

HISTORY OF JOHN TELFORD – UTAH PIONEER – 1851

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John Telford, A Utah Pioneer of 1851, was born March 2, 1802, in the city of Armagh, province of Ulster, Ireland.

He was the son of George Telford and Jane Dodds Telford. He was the sixth child in a family of seven children and was an orphan when he was nine years of age.

The city of his birth is situated in the north central part of Armagh County and is known as the "Orchard of Ireland" and is the Parliamentary borough. Armagh was also the ancient metropolis of Ireland and a seat of learning as well as religious center. It being the seat of three great churches; the Roman Catholic, the Anglican and the Protestant churches.

The Telfords were members of the Episcopal Church and according to tradition their politics and affiliations were with the Old order of Fianna, the champions of Erin whose legendary hero Finn was comparable to the legends of King Arthur and the "Round Table". Although loyal to England and ready to fight for the cause, their sympathies were with the oppressed and liberty-loving Irish people, with their struggle for freedom. John and his wife Jane took great pleasure always in singing "The Wearing of the Green", and other patriotic Irish songs, as they loved their country dearly.

An event in proof of this tradition occurred one evening when John Telford was about seven years of age. As he and his cousin Doctor Willis were returning home they found their street closed and barricaded with fires and in possession of the Orangemen, a secret society in opposition to the Fenians who had many fires burning. As it was late John and his cousin decided to take a chance and pass the fires rather than take the long tiresome way home. They were attacked by the Orangemen who fought with burning torches. John was beaten and severely burned but Doctor Willis fought the men off who were pursuing and John ran to safety. He was burned so severely across his shoulders that he carried the scars to his grave.

John Telford's family had been in Ireland for many years and were a well-to-do people for their day and were very fastidious in their dress. They affected canary colored buckskin trousers (the fastidious dress of that ancient time).

They were soldiers and land-holders., having been given grants of land in Ireland by the King or the English government. According to family tradition, these land grants were given to two Telford brothers by the King.

John thought his people had been in Ireland at least two hundred years

when he was born in 1802. It is probable that they went into Ireland at the beginning of the reign of James I of England (1602-1625). However it is possible they went at another period since besides the King James invasion into Ulster there were two other great invasions into Ireland.

The first was the Norman invasion in 1067 during the reign of Henry II, who after the conquest divided Ireland into counties and set up an English court in Dublin. He made huge land grants to favorite Norman barons to hold as they could, thus beginning the great land struggle in Ireland. The Cromwellian invasion was the third and last invasion into Ireland and during the period of 1649 to 1652, the English Parliament passed an act whereby the English soldiers were given Irish land in lieu of overdue salaries.

The Telford estate was on the border of the hunting court where the "High Lords of Ireland" gathered for the hunt. An interesting tradition concerning the hunting tells how misfortune came to the family causing John's father to seek new opportunities in America.

According to this tradition one of the English aristocracy who was in Ireland on a foxhunt was among a party of hunters on this court. During the chase a rabbit that they were pursuing crossed over the border of the court onto the Telford property and was killed by their dog. Three angry hunters pursued the dog and Mrs. Telford hearing the disturbance stepped through the door into the dooryard. The dog fled to his mistress for protection and hid under her skirts and the three mounted men charged into the yard and right up to the door. The English noblemen demanded the dog and, threatened to kill it. Mrs. Telford refused to give up her dog and when he persisted she defied him. Incited to unreasonable anger the Englishman brought suit against the Telfords and fought the case in the Irish courts for years but the Telfords won the suit. However, the defense of their rights cost them the loss of their property and when John Telford was nine years old his father and the two older sons, James and William, left Ireland for America and secured work in Philadelphia.

The altitude of that mountainous region was too high for George who was used to the low country and he contracted that dread disease known as Mountain Fever and died. His wife Jane D. Telford, who came over to the United States to take care of her two young sons during their father's illness also contracted the fever and passed away leaving the two youngsters alone in a strange land. John and his baby sister Eliza were left in Ireland with their three older sisters and other relatives.

