

PIONEERS OF 1849

Thomas Ralphs was born 22 July, 1819 in Wollerton, Shropshire, England. He was the fifth son born to Benjamin and Mary Edwards Ralphs. Mary was the sixth and youngest child in the family.

Thomas was one of the early converts to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints, in England, as he immigrated to America early in 1842, and prior to immigrating, he had fulfilled a mission for the Church in England. (First missionaries arrived in England in July, 1837).

Sarah Johnson was born 3 February, 1821, in Ireland. However, her parents Joseph (of Birmingham) and Margaret Johnson were English. She talked of a sister and a brother, James. Thus far, we have been unable to obtain further information of her parents and their family.

Both of the subjects of this sketch worked in a pottery in England; Thomas moulded the clay and Sarah decorated it.

They were sweethearts in England and Thomas urged Sarah to be married but Sarah was desirous of going to America and joining the Saints before they married. When reminiscing with her daughter years later, she felt like that was a mistake, as she was extremely seasick on that long ocean voyage, and she felt that a husband could have been quite a help to her.

Their marriage (secular) was performed 10 May 1842, in Missouri. No doubt they had joined some Saints, but the Saints in Missouri were then having a "hectic" time. They had been mistreated and mobbed. Many of the Saints, including the Prophet, Joseph, had already located in Nauvoo.

"On 6 May, 1842" (four days previous to the above mentioned marriage) "Lilburn W. Boggs, Ex-Governor of Missouri, was said to have been shot by an assassin. And, in consequence of the injuries which he had received, suspicion immediately fastened itself upon Joseph (the Prophet), who was accused of having committed the crime."

This accusation was false and was impossible, inasmuch as it was established that Joseph was far distant from the Ex-Governor the date the Ex-Governor was assassinated.

So midst this turmoil and the persecution of the Saints in Missouri, Thomas and Sarah ventured forth on their honeymoon. Their goal was to join the Saints in Nauvoo and this they did. Their grandson, Orestus, recalls that he heard his grandmother say that they lived across the street from the Prophet, Joseph, and his family.

While living in Nauvoo, they partook of all the trials, sufferings, and persecutions of the Saints. And in the meantime, they were raising a family - their first-born, Georgianna, was born prematurely on 24 July 1843. She died the same day.

They were also doing what they could to advance the work of the Lord. Thomas and his brother, Richard, are on record as being members of the 31st Quorum of Seventies, which was organized in Nauvoo, 26 October, 1845. After arriving in "G.S.L. City", this quorum met at the home of one of the members "the first Sunday in each month at 3 P.M." or after the meeting in the tabernacle. Scattered members were requested to assemble themselves together once in six months, and also send in their genealogies, if they have not previously done so. If they fail to do so, they would be dropped and their places filled. Records show that Thomas attended these quorum meetings in "G.S.L. City" and that Richard reported from San Bernardino, Calif.

Sarah told her descendants that she was present at the meeting when the mantle of Joseph Smith fell upon Brigham Young.

"At the close of the morning meeting, President (of the quorum of Twelve Apostles) Brigham Young, made a few remarks and announced that there would be another meeting at 2:00 o'clock. At the appointed time, a great multitude of Saints assembled. The various quorums of the Priesthood were arranged in order before the stand, and after the opening exercises, President Brigham Young addressed the congregation. He spoke with great power and the people were convinced that the authority and power of the presidency was with the Apostles. When he first arose to speak the people were greatly astonished, for President Young stood transfigured before them and they beheld the Prophet, Joseph Smith, and heard his voice as naturally as ever they did when he was living. It was a "manifestation to the Saints that they might recognize the correct authority." (Essentials of Church History p. 388).

The Prophet, Joseph, and his brother, Hyrum, were martyred at Carthage Jail, 27 June, 1844. Sarah recounted to her descendants, that she viewed the mortal remains of the Prophet, Joseph, after his martyrdom.

Both Thomas and Sarah received their Patriarchal Blessings from John Smith, Uncle of the Prophet, Joseph, in Nauvoo, 15 September, 1845.

Readers will recall that the Saints built the, then, largest city in Illinois, "Nauvoo, the Beautiful". The thrifty Saints had built comfortable homes and had fruit trees, flowers, and crops. They, too, were steadfastly striving to build and complete the temple.

January 14, 1845 quote from 'an inspiring epistle "to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in all the world."'

"Brethren, inasmuch as you have long desired blessings, come up to the house of the Lord and help to forward the work that we are engaged in, for we trust that these rooms will be finished by the first of December next, so that you may enter therein and receive wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and the power of the priesthood which you have so long desired; that you may be prepared to go forth to the nations of the earth and build up the kingdom in all parts of the world; gather up Zion; rebuild Jerusalem; and fill the whole earth with the knowledge of God." (History of the Church Vol. 7, pp - 356 - 358.)

