

A life sketch of

William Hymas

and

Mary Ann Atkins Hymas

William Hymas was born July 26, 1806 at Rayleigh, Essex, England. He was the son of Edward and Sarah Howlett Hymas. Rayleigh is located on the coast east of London, at the mouth of the Thames River. At the time of his birth, George III was King of England.

We have no record of his life until he was married to Mary Ann Atkins on January 6, 1834, at which time he was twenty-seven years of age. Mary Ann Atkins was born at Hockley, Essex, England, December 20, 1813. She was the daughter of William Atkins and Lucy Hart. They became the parents of five sons and three daughters, namely: George William, William Alfred, John Atkins, Sarah, Susan, Benjamin, James and Mary Ann.

After their marriage they lived in Rayleigh where their first seven children were born. It appears from the records that they moved to Hockley before the birth of the youngest child in 1851. Here William was foreman over a small group of men, caring for the estate of an English Lord. Two grandsons of William and Mary Ann give a description of this farm after their visit while on missions in England. They saw the house and stables and the trees that were around the house and a pond of water in back of it. They told of the thatched roof and the old-fashioned stables. They saw the old brew house, which at that time was being used as a place for storing wood and coal. They entered the kitchen of the old home where on the left they saw the old fireplace and went into a large front room. The visitors told of the extreme poverty that existed among the people of this locality where the Hymas Family once lived and of their joy over the fact that their ancestors had left this farm and come to America.

In the year 1853, L D.S. missionaries were preaching the gospel in England, and some members of the Hymas Family became interested in the gospel. Charles W. Penrose, a

missionary (and later a member of the First Presidency of the Church), spent considerable time at the Hymas home, teaching the gospel to them. The youngest daughter, Mary Ann, told in her history, "I remember C. W. Penrose, a traveling Elder there, taking me on his lap, singing the songs of Zion and making his home at my mother's, while preaching the gospel there." The following year John was baptized a member of the Church May 21, 1854. His mother was baptized May 26th and his father on June 25th. The other members of the family joined the Church in the next few years, with the exception of the oldest son, George, who never became a member.

After William and his family became members of the Church, they had a desire to come with the saints to America. Two years later, in 1856, John sailed for America, and the following year William Alfred left England and joined his brother, who was living in Iowa at the time.

William and Mary Ann began to make plans to bring their family to the United States and join the boys who were there. Several years later preparations were completed, and they were ready to go to Liverpool, where they could sail to America. William, his wife Mary Ann and their children, Sarah, Susan, Benjamin, James and Mary Ann sailed on the ship "Underwriter" April 23, 1861. George, the oldest son stayed in England.

There were 624 saints on board the ship under the presidency of Elder Milo Andrus, assisted by Elders Homer Duncan and Charles W. Penrose as counselors. Apostles Amasa M. Lyman, Charles C. Rich and George Q. Cannon visited the ship on Sunday, May 21st and held a meeting, giving the saints their blessings and many choice instructions relative to their journey. Two marriages were celebrated during the voyage, and two small children died before the crossing was completed. Meetings were held every Sunday during the month they were on the ship. The "Underwriter" arrived in New York on Tuesday, May 21st.

The family remained in Brooklyn, New York for *a* year where they worked in the shipyards to earn money for the trip to Utah. From there they went to Florence, Nebraska. William and his family joined the James Wareham Ox Train and left Nebraska about the first week of July 1862 with 46 wagons and a company of 250 emigrating saints. On the trip they endured the hardships of pioneer life, walking most of the way and enjoying the evenings by singing and dancing around the campfire.

On the 26th of September the company arrived in Salt Lake City. Their son John, whom they had not seen for six years, and his wife Mary Ann Pitman Hymas welcomed the members of the family. John and his wife had arrived in Salt Lake City in the fall of 1861. William Alfred and his wife, Mary Edwards Hymas and her daughter Catherine James by a former marriage, also came to Salt Lake City with the James Wareham Company, thus bringing the entire family together with the exception of the son George who stayed in England.

The family remained in Utah until the spring of 1864 when the Church leaders called them to help settle Bear Lake Valley. When the family moved to Bear Lake, Sarah and Susan remained in Utah. William and Mary Ann, his wife, and the younger children, Benjamin, James and Mary Ann, together with the William Alfred and John Hymas families arrived in Bear Lake Valley in the Spring of 1864. They first went to Paris where a permanent settlement had been made in the fall of 1863, but decided to settle farther north where the town of Liberty Idaho is now situated. They were among the earliest settlers of that community.