After the death of his parents and when he was nine years old, John was apprenticed to a weaver and although he was used to a good home and plenty he was now forced to make his own living, which he did from that time. He became an expert weaver of the finest linens but he did

not like the work as he was interested in agriculture and wanted to be a landowner and live the free and independent life that was the heritage of his forefathers.

John's people were loyal to England and always ready to fight in her defense, but their sympathies were with the oppressed and liberty loving Irish people and their desperate struggle for freedom. When John was a lad of thirteen years Britain and her allies, the Dutch and the Germans, went to war with France. John's uncles, true to family tradition, went to war for their country. Two were killed in the battle of Waterloo and another was deafened in the same battle from the roar of the cannons that brought death to about 57,000 brave men.

John Telford was married in March 1825 to his cousin Jane Telford in Scotland. After their marriage John secured work and they remained in Scotland about two years and lived across the channel from Belfast, Ireland. Robert Telford, their oldest child, was born at Barrhead, Renfrewshire, Scotland, January 8, 1826.

A short time later John and his family returned to Armagh County, Ireland, where they remained until about 1830, when they decided to seek better agricultural and financial opportunities in America. John and his wife and their three small children set sail from Belfast for Quebec in an emigrant ship sent out by the English government with a company of Irish colonists to settle in Canada. Among this company of colonists were John's sister Mary and her husband Joseph Irwin and Joseph's brother Tom and wife Jane.

This was a long and trying voyage and nearly proved disastrous a number of times during the trip across the ocean. There were incidents causing excitement and thrills as well as dread and tragedy. When Smallpox broke out on board everyone was desperately afraid as it was considered sure death to all who contracted it, so when John's small daughter Anna (two and one half years old) broke out with the disease her mother hid her in one of their large linen chests as she feared some of the panic stricken people would throw the child overboard. This chest is still in the possession of the family, a valued relic.

At sea they were caught in a violent storm and huge waves washed overboard causing much damage. In the darkness they collided with another ship, became entangled and spun like tops in the storm and were nearly sunk. The sailors, however, were very fortunate and succeeded in getting the ships apart. So much damage had already been done to the ship that they had to work desperately for days, pumping water, to save the ship and keep it from sinking while repairs were made. A lot of damage was also done to the effects of the passengers by the salt water that washed on board. John Telford's family records were destroyed along with other valuable articles.

When the colonists reached the harbor at Quebec, they were attacked by another ship, which attempted to ram their vessel and sink them in the harbor, but due to the captain's presence of mind and the quick dexterous work of the helmsman, they escaped injury and no harm was done to the ship. One of the passengers, observing the suspicious maneuvering of the other ship, sounded the alarm. The captain, who was below deck, came on the run with drawn sword calling, "Jack, take the helm." The passengers also rushed to the assistance of the captain at the rail. After the hostile demonstrations were over and they had escaped damage or injury by out-maneuvering the onrushing ship, the captain, who was a Scotchman, took up his speaking tube and called to the crew of the other ship, "Thank you gentleman: except for that act w wouldn't have known your nationality." The affair was hushed up and nothing ever done about it. After this long voyage of eight weeks on the ocean the colonists landed in Quebec.

Soon after arriving in Canada the Telfords and the Irwins sailed up the St. Lawrence River and settled on the Great Lakes. John and his family lived for a short time at Toronto. Some time later they and Tom Irwin and family settled in Essex county, Ontario on adjoining farms just across the river from Detroit, where Joseph and Mary Irwin were located. Here in Essex county John had a fine maple sugar orchard of all new trees. He became prosperous in the short time he had been in this new land and was soon able to build a new house with new furnishings throughout.

During his residence in Canada, John also ran a logging crew and had quite a number of men working for him in the timber as well as on his land. During the winter it was intensely cold in the woods and after the strenuous work of felling trees, the men had to put on their heavy coats and run up and down the felled logs to keep from freezing while they ate their lunch which had been previously buried in the deep snow to keep it from freezing solid.