"Such burning words of advice, council, and encouragement had their effect, and the brethren responded in ever increasing numbers. On Jan. 15th, Pres. Young was informed by Albert P. Rockwell that sixty-two hands and six teams had volunteered to work in the rock quarry."

In the meantime, "abuses, persecutions, murders and robberies were practiced upon us by a horde of land pirates, with impunity, in a Christian republic and land of liberty (while the institutions of justice have either been too weak to afford us protection or redress, or else they have been a little remiss) have brought us to the solemn conclusion that our exit from the United States is the only alternative by which we can enjoy our share of the elements which our Heavenly Father created free for all."

And so the Saints began to get organized for their trek Westward. "By Nov. 23, 1845, Pres. Young was able to report that 3,285 families had been organized for the great trek Westward. He stated

also, that 1,508 wagons were on hand, and that 1,892 more were in the course of construction. The city of Nauvoo had become a vast wagon shop."

The busy Saints, harassed by their enemies, were privileged by Wed. December 10, 1845 to begin to receive their endowments in the Temple. "At 4:25 P.M., Pres. Young and Heber C. Kimball commenced administering the ordinances of the endowment."

February 4, 1846 the first family ferried across the Mississippi River to begin their historic journey westward. Others followed day by day.

On Saturday, February 7, "upwards of six hundred received ordinances in the Temple." The Temple was then closed for ordinance work.

Thomas received his endowments on that last day. Sarah would have been there, too, but her second child, Joseph, was born February 5, 1846, or just two days previous.

How long the Ralphs tarried in Nauvoo is conjecture. Their son Ephraim, said that they were poor and couldn't qualify with material goods to join a group of Saints to leave, and that they left by themselves as they accumulated enough resources. However, we do know that they were in Bonaparte, Van Buren Co., Iowa by 19 April, 1848, as that was the place and time their son, Ephraim, was born.

Brigham Young wrote, "Our homes, gardens, orchards, farms, streets, bridges, mills, public halls, magnificent Temple and other public improvements, we leave as a monument of our patriotism, industry, economy, uprightness of purpose, and integrity of heart; and as a living testimony of the falsehood and the wickedness of those who charge us with disloyalty to the Constitution of our country, idleness, and dishonesty."

Somewhere along that trek in the state of Iowa, death claimed their second child, Joseph, on 27 July, 1848. He was then nearly two and one half years old.

Marriage, births, death, trials, etc. did not deter their resolve to press on with their westward journey. Subsequently, they arrived in Kanessville and became members of the Fifth Company of Pioneers. Ezra T. Benson, then an Apostle, was the Captain of this Company. The Captain of the Third Company was Silas Richards and

the captain of the Fourth Company was Apostle George A. Smith. These three companies traveled so close together that they often camped in the same locality. William I. Appleby was appointed to write a day by day account of their travels and the following quotes of the journey are from his account:

"Wednesday, July 4, 1849. Left Kaneshville (Council Bluffs), today with our teams, traveled about six miles and camped on the prairie. Tarrried until the Sabbath following (July 8) when we moved about four miles further to-ward the Missouri River, to embrace our turn in being ferried over the same, which we accomplished on Wednesday, the eleventh and encamped again on indian territory, Omaha lands near Winter Quarters, awaiting the arrival of our brethren."

"Saturday, July 14. Left our camp near Winter Quarters, went about six miles and encamped for the night. Mosquitoes bad indeed."

"Friday, July 20. Third, Fourth, and Fifth Companies moved forward thirteen miles and camped without any accidents, all enjoying tolerable health, thanks to Heaven's King."

Saturday, July 21. Traveled ten miles and encamped at a place called Shell Creek, having traveled alto-gether 62½ miles since we left Winter Quarters, according to Clayton's Guide, which distance was measured by the Pioneers with roadometer in the year 1847."

"Monday, July 23. Camp moved early; traveled about twelve miles through a wet, muddy, miry, and slimy road (it had been raining the day previous) and encamped on the banks of the Platte. The plains here are hundreds of miles in length and from three to twelve miles wide from the Platte River south to the Bluffs north, and are covered with rich, luxuriant pastures and beautiful flowers of different odors, colors, and variegated hues. The lands thus far traveled from the Missouri River belong to the Omaha and Pawnee tribes of Indians, but we have not seen any since we left Winter Quarters. We found an Indian skull along the way three days ago."

