

A life sketch of
Uriah 'Ury' Welch Wilkins

1842 – 1891

Uriah Welch was born May 5, 1842 at Pilsdon, Dorsetshire, England. Uriah was the youngest child of Job and Charlotte Rawlins Welch. The Welch family included a total of seven children; however four had passed away before Uriah was born. Only two surviving sisters, Charlotte Honor and Harriet, welcomed their new sister.¹ Uriah was soon nicknamed "Ury" by family and friends.²

The Welch family became acquainted with missionaries preaching the 'Good Word' in their area of England. In 1849, Ury's parents accepted the gospel message and were baptized. Job and Charlotte became members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.¹ Job and Charlotte made the decision to leave their homeland of England and immigrate to America where they could join with other members of the Church and find a new beginning for their family.²

Job booked passage for his family on the 'North Atlantic' sailing ship. On September 4, 1850, the Welch family set sail from the docks of Liverpool, England. They were among 357 Latter-day Saints aboard the vessel and under the direction of David Sudworth and Hamilton G. Park. The ship's passenger records show the Welch family listed as: Job Welch (40) carpenter, Charlotte Rawlins Welch (47), Honor (20), Uriah (8), and Ann (44 - Job's sister).³ Ury's sister, Harriet, had passed away in March of this same year.¹

Travel aboard the 'North Atlantic' was fairly uneventful. The voyage notes state that after a rather lengthy, but safe and pleasant passage, the company arrived in New Orleans, November 1st.³ From New Orleans the Welch family continued their journey up the Mississippi River to St. Louis, Missouri. There they learned that it was too late in the season for



further travel west and that no wagon train companies would be crossing the plains until spring. The Welch family spent their first American winter in Illinois. Job was a carpenter by trade.² It is assumed that he worked while at Illinois and that the family saved all they could to acquire the necessary supplies for their move to the Utah Territory.

Ury was baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on October 31, 1851 while her family was living in Illinois.¹

It is believed that in the early spring of 1854, the Welch family made arrangements to travel west with a Mormon wagon train. In the same company were other English immigrants including Charles and Elizabeth Wilkins.² They had a two year old daughter named Lillian, who had been born May 9, 1852.¹ The Welch family adored her. While crossing the plains Elizabeth became sick and died of cholera. Elizabeth was buried along the trail near Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.¹ The Welch family helped Charles care for Lillian during the rest of the journey. After arriving in the Great Salt Lake Valley, Job and Charles stayed close to each other and their families continued their friendship and were a great support to each other.²

Ury was thirteen or fourteen years old when she married Charles, who was then twenty-eight or twenty-nine. An actual wedding date for Charles and Ury is not known, but it is believed to have been some time in 1855 or 1856 at South Cottonwood, Utah Territory.¹ Even though there was a great age difference between Ury and Charles, they shared the same beliefs and values, which must have given them a solid foundation to build their future upon. They were later sealed on May 4, 1861 in the Endowment House at Great Salt Lake, Utah Territory.¹

Ury's marriage to Charles instantly made her a mother as she took over the full time responsibilities of caring for Lillian. Ury loved Lillian as if she were her own child.²

Over the following thirty years Charles and Ury had fifteen children: Clarissa born October 11, 1857 at Willard, Box Elder, Utah and Ury Harriet born December 18, 1859 at Millcreek, Salt Lake, Utah. Their other children were born at South Cottonwood, Salt Lake, Utah. They were: Charles Albert born December 14, 1861, Heber Christopher born February 7, 1864, twins Nephi and Eli born March 18, 1866 (Eli died the same day), Jesse Lester born

February 15, 1868, Charlotte Ann born April 7, 1870, William Henry born July 9, 1872, Mary Jane born October 21, 1874, Rueben born January 31, 1877, Andrew born February 13, 1879, Stephen Job born June 18, 1881, Lydia Louise born December 13, 1882 and Nettie Luella born July 25, 1885.¹

Charles and Ury lived for a while in the area that is now Willard, Box Elder, Utah. Later they moved their family to South Cottonwood, Salt Lake, Utah where Charles bought a farm. This farm became the Wilkin's home and it was where they lived for the remainder of their lives.⁴ The 'Cottonwoods' was a beautiful area, but the sagebrush and oak brush had to be cleared off the land in order to make it suitable for farming. Long days and hard work was required by Charles and all in the family who were able to help. Charles also did some butcher work and made shoes to help provide for his family.²

The Wilkins home was described as a one room dwelling. Ury kept the family warm and fed using a large fireplace that was inside the home. The house had a willow fence around it that was quite unique. Wooden stakes were driven into the ground and green willows were woven between the stakes. Mud was then plastered to the willow fence frame.²

Later, Charles built a larger wooden home on the farm to better accommodate their growing family. This new home was a story and a half high log house with two rooms upstairs and two down. It had a large lean-to off the back side. Their new home had a cooking stove, which was a cherished treasure for Ury. The Wilkins always stored enough wheat to last from one harvest to the next harvest as a precaution to prevent famine, which was a concern with their large family. In the new house there was a bin that held a thousand pounds of flour. This feature was especially nice for Ury as her large family ate many loaves of bread.²

Music was an important part of the Wilkins family life. Several of the children were self-taught violin players. Their music was heard in and out of the house and was shared with the community at different social activities.²