It was about eight years after John Telford settled in Canada that he joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. He was converted by John Lander and was baptized on the 17th of January, 1838 by John Witt. Immediately after joining the church John began preparations for a speedy departure for the United States to join the main body of the saints at Kirtland, Geauga County, Ohio.

Then came their first real sacrifice when they willingly gave up their new home and prosperity for the sake of their religion. Because of the opposition and the prejudice of the people against his unpopular belief, John did not try to sell any of his property. He just locked up his house and left everything intact. Their young orchard of sugar maple trees that had been tapped only once or twice, their comfortable home and possessions, were left behind. They went with only the few things allowed them by the United States Government packed into their wagon and with five small children cast their lot with the harassed

people of their faith, who were also sacrificing all material considerations, every comfort, and often health and even life itself for their religion.

It was in the early part of 1838 that John and his family reached Kirtland, during that dark period of the Church when the Saints suffered so much from persecution and apostasy, just before they were forced to leave the state.

Kirtland, once the refuge of this people and a prosperous community, was situated in the loveliest spot in northern Ohio. It was a beautiful town with its hills, vales and clear streams of water, and with their far famed Temple built on the highest bluff and overlooking the shimmering waters of Lake Erie in the distance.

Due to persecution the Saints must leave all this and seek new homes in another state, so early on July 6, 1838, nearly all the Saints left Kirtland and moved in a body to Missouri, under the leadership of the Seventies. It is thought, however, that John was not a member of the "Kirtland Camp" but that he and his family left about the same time and went some distance away from that vicinity where he got work in a farming district for the summer and joined the Saints later in Missouri. John Telford and his family endured all the persecutions, mobbings and drivings suffered by the Saints in the early history of the Church in Ohio, Missouri and Illinois.

At one time during this distressing period when he and all of his family except Robert were down in bed with chills and fever, the mob came and ordered them out of their home. The victims of this fever were very ill every other day but John and his wife were fortunate that their worst time occurred on alternate days so when one was too sick to get up it was possible for the other to help take care of the children. On the day that the mob came John was so helpless and ill that it aroused the sympathy of one member of the mob who objected to the heartless treatment imposed upon them by the mobbers and interceded for them, and got the mob to consent to let them remain in their home until the following day, but when the morning came conditions were even worse and neither John nor his wife were able to get up when the mob returned. This only added to the fury of the men and they threatened to burn the family with the house unless they would denounce Joseph Smith as an imposter. This they refused to do although the mobbers devised every means to get them to discredit the Prophet. When their efforts failed they prepared to carry out their inhuman threats, but the man who had interceded for them on the previous day defied the mob and carried the family out of the house, against the blasphemous threats of the mobbers. He helped them to get away in safety by marching with his gun between their wagon and the anger crazed mob for a mile while their home and their crops and all their possessions were consumed by fire, Even the great stacks of sacked wheat that was piled in the yard during the harvest was also

burned by the infuriated mob.

Sick and destitute this family of exiles left their stricken community and looked in vain for food and shelter as the mob had threatened the residents in all the surrounding country with the like treatment if they sold food to the Saints or assisted them in any way. In one of the outlying districts John attempted to buy food for his family but the farmer told him that even there the mob had threatened the same violence against any one who aided the Mormons. He said, "I pretend to be human but I dare not sell you anything or I too would be forced to flee with my family." The farmer was alone and going into the field but he told John that there was meat in the smokehouse and flour and potatoes in the bins and with a hurried " Good day Sir." he went into the field. John took a few slices of bacon, a little flour and potatoes, put his money under the door and hurriedly went away before anybody discovered that he received assistance. It probably was in Missouri where this occurred, as John owned a farm in that state and was in Independence at the time on the Haun's Mill Massacre, on October 30, 1838.