"Tuesday, July 24. Traveled eleven miles through muddy roads, the weather being exceedingly warm, which fatigued our cattle very much. Stopped to rest often and encamped for the night at the Loupe Fork of the Platte River, opposite to where the Pawnee Village of several hundred huts was located in the Spring of 1847 when the Pioneer camp went out. We found a good camping place, plenty of wood and water. Nearby where we encamped was a grave enclosed with some cottonwood logs and bark, supposed to be the grave of some

golddigger. It is quite interesting in the evening, when the camp stops, to witness the activity of all that are able; some watering cattle, some driving others to herd, others carrying wood and water for the evening and morning, while others are preparing their meals; after supper, the driving up of the herd, chaining and tying up cattle. The captain of the guard blows his horn and summons the guards to duty. The camp, after prayers, retires to rest, with their camp fires burning, and their lamps lighted up in their wagons. With the lowing of the oxen, the bleating of the sheep, the neighing of the horses in the corral, the howling of the wolves on the distant hills and prairies, with the half-hourly cry of the guards from No. 1 up, as they cry the hour of the night with "all is right;" all combined lends enchantment to the scene and a feeling of praise, veneration, and thanksgiving to the God of the Saints."

"Saturday, July 28.\*\*In the evening, we camped near Captain Richards camp, where they had a 'trip on the light, fantastic toe.'"

"Tuesday, August 7. It is remarkable that not one Indian has been seen since we left the Missouri River (all away hunting, we suppose) until last evening, when two were discovered near the coral, lurking about in the grass, endeavoring to steal our horses, no doubt. The guard (Capt. Averett) discovered them and on the Indians hearing the click of the gun as he drew back the cock, they fled down the banks of the creek."

"Thursday, August 9. Traveled twelve miles; roads good but dusty; weather hot. Encamped without wood, only buffalo chips. Dug several wells and got a supply of quite good, pure water."

"Friday, August 10. Twelve miles completed on our journey for this day; some part, sandy roads. A heavy shower coming on. We encamped early near low, sandy bluffs. From about 5 P.M. o'clock until midnight, there was one constant and incessant torrent almost; the lightning flashed in vivid glare, the thunder rolled in rumbling and terrific peals, the wind howled through our camp of canvas stretched to the enraged elements. Many were the mothers of infants that received the cold drops through their frail covering and reposed in their saturated beds, without murmuring, as it was Heaven's will. The cattle bent to the storm as they stood upon their feet, and sometimes tried a rope or chain, by which they were made fast. The guards, wet and dripping, paced the camp, in their several rounds, crying the hour, exposed to the furious and pitiless storm. However, after about seven hours, the elements having spent their fury, a calm subsided, and in the morning the

camp arose to behold a beautiful, clear sky, a shining scene; cattle all safe and cheerful and smiling countenances in the camp, and plenty of water around the same.

"The statistics of the camp are as follows, according to the report of the Captains of Tens: 120 wagons, 447 souls, 128 men, 23 horses, 2 mules, 2 ponies, 489 oxen, 220 cows, 70 loose cattle, 100 sheep, 12 pigs, 80 chickens, 17 cats, 27 dogs, 19 ducks, 4 turkeys, 2 doves, 151 guns, 37 pistols and 1 sword."

"Friday August 17 "\*\*\*\*\* heavy shower of thunder, lightning, rain and very large hail."

"Monday, August 20. 340 miles from Winter Quarters."

"Monday, August 27. Completed thirteen miles more travel over sandy bluffs; dust plenty; weather quite hot, and cattle much fatigued. Some few's feet are getting sore, as also their necks and shoulders. Encamped near Ancient Bluff Ruins, 419 miles from Winter Quarters. Our camps continue to enjoy quite good health."

Thursday, September 13. 600 miles from Winter Quarters."

? date. Mail, fresh oxen, fresh teamsters and wagon sent from Salt Lake City.

October 1. Froze ice. Snow.

Friday, October 5. Altitude some 6000 ft. Weather intensely cold.

Wednesday, October 17. Encamped near Bridger's Fort.

Friday, October 19. Crossed over mountain 8000 ft. altitude.

Saturday, October 20. Crossed over Bear River.

Monday, October 22. Twelve miles made off of our journey today. Camped in Echo Canyon. Cattle tired; their feet sore. Roads bad; ditches, ravines, mud, mire, etc. plenty."

Journey from Winter Quarters 1,030 miles (about).

Quote from Fifth Company follows:

On October 2, the Companies of Elders Smith, Benson and Richards, were encamped on the Sweetwater, West of the Rocky Ridge and while there, were overtaken by a furious wind and snowstorm, which continued for 36 hours. The snow drifted in every direction, in many places being 3 or 4 ft. deep, and freezing on everything it touched. Unable to keep warm,

most of the women and children remained in bed and 17 of the cattle in Bro. Benson's Company perished."

