent back to Iowa City on business. While making the trip, he decided to go in search of their lost money. To his surprise and delight, he found it. Upon his return to Council Bluff, he and John traveled on to Omaha, Nebraska.

At Omaha they became friendly with a family by the name of Lewis. It was here that John met a charming girl by the name of Mary Ann Pitman, daughter of Mrs. Lewis. They met at Sunday School and became very good friends. It was not long before their friendship ripened into love.

John was very anxious to go to Salt Lake City, and he joined the Creighton Telegraph Train to work for Mr. Creighton on his way to Utah. The Mormons at Omaha were given the job of working on this line. Later in life, John told his son Wilford that he had driven an ox team and made trips hauling wire and supplies. The telegraph line was completed to Salt Lake City in October 1861 and it was at this time that John arrived in Salt Lake City.

After John had left Omaha, Mary Ann was anxious to go to Salt Lake where she would meet with him again. She was 14 years old at this time and her folks thought that she was too young to make the trip without them. After her persistent coaxing they made arrangements for her to go with Brother John Stock and his family for twenty dollars. They traveled with Captain Homer Duncan's ox train company. The following information is given in the Church Emigration Book:

“Captain Homer Duncan's ox train left Florence, June 25, 1861 as an independent company consisting of 258 emigrating saints, with 47 wagons, 127 yoke of cattle, 89 loose cattle, 15 horses and mules and one low cart. Many of the emigrants who traveled in this company had crossed the Atlantic in the ship ‘Underwriter’. By telegram to President Brigham Young it was learned that this company camped on the Little Sandy on the night of August 28, 1861. The train arrived safely in Salt Lake City, September 13, 1861.”

Mary Ann Pitman and John Hymas met again in Salt Lake City where they continued their courtship. They were married November 10, 1861, in Salt Lake City, Utah. He was 22 and she was 15 years of age at the time. They made their home there and were very happy meeting

the conditions of pioneer life together and living the gospel which meant so much to them.

John was a bodyguard for President Brigham Young while living in Salt Lake City.

The early life of Mary Ann Pitman was spent in England. She was born October 4, 1846 at Southampton, Hampshire, England. She was the daughter of James Pitman and Ann Molton King. We have no record of her life while she lived in England. Information which we have received from the branch records there show that James and Ann Pitman were baptized March 20, 1848 into the L.D.S. Church. When Mary Ann was 10 years old, she came with her parents to America. Her father was 44 and her mother 42 at the time they left England. They sailed on the ship 'Tuscarora' on May 30, 1857. The following account is found in the Church Emigration Book:

"One hundred and first company, Tuscarora, 547 souls. The ship Tuscarora, Captain Dunlevy sailed from Liverpool May 30, 1857 having 547 of the saints on board of whom 298 were from the Scandinavian and the remainder from the British Missions. Elder Richard Harper was appointed President of the company, with Joseph Stapleton and C. M. Funk as his counselors. The saints who sailed that vessel only contemplated going to the states that season, then to labor and procure means to enable them to cross the plains to Utah another year. After a pleasant voyage, lasting about five weeks, the Tuscarora arrived in Philadelphia on July 3<sup>rd</sup>. From that port most of the emigrants continued the journey by rail to Burlington, Iowa, where they scattered in search of employment."

There is no record of where James Pitman, his wife Ann, and their daughter Mary Ann went after they landed in Philadelphia. From a history written by Joseph Lewis, we learn that James Pitman died in 1858. The place where they were living at the time is not known. Mary Ann and her mother were living in Omaha, Nebraska when they met Joseph Lewis, a member of the church. His wife had died and the following paragraph is taken from church history records:

"While attending meetings and associating with the saints, I made the acquaintance of a widow lady by the name of Ann M. Pitman. Her husband had been dead for about nine months and had left her with one daughter about 13 years of age. I married Mrs. Pitman on May 1, 1859 and this union brought much happiness and encouragement to me. My wife was a

good, kind, industrious woman and a faithful Latter Day Saint. We were able to lay a little means preparatory to crossing the plains on our way to Utah, where the saints were gathering.”

The parents of John Hymas, and his brothers and sisters with the exception of his brother George, arrived in Salt Lake City with the James Wareham Company, September 26, 1862. Mary Ann’s mother and stepfather arrived in the city about the same time.

Soon after arriving in Salt Lake City, John and Mary Ann and also Joseph and Ann Lewis received their endowments in the Endowment House on February 13, 1864. John served as a body guard for the Prophet Brigham Young while living here. May Ann was a midwife.

John and Mary Ann left Salt Lake City in the spring of 1864 to make their home in the Bear Lake Valley, where a permanent settlement had been made at Paris, Idaho, in the fall of 1863. They came with her parents by way of Soda Springs and arrived in Paris in the month of May. They settled several miles northwest of Paris at the place later known as Liberty, Idaho.