The terrible experience of the Saints during the Missouri persecutions was among the most tragic events in the history of the Church. No words can describe the misery and suffering of this people during the tragic winter of 1838 and 1839, when about 15,000 Saints were driven from their homes by armed mobs. Their property was destroyed and the people expelled from the state and again forced to seek shelter in another state.

This exodus was under the direction of Brigham Young. Many of the Saints went to Quincy, Illinois and located temporarily. John and his family later went to Hancock County and located in Nauvoo the beautiful city, which they helped to build and develop.

Nauvoo, first called Commerce, was built on a magnificent site overlooking the Mississippi and in a majestic curve of the river, which formed a half circle around the city. Nauvoo grew rapidly from an unhealthy marshland, with few inhabitants, into a beautiful, prosperous city, the largest in the state of Illinois at that time. It became famous for its industry and beauty, for its educational opportunities, its comfortable homes and magnificent Temple.

John Telford was in Nauvoo when the corner stone of the Temple was laid on April 6, 1841. He worked on the Temple until the building was completed. Here in Nauvoo John built a good one and one-half story brick house, with lovely flower gardens, one-half [block] North of the Temple. He also owned two city lots in Nauvoo.

Here they were again happy and comfortable when persecutions were renewed and the people in Nauvoo and vicinity were harassed as they were in Ohio and Missouri.

On the 27th of June, 1844, the greatest sorrow of all befell the Mormon people when their beloved prophet and patriarch, Joseph and Hyrum Smith were martyred at Carthage, Illinois. This was a distressing and difficult period for the grief stricken Saints, but under the leadership of the Twelve, the work of the Church and the City continued to advance.

Although persecutions, which had ceased for a short time after the martyrdom, were renewed with increased determination, the work on the Temple continued. In their anxiety to complete the building before they were forced to flee from the city, the Saints worked in all kinds of weather and suffered a lot from cold and exposure.

John's son Robert worked at the rock quarries and also helped with the construction of the Temple. One day while working at the top of the structure and on the inside of the building, he fell to the bottom, receiving injuries from which he never entirely recovered. The younger son George who suffered so much from exposure while working on the temple in the cold, wet weather, later died from the effects of pneumonia at Garden Grove in 1850, when he was twenty-one years of age.

When the Temple was completed as far as necessary for this work, John and his wife Jane and his three oldest children had the opportunity of receiving their endowments there, before the Saints were expelled from the state. John was endowed on December 24, 1845.

He and his family left their home in Nauvoo in February 1846, at the beginning of the general exodus west of over 20,000 homeless, destitute people. The majority of the Saints who left Nauvoo during the extremely cold, stormy winter, camped on the open prairie across the river from their beautiful city where their comfortable homes were empty and their property unsold, while they lived in open camps, suffering untold hardships in the vain hope of thus avoiding further hostilities and bloodshed and the destruction of their property by the mob.

After leaving Nauvoo, the Telfords went back to Quincy and resumed work. They lived for two years at the Quincy Bottoms, where they split rails which they sold to a steam boat company. In this way they earned the money to purchase their equipment for the journey across the plains to the Salt Lake Valley. During this unsettled period John and his family also lived for a short time at Calhoon Point and Garden Grove.

In 1851 they started to Utah with the Harry Walton Company. The usual plan of organization for traveling was to divide the people into companies of one hundred wagons, subdivided into companies of fifty wagons and ten wagons, with captains over each division, John was the

captain of a division of fifty.

He was well equipped for his journey into the wilderness. He had three wagons packed with flour and provisions, seeds for planting and other necessities. One of the wagons, and extra large one, was loaded with bolts of cloth, fine linen and other materials which lasted the family for years after they reached their destination, all of which he divided with poorer families after they reached the valley.

John's wagons were built especially for the trip and according to his own specifications, so that no space was wasted. Two of his wagons were extra large and he also had a light one-horse wagon for his family to ride in. It was equipped with an especially built and upholstered seat, to add some comfort to the long, dreary journey across the plains. There were only four of his children left, however, to make this journey as three had died during that distressing period due to persecution.

