

GEORGE SPILSBURY and FANNY SMITH SPILSBURY
(Parents of George Moroni Spilsbury)

Born: 21 April 1823

Leigh, Worcestershire, England

Died: 25 January 1919 (95 yrs.)

Toquerville, Washington, Utah

Married: 5 September 1842

Parents: Joseph Spilsbury and
Tabitha Bridges

25 December 1823

Creadley, Hrfdsr, England

5 June 1903 (79 yrs.)

Toquerville, Washington, Utah

Richard Smith and

Vobe Hannah Horton

George Spilsbury joined the Church in England when he was 17; nine months later he became a missionary. One of his converts was a young lady, Fanny Smith. When Fanny joined the Church and decided to travel to America, her grieving father gave her a locket, telling her, "I can warn you that those Mormons in their wild country are ruthless and will never allow you to write and certainly never allow you to come back to me. Send me this locket as a sign and I will know that your are sorry and I will make it possible for you to come home!" Fanny never returned the locket and never saw her family again. George and Fanny married and worked to earn money to immigrate to America. George worked at his trade as a bricklayer; Fanny sewed hats. They left family and beautiful homeland behind, sailing from Liverpool and arriving at New Orleans, where they had to borrow money to travel up the river to Nauvoo.



Here they were acquainted with the Prophet, Joseph Smith. All his life, George bore a firm testimony of the divine calling of the Prophet. They suffered from the persecutions by the enemies of the church and, in fact, one day a bullet whizzed by Fanny and left a hole in the washtub she was carrying. In Nauvoo, George helped quarry stone for the temple and spent much time protecting the prophet from mob violence. He was a member of Colonel Pitts Band. Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum spent many hours in their home. George and Fanny viewed the martyred bodies of the Prophet and his brother; George witnessed the transformation as Brigham Young assumed the mantel of the Prophet.

They traveled across the plains to Salt Lake Valley in 1850. They had already lost four children in infancy. Fanny bore her fifth child in a covered wagon as she was suffering from the effects of cholera. The birth of her baby saved her life, but she nearly lost him when the thirst-crazed oxen tumbled the wagon over in the Platte River, spilling out mother, baby, and all their belongings. The baby was found, apparently drowned, downstream among some boxes; he was quickly administered to and christened Alma Platte Spilsbury; he lived to father a great posterity.

George and Fanny built a home in Draper but were called by Brigham Young in 1863 to help settle Utah's Dixie. They first settled in Grafton but had to move to Rockville because of danger from the Indians. They eventually made their home in Toquerville. My grandfather, George Moroni, was the sixth of thirteen children; only five lived to adulthood. Fanny was known as a gracious hostess to important visitors to Southern Utah. The last 12 years of her life she was impaired by a stroke and was confined to her bed and chair, but remained cheerful and patient to the end.

George was ordained a Patriarch and was Sunday School superintendent for over fifty years. For seventeen years he rode on horseback through his area; after that he wore out three buggies and buckboards, three sets of harnesses and four horses traveling over 30,000 miles in the Sunday school cause at his own expense. In his later years, George lived in a small house by his son, George Moroni. My father recalls taking freshly churned buttermilk to his grandfather each evening before bedtime and then locking the door to keep him safe because he walked in his sleep. One night in his sleep, George climbed out the window and walked to the end of the road where he fell down a deep ravine. He lay in the water at the bottom which caused him to contract a fatal case of pneumonia; he died at age 95. He was stalwart in the church from the time of his conversion in England. Here is part of his personal testimony:

The question may be asked by some of my grandchildren, 'Did you feel disappointed when you saw him [the Prophet] the first time?' I will tell you. All my troubles, and privations of leaving my father and mother, brothers, sisters and my native land seemed nothing compared with the joy of my experience when I first saw and heard him, the Prophet Joseph Smith, preach. I felt greatly blessed of the Lord in having such a glorious privilege."