

## James and Ann Naylor Eyre

James Eyre was born at Quarrington, Lincolnshire, England in 1793. The records show he was christened July 1795, the son of James Eyre and Elleonor Elcey. It is also recorded that Ann Naylor was born November 12, 1798 to William and Ann Naylor in the parish of Heckington, Lincolnshire, England. Quarrington and Heckington were neighboring parishes in the district of Sleaford.

As James and Ann kept no personal records, we must form a picture of their lives from the times they lived in and the nature of their people. Sleaford is located in what is called East Anglia at the edge of the Fens, where long grasses plentiful and used to thatch roofs over those who resided there. This was historically "freedom country." It is an area of England where Robin Hood reputedly roamed, and where Pilgrim fathers were imprisoned. Sleaford was far enough away from the cities to maintain the integrity of village life.

James and Ann came from a line of modest farmers and shepherds. Their people were tenants on land owned by the privileged class for centuries past. At the time of their birth England had a population of about 15 million. Of that number only 2% owned land. As only the land owners could vote, serve in Parliament, military, civil service, and receive an education, 98% of the people of England were dependant on the whims and knowledge of the ruling class.

This was the age of which Dickens wrote. The Eyre family lived with the fears of the times, when children worked long hours to earn the family's bread, and the threat of work or poorhouse hung over every infirmed or aged person unable to rely on his family or friends. It was a time when the Anglican Church and its bishops owned the land, privilege, and votes. It was a time when the humble were kept humble intentionally. James and Ann grew up with the fever of miracles of the industrial revolution: when the poor farmers went into factory work and found slavery of a different nature. Labor was paid cheaply with no consideration to hours, conditions, age, illness, or accident. Workers were used and discarded. This was a time of deterioration in health and moral fiber, of pollution and disfigurement, and of depression and hunger.

James and Ann met and married in the midst of the greatest depression England had ever felt. They moved southeast of Seaford to the nearby village of Dows by and settled into the routine of feeding and housing the children who were born to them. James was twenty and Ann was eighteen when their first child was born. James was a shepherd in an area of England where sheep did well. Wool was in demand as textile factories sprang up in the west. Wool raising was essential to the economy. Farming, up until 1840, was done much as it had been in medieval times. Fields were left fallow to regenerate, the farm tools were primitive. During their lives great advances were made in agriculture. Lincoln was known for its barley, wheat, and potatoes, as well as the cattle and sheep raised there. Roof-thatching was a common farmyard skill and we assume James and his sons thatched the roofs of their homes and barns. Until the year 1847 it is easy to picture James and his growing family doing work of the time. Planting, harvesting, carding wool, spinning and weaving. The Eyres were most likely among the number who saved their Shillings and Pence for their quarter-rent (paid four times a year). They probably participated in parish activities such as weddings, funerals, fairs, festivals and worship. They spent leisure time strolling the country lanes or visiting with neighbors and friends. The years from 1813 through the 1840's were hard times in England and James and Ann endured the depressions, shortages and hungry times with other Englishmen. During these times Ann Naylor Eyre bore 13 children of record. They buried their sixth child, seven month old Charlotte in April

of 1827, and a twin son Robert, two days after his birth in 1840. In 1845 Ann gave birth to Edwin, her last child. She was 46 years old. Her oldest child, James, was then 28 years old. For her time, she must have been a woman of strong constitution and robust health.

In 1837 the first missionaries for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints arrived in England. The missionaries sent from America represented a double appeal. First, they brought a new vision of spiritual power. The knowledge that the Gospel was restored held logic, and was carried by aggressive messengers. The story of the vision of the prophet Joseph Smith rang true in the hearts and minds of the people. The presentation of the Book of Mormon was evidence. The declarations by the three and eight witnesses were believable. The message of the Book of Mormon was a reality, and understandably, another testament of Jesus Christ. It added light and knowledge and truth not known to this pious and bible oriented people. The restored gospel so profound, yet simple, lifted the darkness of the spiritual drought. Tens of thousands of people joined the church.

The second appeal was a new hope that there would be relief from the various powers holding them in bondage. There was also an added hope that if they could go to America there would be unlimited opportunities.

We know that James was baptized March 16, 1847 by Joseph Banks. He states in his own handwritten journal, "In the spring of 1847 I baptized Father Eyre into the Church and Kingdom of our Father and he stood firm until his death." We know that Ann and her oldest son James, and daughter Sarah, the ninth child, were baptized in November of 1847. We have records of the baptisms of all the Eyre children at various times, with the exceptions of Ann and Elsie.

At the time of the first baptism in the Eyre family James was 52 years old and Ann was 49. The youngest of their 13 living children was Edwin, who was two years old.

James III, the oldest child, was 31 years old and still living at home. He would not marry for another 10 to 11 years, when he was about 42. It seems however, that he was a great help and support to his father and was like another bread-winner to this large family.

Ann, the second child, had married Robert Banks, had one daughter in 1838 and was widowed. She then married Francis Dobney. In the spring of 1847 she gave birth to the first of six Dobney children.

Ellen had married William Banks in 1841, and in 1843 they departed for Australia with their two children.

William was 25 years old at the time, however, little is known about him.

Elsie was at home in 1847. She was 23 and would marry John Watts 4 years later. She came under the influence of the gospel, but we know very little of her life, and have no record of her baptism.