When John began the journey west he had horses enough for all his wagons, but on the plains the Indians stole or shot his horses so he was forced to use cows and oxen the remainder of the journey. The fine black mare which his daughter Anna drove on the light wagon was killed by a poisoned arrow so she drove a cow the remainder of the way to Utah. Victoria, the youngest daughter, who drove a team had to use a cow and a horse on her wagon after the stampede. A young French-Canadian, Peter Corina, who came from Canada with John also drove one of his wagons to the valley.

This company arrived in Salt Lake City in September 1851, John settled in Bountiful, Davis County, the second settlement in Utah.

The first few years in this territory were a critical time for the pioneers. The partial crop failures due to drought and grasshopper plagues, their isolation from manufacturing centers and the slow means of transportation had left many of them about destitute of clothing and other necessities. John's foresight had enabled him to provide his family with plenty of material for clothing, but after seven years there was little to choose from and they made their dresses from the same bolt of cloth for everyday as well as for Sunday. The only difference being in the amount of yardage used. Their best dresses being made very full according to the mode for dress occasions.

Added to the difficulties of building a new empire in this arid and isolated region was the political oppression and misrepresentation they were forced to endure.

During the summer of 1857 the pioneers were faced with what they feared was utter ruin and disaster when they received word that an army was marching against them. The troops were sent to Utah by the Federal Government because of reports received at Washington, against

the pioneers. When it was rumored that the army was planning a "Mormon Conquest" and expected to take over their homes and all their possessions the pioneers prepared for self-defense. They stationed a picket guard at Weber Camp in the mouth of Echo Canyon to watch the movements of the U. S. Soldiers during the winter. All the mountain passes were guarded by the Utah Militia.

The pioneers also planned to burn their homes and destroy everything they had built up and leave the valley a blackened ruin rather than again leave their homes to be enjoyed by their enemies.

In the spring of 1858 John Telford and his family, with the pioneers of the other northern settlements, left their homes and moved en masse for the South, leaving only enough men in the deserted communities to burn the buildings and lay waste the country.

On this trip south John was caught in the quicksand while fording the river and his wagon sunk and damaged their perishable goods. A lot of his valuable papers were destroyed. The deeds to all the homes, which he had given up and left unsold after joining the church, his diary covering a period of twenty years and giving a daily record of all his travels and experiences during those turbulent years in the early history of the Church- all these were destroyed.

The people went to Provo and waited for a peaceable settlement of their difficulties. When the word came that the army under Col. A. S. Johnson had passed through Salt Lake City on the 26th of June and were locating in Cedar Valley, forty miles from the city, most of the people returned to their deserted homes. They arrived in time to harvest a volunteer crop of grain, which covered their fields.

The presence of the Army at Camp Floyd which they had considered a detriment to them really proved to be a benefit to the people as it furnished them with employment during the construction of the camp and provided them with a market for their produce and surplus crop. It also enabled them to purchase much needed equipment at small cost when the Army returned east.

On March 13, 1857, John Telford was married to Elizabeth Robinson, a Handcart Pioneer of 1856. She was an educated and cultured woman from Beauville, Nottinghamshire, England. She was a woman of supreme faith and courage who met the problems of this new country in the true pioneer spirit. In December 1857, Elizabeth's son William was born, the first of her nine children.

John Telford lived many years in Bountiful where he was active in both the Church and the community. He was a councilor to bishop Anson Call, President of the Teachers Quorum and also a visiting teacher. He was Assistant Superintendent of the Sunday School for many years and was a teacher of Theology.

John was an authority on church doctrine and was well qualified for this position as he was a High Priest and had the privilege of being a member of the School of the Prophets, which was first organized in Kirtland and taught by the Prophet Joseph Smith. This school was the first educational movement sponsored by the Church and included only those holding the Melchizedek Priesthood considered worthy. This school took up an intensive study of many important subjects such as history, science, the laws governing the universe as well as the sublime truths of Theology. They also studied subjects pertaining to health and proper living.