It is estimated that during the spring of 1864, about twenty families located at Liberty. The settlers plowed land and planted wheat and other crops as soon as possible, and in the fall began to build houses. During the year of 1864, a severe frost damaged the crops, resulting in a scarcity of food. Wheat was worth \$5.00 a bushel and was practically unobtainable at that price. Many settlers went to Cache Valley and other places to obtain grain. John went with another man on snowshoes to Cache Valley and they carried sacks of flour home on their backs. Most of the bread that year was made from frozen wheat, which had been ground in coffee mills. All suffered terrible hardships during that winter.

It was during their first winter in Bear Lake that a son was born to John and Mary Ann. Mary Ann’s mother had been a midwife for many years and was with them at the time. This baby made everyone happy as this was their first child and they had been married more than three years. Over the years John and Mary Ann had a total of ten children:

John William	1865-1959
Mary Ann Adelia	1866-1944
Joseph Mannaseh	1867-1932
Benjamin Pitman	1869-1940
Hyrum Henry	1870-1908
Clara Drucilla	1872-1901
Caddie Caroline	1873-1953
Arthur James	1875-1941

Alice Lucinda  
David Moroni

1876-1941  
1878-1935

John and Mary Ann lived in a small house in East Liberty where John owned and farmed land for the support of his family. He organized the first choir in Liberty and was choir leader for many years. He was a ward teacher and helped with many of the church activities. He helped with the building of houses and roads and with the many things, which had to be done in the new community.

When David was two weeks old, Mary Ann died on January 22, 1878, at the age of 31 years, 3 months and 18 days. She was buried in the Liberty Cemetery.

Mary Ann's death came as such a heartbreak for John. He penned:

To the memory of my dear departed wife, died January 22, 1878

Farewell. It is a word of sorrow

To the strong and to the brave,

When we're called upon to follow

Our beloved ones to the grave.

Oh, how sad to me the parting

Very few on earth can tell,

While I write the tears are starting

While I say the word 'Farewell'.

Farewell for a little season

Dearest treasure of my heart

How I mourn, 'tis for what reason

That we're called upon to part.

Ph how sadly I have missed you

And how dreary seems my life

Yet I hope some day to meet you

Yes, my faithful loving wife.

Thou was always truth defending  
And the race thou bravely run  
Always to God's will bending  
Thou nobly fought, the battle won.  
Tho' I'm left to mourn in sorrow  
Any my heart is full of pain  
Tho' I live today, tomorrow  
May unit us once again.  
Oh, Lord, preserve my little flock  
Who are left without a mother's care  
May Thy good spirit be their prop,  
This is Thy servant's humble prayer.

-John Atkins Hymas

Even in his sorrow John carried on and with the exception of the little two weeks old baby, who was taken to live with his grandmother, all of the children remained at home and were cared for by the John and the older girls. The oldest was not quite 12 years old when this responsibility fell upon her shoulders. Friends asked to take some of the children, but John wanted to keep them together if at all possible. He succeeded in doing so until he married Mary Jane Watkins on October 24, 1878 in the Endowment House. Mary Jane had worked for John helping with household chores and the children after Mary Ann's death.

John and Mary Jane lived in the small house at Liberty until 1884, when John and his sons built a new house. It was a grand home with seven rooms, which included a pantry and a milk house was attached. A smoke house was behind the house where they cured their meat. Six boys and four girls were born to John and Mary Jane, which made a very full house. Their children were:

Thomas Nephi	1879-1964
Martha Jane	1881-1955
Bertha Ann	1882-1887
Rebecca Rose	1884-1962
Charles Eugene	1887-1951
Emily Elizabeth	1889-1889
Wilford Watkins	1890-1971
Lottie	1892-1980
Melvin Morris	1894-1975
Mabel	1896-1976

It was well known that they were a family with well set rules in their home. One was 'nine o'clock prayer time'. All understood that you better be home at nine o'clock for family prayer. As the children grew and started spending more time with friends and dating, the rule never changed.

John was very public spirited and served in his community at various times. His service included school trustee, road supervisor, manager of a local dramatic association, and when the YMMIA was organized in Liberty in 1876, John was sustained as second counselor. He also built caskets and performed many acts of charity and kindness. On one occasion in the early days, he and Samuel Matthew, who was his close neighbor and a very close friend, carried hay on their backs in the wintertime to feed a cow belonging to David King. The cow was stranded in the mountains north of Liberty for some time.

John passed away on November 8, 1917 at the age of 78 years. His faithful family was at his bedside when the end came. He was greatly loved by all those who knew him. For 20 years before his death his family gathered at the old home on his birthday to honor him. On such occasions they would present programs, sing songs and play games in the big beautiful yard. John was buried in the Liberty Cemetery.

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*The author of this Life Sketch of John Atkins and Mary Ann Pitman Hymas is unknown, however much of it is similar to a history written by Edith Parker Haddock and Adelia Parker Knudson, grand-daughters of John Atkins Hymas.*

*Names, places, dates and recorded events have been verified with family genealogy information, historical and family history records in possession of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, as far as it is possible.*