Mountains surround Bear Lake Valley on all sides, and a large lake occupies the southern portion. At the time of its settlement, Bear Lake was considered to be very primitive territory where wild game was plentiful and the lake and streams were stocked with fish. Wild grasses suitable for grazing of livestock covered the valley and the adjoining mountains, and timber suitable for building existed in large quantities.

When the settlers arrived in the valley they were confronted with the ordinary conditions of early pioneer life. Land had to be cleared and plowed for the planting of crops, homes had to be built, roads constructed, and ditches and canals dug for the irrigation of the land. During the year of 1864 about 700 people arrived in Bear Lake Valley to make their homes. During this year the towns of Bloomington, St. Charles, Fish Haven, Ovid, Liberty, Montpelier, Bennington and Georgetown were established under the leadership of Charles C. Rich.

In histories that have been written we are told that Mary Ann, wife of William, and the three younger children, Benjamin, James and Mary Ann went to Hyde Park, Utah in the fall of 1864 where they lived for many years. William and his two sons, William Alfred and John, remained in Liberty. It appears from the records that William and Mary Ann did not live together after this time.

Mary Ann received her endowments on September 30, 1872 at which time she was married to John Anthony Wolf. Later she moved to Canada and lived there until her death on October 13, 1906 at Cardston, Alberta, Canada, being at the time of her death nearly ninety-one years of age. She is buried in the Cardston cemetery.

Laura Cahoon, a great grand-daughter of William and Mary Ann Atkins Hymas, who lived in Cardston, Canada, has written some interesting things she learned about her great grandmother, and the following is taken from her writings:

“She was very retiring, didn’t talk very much, but when she did it was something worth listening to. She was very neat and correct in everything, and very pleasant to be around. You could set your clock by the things Grandma did, and she was very punctual and did everything at a certain time. Father said Grandma always went to bed the same time every night; I think it was 8:00 p. m. in the winter and 9:00 p. m. in the summer. She also got up the same time every morning.”

My mother remembers her, but that is about all. She had only been married a few years when Grandma died. She said that when my father George Alfred Duce, was about 10 years old he lived on winter with Grandma Hymas. He would go to her place after school and get coal, wood and water for her. Then after supper he would do his homework while Grandma Hymas would knit or read. In the morning he would build the fire and empty ashes, etc., before going to school. She used to go to my Grandmother Duce’s (Mary Ann) every Thursday to do her mending and darning. This was in Hyde Park before she moved to Canada.

She apparently had one hobby or she thought it was a special task for her to do. She would make yeast with hops and potato water every day and give it to the neighbors when they wanted to make bread. She said she couldn’t do much but she could make yeast. People used to think her yeast was very good, and made excellent bread.

She wore black dresses with large pockets and one of the great-grandchildren told me she always had peppermints in her pockets and would give them to the children.

Grandma Hymas wanted to be independent and take care of herself as long as possible,

but she had a stroke and was helpless toward the end of her life. They would help her into a chair and some of her great grandchildren can remember sitting on the side of her bed and fanning her.

William Hymas remained in Liberty where he engaged in farming, as he had done in England. He experienced the hardships that the pioneers passed through during the early years of the colonization of Bear Lake Valley. The winter of 1864-65 was especially severe. The grain crop planted during the spring of this year froze before it was mature, and during the winter the pioneers were compelled to grind frozen wheat with a coffee grinder in order to make flour. The bread made from this wheat was of very poor quality, being sticky and unpalatable. The snow was very deep during this winter. The cold was intense, and feed for livestock was very scarce, and some of the livestock died before spring came.

William's home in Liberty was located on the hill just west of the present Benjamin P. Hymas home.

Stories of William's life during the early days of pioneering in Bear Lake Valley show that he 'was a man of generous nature and was always willing to help others'. During November of the year 1865, Joshua Jarvis was coming to Bear Lake Valley by way of Emigration Canyon, and due to the bad road he was unable to drive his wagon over the top of the divide. He walked into Liberty for help, coming to the William Hymas home. William took his team and brought Brother Jarvis' wagon and family into the valley. The Jarvis Family stayed with William until their animals were rested and then proceeded on to Paris.

The records show that William had a second wife whose name was Ann Watkins, but it appears that they did not live together very long. Later he married Christina McDonald on the 6th day of July 1869, at which time he received his endowments. Christina died prior to the death of William, and during his later years he lived with his son William Alfred. William died May 7, 1889 at the age of 83 years, and was buried in the Liberty Cemetery.

This Life Sketch of William Hymas & Mary Ann Atkins Hymas was written by Edith & Darwin Haddock.

Names, places, and dates have been verified with family genealogy information and records in possession of K. Oswald, and family history records in possession of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.