Ezra T. Benson's Company "arrived in the city in Companies of Ten about October 28, 1849."

And thus ended the historic journey Westward for the Ezra T. Benson Company, of which Thomas and Sarah Ralphs, and son, Ephraim, then 1½ years of age, were members. They had endured many hardships; they had hungered, thirsted, toiled, as they trudged their way. They had felt the extreme heat of July's and August's piercing sun and the cold Autumn nights of September and October as they pursued the mountainous part of their journey. They had experienced all kinds of storms; rain, hail, sleet, snow, thunder, lightning and dust - dust so thick in the air, they could scarcely see. They had hauled water, in containers, along with them, to use in time of need. They had dug wells. They had picked wild strawberries to eat. They had killed antelope and other game for food. Mention was made that prairie dogs were "very good eating" as their "diet was grass." They had encountered various road difficulties; sometimes the roads were muddy, sometimes they were sandy, sometimes they were mountainous. They had to ferry rivers and ford streams. They had spent a day now and again by enforced stops to repair wagons, reset tires, do their laundry, baking, etc. They had worshipped; always mindful of their Maker and their obligations to Him, they ever hallowed the Sabbath Day. It was usual to cease their journey on the Sabbath Day, and worship in a meeting.

Needless to say that they must have been happy to finally arrive at their journey's end, even though they encountered new problems relative to building a home and joining with others in pioneering a new locality.

The family of three located in the Tenth Ward in Salt Lake City. Thomas Ralphs was on record in "G.S.L. City" Tenth Ward as a full tithe payer. Samples of Tithing Receipts follow:

"This certifies that Thomas Ralphs has paid his labor and produce Tithing in full to April 6, 1854.

G.S.L. City, May 22, 1854  
A. Calkin, Clk."

"This certifies that Thomas Ralphs has paid his property Tithing, in full in accordance with vote of conference Sept. 10, 1851.

G.S.L. City, January 21, 1852  
Wm. Clayton, Recorder  
pr. H. B. Clauson"

Other items of interest in the Tenth Ward Record follow: Thomas Ralphs' name was listed among "the names of those who wrought on the water ditch in 1853" and he also did work on the "Big Canyon Ditch" and "Ward Ditches" and his name also appeared with "the names of those who wrought on the water canal 30 April, 1855."

November 8, 1853, a meeting was held in the Tenth Ward to organize a Fire Company and Thomas Ralphs was selected to help in this cause.

He was assigned on 3 February, 1853 to be a Ward Teacher of Block 27.

Their daughter, Sarah Ann and sons, Thomas Heber and James Albert were born while the Ralphs lived in the Tenth Ward and they and their older brother, Ephraim were duly blessed there.

Sarah received her endowments and was sealed to her husband in Salt Lake City, 9 December, 1851.

Thomas assisted in the erection of the Salt Lake Temple (1853-1893) by hauling rock from "a granite quarry some twenty miles to the southeast. The only means of transportation was by ox team, and in the early days of construction three or four yoke of oxen required three or four days to make a round trip transporting one block of foundation stone. Through the years the work progressed slowly but with great care. A railroad later supplanted the ox team."

The family moved to Brigham City in 1855, "through the solicitation of Lorenzo Snow" (then an Apostle). They were some of the early settlers of that place. Their home was in the Northwest part of the City. Brigham City Ward was organized in 1852. It was divided into First, Second, Third and Fourth Wards, 19 August, 1877. The Ralphs' home was within the boundaries of the Third Ward (Northwest part of the City).

They continued to pioneer and suffered many privations and hardships. From their son's biography written 20 November, 1902

quote, "Ephraim was inured to hardships, sharing in many privations of the early settlers of Utah. He remembers, distinctly, going with his mother two miles west of Brigham to pull what were called water segoes, which grew profusely that season (1856) in the water. The segoes were stewed and with a little bran or flour, made into a porridge, to subsist on."

Their daughter, Mary Frances, was born 15 February, 1857.

In July, 1858, the entire family moved south because of the invasion of Johnston's Army. After all danger of this invasion was past, the family returned to Brigham City.

Now it would appear that all obstacles had been surmounted and that the rewards of their toil, travels, hardships, privations, etc. were in sight, but the family was bereft, on 11 June, 1859, of the husband and father. He was less than forty years of age.