John was also Justice of the Peace for eight years. He helped with both money and labor to redeem the desert. He helped to build the first gristmill in Centerville and assisted in building the canal in Salt Lake City that supplied Gardner Grist Mill. He helped to bridge Weber River and assisted in building the tannery at Farmington, also Snow's Carding Mills at Brigham City. John helped to build roads and canals and also the Union Pacific Railroad. He also assisted in building the Co-op Store and Tabernacle at East Bountiful.

John Telford raised the first peaches in Davis County and paid the first tithing peaches in Utah. He and Joseph Holbrook also raised the first Early-rose potatoes in Utah. They received two and one half potatoes from the East for seed, which they divided for planting.

John also did pioneer work in Richmond where he moved in 1860. He lived in the old fort and helped with pioneer work in that community for a short time and then moved to Brigham City for a few years where he continued his work of pioneering.

About 1864 John and his family returned to Bountiful where they remained until June 1881 when they went back to Cache Valley and lived in Lewiston for about one year. When he was eighty years he bought a small farm and a three-acre lot in Richmond and built a home there where he resided the remainder of his life.

John Telford was a man of fine character and a natural leader. He was honest, industrious, straightforward and truthful and a high sense of justice and honor. He was broad-minded, kind, understanding and generous to a fault. He despised hypocrisy, vulgarity and unfair dealing. He was a man of exceptionally good judgment and was held in high esteem by his townspeople. He was always called to act as a mediator in all the disputes in the community and his judgment was never questioned. Whatever his decision all parties were satisfied that justice had been rendered.

John was a student of the law so was qualified to fill the need of the early pioneer community in the capacity of legal advisor, investigator

and judge. In his office of Justice of the Peace and as a member of the Bishopric, he was called to act in this capacity for many years, both in temporal and spiritual affairs.

John was intellectual and of a highly spiritual nature and was very reverent. He had good government in his family, He guided his children with a word or a nod of his head and they never disregarded his wishes. He was patient as Job and often imposed upon. He was high tempered and although perfectly controlled he could wither one with a look when angry and people feared his displeasure.

John was a good neighbor, loyal to his friends, his country and his religion. He had a great pride of ancestry but stood for individual accomplishment and had no false money values. He loved fine horses and beautiful surroundings and was especially interested in agriculture, horticulture, politics and religion.

He loved music, had a good tenor voice and enjoyed singing. He also loved poetry and all good books. He knew and often repeated appropriate quotations from poetry, fiction or the scriptures to fit every situation or occasion.

When John came to Utah he brought quite a number of books with him across the plains. Among these were all the Church works. Walker's Dictionary, Biography of Distinguished Men, Pictorial History of America, Exercises on the Globes and Rollins Ancient Histories. He also brought some volumes of poetry, such as Poems of the Seasons, Poetry of the Passions, Poems of Robert Burns and John Saxe and several other volumes as well as some volumes of Discourses, etc.

John Telford was a great reader and a student all his life. He was educated and a true gentleman. He always retained his keen, active mind and was as straight as a soldier when he died.

After a long life, rich in experience, he passes away at his home in Richmond on Sunday, January 19, 1896, a victim of pneumonia. He was ninety-three years, ten months and seventeen days old when he died.

He was survived by his wife Elizabeth and eight of his seventeen children. He also had forty-four grandchildren and one hundred and eleven great grandchildren and one second great grandchild. Before his death there were five generations in the family.

Funeral services for John Telford were held in the Richmond Ward Chapel on Wednesday, January 22, 1896, and were attended by a host of relatives and friends. The speakers were all old friends of approximately forty years standing: Apostle Marriner W. Merrill, Elders Christian Hyer and Wallace Burnham of Richmond and William Waddoups and Sidney Kent of Lewiston.

John Telford was interred in the Richmond Cemetery where he lies at peace on that lovely quiet hillside, an impressive marble shaft with and Emblem of Old Ireland marking his last resting place.