

A life sketch of
Joseph Lewis Sr.

1823 – 1900

Joseph Lewis Sr. was born in the town of Bath, Somersetshire, England, on July 1, 1823. He was the second son of Benjamin Lewis and Jane Caswell. His brothers, Philip and Edward, died when they were young and his sister Jemima married in England and later, with her small son, came to America. She married Richard Mills and they made their home in Centerville, Utah.

Joseph's father died when he was about nineteen years old. Joseph helped his mother in the shop and in spite of his dislike for the trade he learned it well and became a very good shoemaker.

Joseph first heard of the gospel of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1842 when he was invited to visit church with a friend. He said,

I accepted the invitation and was much pleased with what I heard. I made diligent and prayerful investigation of the principles they taught, using them all the time as a pattern and guide by which to test each point of doctrine of the simple plan laid down by our Savior and His Apostles.

Joseph was baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on July 1, 1843 by Elder Thomas Smith.

Joseph married Eliza Freman August 11, 1844. He and his wife desired very much to come to Zion to join the Saints. They worked hard to pay off their debts in preparation for this desire. It wasn't until 1856 that they were able to leave England. By this time they had six children, one of which died when eight weeks old.

On May 2, 1856, Joseph, his wife Eliza and their five children left Liverpool in the sailing vessel 'Thornton', for America. The journey was a rough one, but they landed at New York June 15, 1856. From there they journeyed to Florence, Nebraska. The company suffered much from sickness, hunger, fatigue and the elements. The following winter was most severe and again they suffered, especially from hunger and disease. Typhoid was very prevalent and Eliza became one of its victims. Eliza passed away October 17, 1857, leaving an infant son and five

other children. The children suffered much from the fever and in the words of their father, “they wasted away to mere skeletons before they began slowly to get well.”

Friends and neighbors were kind to Joseph and his motherless children, but it was almost impossible to obtain work and pay was small. The following is taken from Joseph’s diary.

I could find no work to do and spent months seeking employment with only an occasional day or two of work sawing and cutting wood for very little pay. Under these discouraging circumstances I concluded that to keep my children together and struggle longer to support them was to deprive them of the care and education they were justly entitled to. Though I was loath to part with them, I gave my consent and my six bright little children were separated and consigned to homes where they could be well taken care of. To this the children gave their willing approval.

In 1859, Joseph met and married Ann King Pitman, a widow. Much happiness came from this union and through their united efforts they were able to save enough money to leave Florence, Nebraska and travel to the Salt Lake Valley. They did so on July 5, 1862. They remained in the Salt Lake Valley until the spring of 1864. At this time they moved to Bear Lake Valley. They located on what was then called North Creek. They planted crops there but early frost destroyed them and Joseph was forced to find work elsewhere. He found work in a shoe shop at Hyde Park, Utah.

In June 1865, Joseph went to Salt Lake City where he married Elizabeth Ann King, who was a niece of Anns. Soon after this he and his wives accompanied David King and the John Hymas family and returned to the Bear Lake Valley, settling in Liberty, Idaho.

Sometime later, Joseph was invited to come to the home of Charles C. Rich to make shoes for his family. This he did. He moved to Paris where he rented a one room log house. It had neither windows nor floor and a blanket served as a door. Joseph said, “We fared as well as many others and tried to feel content with our humble lot.”

As soon as possible he purchased two city lots in Paris and moved his house from Liberty on one of the lots and built another house on the second lot. Lumber was scarce and expensive so no floor was put in the house. Some of the men tried to saw logs into lumber by hand. This was slow and tedious, and made the lumber cost as much as fifteen dollars per hundred feet; too expensive for most of the people to buy.

It was necessary to bring supplies from Cache Valley into Bear Lake Valley. Due to the high range of mountains this travel often endangered the lives of the pioneers during the severe winter storms. Joseph wrote,

Many times I crossed those mountains in the most severe storms and cold in order to procure bread for winter. As we were all filling a mission of arduous labor in cultivating and subduing a most formidable wilderness, I felt it my duty to remain in the valley and perform my share of the work and hardships if only to make it possible for my children and future generations to live and enjoy peace by themselves where they would not be molested by mobs, etc., as we had been in the States.

Joseph and Elizabeth had the following children: John David, Franklin William, Eliza Ann, Walter Henry, George Albert, Arthur James, Fredrick Charles and Samuel Wilford. George Albert died when he was two years old. The rest of the family grew to maturity and raised families in Paris where they each contributed much to the growth and development of the town. Many of their descendants have enjoyed the benefits of their pioneer relatives.

In January 1886, Joseph was arrested on the charge of 'unlawful cohabitation' with his wives and was placed under bond until the May term of court. He was then tried by jury and convicted. He spent six months in the United States Penitentiary at Boise, Idaho and fined \$300.00. This was very upsetting to Joseph and others who were likewise sentenced.

In 1887, Joseph met with an accident and broke his thigh. He suffered much from this and never completely recovered from this accident.

Joseph Lewis Sr. died March 14, 1900 and was buried in the Paris City Cemetery, Bear Lake County, Idaho.

This Life Sketch of Joseph Lewis Sr. was written by Donnetta Lewis Baker and Edith P. Haddock. The original account has been slightly revised and additions made to make it more complete from stories, documents and other records collected and kept in the Family History Library of K. Oswald.