Education was also important in the Wilkins family. Ury and Charles helped teach their children what they could although their own education was limited. Work on the farm

required the boys help and their school attendance was determined by what was happening on the farm. Ury taught her daughters the same cooking and homemaking skills she had learned as a young girl. Ury and her girls spun yarn, and knitted socks and stockings. They also made the boys shirts, as well as their own dresses. Often they bought material by the bolt and everyone had matching articles of clothing. The trousers for the little boys were also homemade. Everything was worn until there were holes, and then they were patched and worn again. What was usable was passed from child to child until there was nothing left to use.²

Church activity was interwoven into the Wilkins family life. Ury saw to it that the children always went to Primary and Sunday School. Social activities were usually organized by the Church, which the Wilkins family attended. They participated in plays and dances and many other activities held in the South Cottonwood area.²

One can only imagine the life of a pioneer wife and mother. The demands on Ury were constant and not without unpredictable challenges. Ury's sister-in-law, Elizabeth, once wrote, "Charles and his wife and all the children had bad eyes last summer. His wife was blind for nine weeks."⁵

For many years, Ury suffered from an injury that left her with a kneecap that would easily become dislocated. The story was told that when Ury was a young woman she was leading a cow with a rope. The cow ran around her and the rope wrapped around her legs and pulled a knee out of joint. Her knee never healed correctly and was always weak after this accident. Ury took great care in walking to prevent her knee from slipping out of joint. When it did become dislocated it was painful and someone would have to help put it back in place.⁴

On November 8, 1891, at the age of forty nine, Uriah 'Ury' Welch Wilkins passed away at South Cottonwood, Salt Lake, Utah.¹ She was buried in the Murray City Cemetery, Murray, Salt Lake, Utah,⁶ where Charles had served as sexton since 1872.⁷

Ury's death left a void that could not be filled. Charles did the best he could to keep the family going with the help of his older children. It was quickly realized just how much Ury had done to keep her family fed, clothed and happy. At a young age, Ury became the mother of a

little girl she loved and raised as she did her own children. She was no stranger to sorrow as she experienced the loss of two children as infants. Her responsibilities were vast as she devoted all of her energy and efforts to her large family. Ury worked at the side of her loving husband to establish their home and faithfully served in the community and Church. Endless hours of hard physical labor were required daily and yet she found time to teach, laugh and play.

Ury was a friend to her own family, as well as her extended family, and helped care for them as they immigrated and lived nearby. In a letter Charles wrote to his mother hoping to coax her to America he said: "Aneybody can live with Ury. She is one of the most peaceable woemen that ever lived."⁸ That description of Ury was proven to be true over and over again.

Ury was a typical pioneer woman whose contribution was not always noticed or given the credit it deserved. Uriah 'Ury' Welch Wilkins was a woman whose companionship and influence made the world a better place. Many of the lessons she taught were learned by her day to day example; she lived what she believed. Ury would have been proud to watch her family mature and lead lives that were a reflection of the ideals and qualities she had strived to instill in them.

-
- 1 Family History Records in the possession of Karla Knapp Oswald. Dates, locations and other vital facts have been compared to and verified with records preserved within the FamilySearch data base maintained by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints available at FamilySearch.org.
 - 2 Eva Lina Judd Wilkins, "*History of Charles Wilkins, Jr.*" (original). This original history included factual family information and stories obtained from documents and personal knowledge of family members. Some of this information has been incorporated into this life sketch where noted.
 - 3 Mormon Migration, *Liverpool to New Orleans, 4 Sept 1850 – 1 Nov 1850*
http://mormonmigration.lib.byu.edu/Search/showDetails/db:MM_MII/t:voyage/id:306/keywords:John+J+Boyd#.VDVRsmwqIOs.email

- 4 Wilkins Reunion Committee, *"History of Charles Wilkins, Jr."*, compiled and edited August 1994 Some of the information from this booklet has been incorporated into this life sketch where noted.

Note: Records have not been found to determine when the Welch family traveled west nor with which wagon train. The following note is found on the official website for Mormon Overland Travel under Unknown Companies. "The Welch family came to Utah between 1851 and 1860. They likely came in 1851. But the first documentation to place them in Utah are church ordinances performed in May 1861, which was prior to the arrival of that season's emigration. Further research is needed to narrow the year of their travel." It is noted that Job was 43 when he traveled to the Great Salt Lake Valley. Charles, Elizabeth and Lillian Wilkins are also found in the Unknown Companies list.
Mormon Overland Travel, <http://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/companyDetail?lang=eng&companyId=474>

- 5 Elizabeth Wilkins Steadman, *Letters of Elizabeth Wilkins Steadman* - Five letters written by Elizabeth to her mother, Jane Rixon Wilkins. The letters were written to Jane while she was still living in England. Information taken from one letter believed to have been written in 1864.
- 6 Find A Grave, Ury Welch Wilkins Memorial #130878 <http://www.findagrave.com>
- 7 Murray City Utah, City Cemetery, *"Planning the Cemetery"*
<http://www.murray.utah.gov/index.aspx?NID=187>
- 8 Charles Wilkins, Jr., *Letters to Mother* - Three letters Charles wrote to his mother, Jane Rixon Wilkins, while she was living in England. Letter addressed - South Cottonwood Ward, Great S. L. Co. Utah Territory, July 2, 186(?).

Note: The original photograph of Uriah 'Ury' Welch Wilkins, used in this life sketch was donated to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints History Department by V. Arlen Oswald, great grandson of Charles Wilkins Jr., in April 2012. The History Department restored and digitized the original photograph in an effort to preserve it. The attached photograph is a copy of the restored, digitized and preserved original.

"A Life Sketch of Uriah 'Ury' Welch Wilkins" was compiled by Karla Knapp Oswald - revised November 2014