Sarah was greatly grieved at the loss of her beloved companion. Two months later on 12 August, 1859, she gave birth to a daughter, Lovinnia E. Resolutely she set forth to provide for and rear her family. She organized a school and taught in a room in her own home. Later she taught school in a public building in Calls Fort, 4.8 miles distant from her home, (distance recently measured with odometer) and she commuted on foot. When Mary became old enough, she assisted her mother with the school. Sarah's sons all worked hard to help maintain the family.

Later Sarah was called to attend classes in Salt Lake City to train to be a midwife. She, with others was "set apart to be a midwife and nurse in Zion" Friday, Sept. 26, 1873, by Orson Pratt and George Q. Cannon.

On March 16, 1861, Sarah's baby daughter died.

Notwithstanding the many trials and privations endured, Sarah lived to be 75 years old; she passed away 14 April, 1896.

Both Thomas and Sarah "lived and died, faithful Latter-Day Saints." From their son, Ephraim's biography, "His father died when he was eleven years old, leaving him in the care of a good, wise mother, whose teachings impressed him early in life, with principles that would, if followed, insure a good honorable life, and a strong reverence for Diety, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ." These noble Pioneers are interred in the Brigham City Cemetery.

Items of interest regarding the subjects of these sketches and Thomas Ralph's brothers and sister:

William Ralphs and Joseph Ralphs appeared on the 1850 Nauvoo Tax Assessment list.

Ephraim Ralphs had in his possession two deeds which his father, Thomas, had of property he owned in Nauvoo. He also had Thomas' appointment to a Mission in England and Sarah's Certificate of Midwifery.

"Wednesday, August 20, 1845, a severe thunderstorm visited Nauvoo in the morning; Brother Ralph (Joseph) was killed by lightning on Parley Street; others were knocked down."

William B. married Elizabeth Brooks (of Staffordshire, England). They immigrated to Utah and lived in American Fork. Their descendant, Leon Ralphs, presently lives in Ferron, Utah.

~~Mary received her endowments in the Nauvoo Temple, 6 Feb. 1846.~~

This accounts for all the children, except John <sup>and Mary</sup> of Benjamin and Mary Edwards Ralphs, being in Nauvoo. ~~Perhaps he was there too, but nothing was found to indicate that he was.~~

Benjamin Ralphs and Mary Edwards were married 30 Jan. 1806 at Hodnet, Shropshire, England. Their children were all born in Wollerton, Shropshire, England. They were: John (Jan. 1808- ), Joseph (Jan. 1810-20 Aug. 1845), Richard (Sept. 1812), William B. 6 May 1816- ), Thomas (22 July 1819-11 June 1859), Mary (3 Dec. 1821- ).

Thomas Ralphs and Sarah Johnson were married 10 May 1842 in Missouri. Their children were: Georgianna (24 July 1843-24 July 1843), Joseph (5 Feb. 1846-27 July 1848), Ephraim (19 April 1848-2 Jan. 1934), Sarah Ann (5 March 1851-3 Oct. 1852), Thomas Heber (29 Jan. 1853-1924), James Albert (18 Dec. 1854- ), Mary Frances (15 Feb. 1857-2 Nov. 1924), Lovinnia E. (12 Aug. 1859-16 Mar. 1861).

1845 June 4 and in each issue of the Nauvoo Neighbor (a weekly newspaper) for a period of six months appeared the following advertisement: "The Potters Association".

"The undersigned would inform the citizens of the city of Joseph and the public generally that we are now manufacturing of the best material and have on hand a large assortment of Earthenware, a few yards east of the Temple on Knight Street, such as Pitchers, Bowl, Plates, Dishes, Cups and Saucers, Chambers, Peppers and Salts, Nappes, Mugs, etc., which will be sold wholesale and retail for Cash or Country Produce, cheaper than can be purchased on the Mississippi, of the same quality. We boast of the best material and best workman the United States can afford, being English Potters and having worked in the most extensive manufactories in England.

Elijah K. Fuller, Pres.  
Richard Taylor Steele  
William Box  
Richard Ralphs

Joseph Ralphs  
Thomas Ralphs  
Alfred Cordon  
John Bourne, Clerk  
June 4, 1845-5-6m."

"The manufacture of China and Earthenware, in the Northern part of the County (Staffordshire), is the most extensive and important in the kingdom; the district called the Potteries consist of numerous scattered villages occupying an extent of about ten square miles, and containing about 20,000. It is crossed by Trent and Mercy, or Grand Trunk Canal."

-- Lewis' Topographical Dictionary

"Near Coalfort (Shropshire) on the Severn, colored china of all sorts and of exquisite taste and beauty, is made and at the same newly-formed town is a manufacture of earthenware, in imitation of that made at Etruria (Staffordshire) commonly called Wedgewood ware." -- Lewis' Topographical Dictionary p 83.