Charlotte was married to Joseph Banks in August of 1846. Her husband had been a member of the church since August 1845. Joseph Banks is a significant and central figure in the Eyre and Banks families. Members of both families joined the church as Joseph led the way.

John was 15 at the time his parents entered the church, but he was not baptized until he was 19 years old in 1851. John Eyre was baptized by another Banks brother, also named John.

Sarah was 12 years old. In November of 1847 she was baptized along with her mother.

The three youngest sons, George, Benjamin, and Edwin were 9, 7, and 2 respectively.

From various reports and inferences, we know that James and Ann embraced the gospel in every facet of their lives. James expressed many times after becoming a member of the church that he never knew what real joy was until he became a Latter-Day Saint. One of his favorite songs that he loved to sing at the fireside was this: "A Mormon father loves to see his Mormon

family all agree. With prattling infant in his knee, cries, 'Daddy, I'm a Mormon.' Ha, the merry, ho the merry, ha the merry Mormon." The Eyre family read the scriptures, had prayers together, attended meetings, and prepared their sons for missions. As soon as the call to gather to Zion was issued, the Eyres began to think in terms of immigrating. They saved and deposited into the Perpetual Emigration Fund. Some have mentioned the monetary assistance from the oldest son James in this regard.

Although the older daughters were married, Ann still had the responsibility of young children. The gospel was central to all they did. Survival and everyday work was a great care and responsibility in which every family member participated.

In 1855 James and Ann and three sons were turned out of their home by a minister of the Church of England because they belonged to the LDS Church. The minister told them they could live in one of his houses if they would renounce their LDS Church membership. However, James responded, "My religion is a pure and undefiled one. It is the religion of the Lord, Jesus Christ and I would not give it up for your house or this town or all that my eyes ever beheld."

We do not know where they went to live at that time. Possibly they resided with other family members. It had been nearly eight years since their baptism. James was 60 years old and Ann was 57.

1855 was a transition time for the Eyre family. Ann (daughter) was well married to her second husband. Ellen and Charlotte had married two Banks brothers, William and Joseph, and had left to try their fortunes in Australia. Australia beckoned many Englishmen in those years. Over a million left to try the sheep trade or mine for gold. John made his way to Utah, married, and settled in Parowan. Sarah, still a young girl, left shortly after John in the spring of 1855 for America. Also at this time George was preparing for his mission. The immediate family was shrinking and being pulled apart by three continents. George later served his mission in Yorkshire and married Rebecca Hopkin. They then also immigrated to Utah. By 1858 word was received that Sarah, who had been working in Cincinnati, had married Joseph Myers in Ohio.

In 1855, news arrived that Charlotte and Ellen had left Australia and were in route to Utah via California. Their arrival took nearly three years. By the year 1864 the infrequent mail brought James and Ann word that a nucleus of their family had been established at a place called Minersville, Utah, and their children in Zion were beckoning. In Minersville were Ellen, Charlotte, John, Sarah, and George. Now the dilemma: to go or to stay. James was nearing 70 and Ann was 67. The journey would be hard and the separation from James III, Ann, William, and Elsie, and their grandchildren would most likely be permanent. The pull to leave England was great. England was not a welcomed place for the aged. Older people were dependant on their children, who were themselves struggling under the strain of the times. Also to consider were Edwin and Benjamin, who were not boys, but men of 20 and 25 and had limited opportunities in their future. The decision was finally made to comply with their self-imposed call to go to Zion, to leave their home in Dowsby and establish themselves in Utah with the saints and their family.

James and Ann and their sons Benjamin and Edwin made their preparations, said their goodbyes, and set sail for America April 20, 1865 on the Bellwood. Their voyage was harsh and uncomfortable. They ate salt pork, dried peas, and hardtack, and drank poor water and bad tea. A few weeks after they had left England, Ann, whose age and health could not endure the food and the tossing sea, became ill and died toward the end of May 1865. She was buried in the Atlantic Ocean. James received a testimony as to the evidence of life after death when shortly after her passing, he felt her touch him on the arm and cheek. He had no doubt it was his wife, and this lightened the burden of his sorrow. They landed in New York at Castle Gardens on June 1, 1865

after a journey of about six weeks. James and his sons then proceeded by train to St. Joseph, Missouri, and took a boat a few miles up river to a city called Wyoming. There Edwin and Benjamin were able to hire on to drive ox teams for a freight company traveling to Utah for \$50 a month and free transportation for their father. This was their first experience working with oxen. It was a difficult journey as the streams had no bridges and Indians and wild animals roamed the prairies. There was trouble with the wagon masters of the freight company who were vile, corrupt, and ungodly men. They had difficulties crossing the Platte River, at what is now Casper, Wyoming. The drivers usually crossed the streams with shoes off and pants rolled up. Their legs and feet became sore.

In the early part of September as the company was traveling up what was called Bitter Creek in Wyoming, a heavy snow fell, thus hindering their progress. It was here in the cold that James became ill. During his sickness a special wagon was provided for him. His sons were only able to spend a few moments each day with their father because of their labors. A few weeks after becoming ill James died. The boys then faced the task of preparing their father for burial. James Eyre was buried by the side of the wagon trail on Ham's Fork in Wyoming not far from Fort Bridger.

The lives of James and Ann Naylor Eyre began before 1800, in England, and ended like so many others who heeded the call to Zion... in the depths of the ocean and amidst the sagebrush beside a lonely trail. Although they were unable to complete their journey and join their children in Minersville, the legacy they had begun continued on in the lives of their children.