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Biographical Sketch

of

John Mercer

by Laura Boley Francom

Pioneer Year 1848

Born: 7 Sep 1818, Newhall Wimmerly, Yorkshire, England

Married: Nancy Wilson

Died: 8 Mar 1860

John Mercer was born Sep, 7th, 1818 at Newhall Winmerly or Bashelheaves, Yorkshire (near Preston, England). He was the son of Thomas Mercer and Margaret Pegg Embly, the grandson of James Mercer and Martha Hay and the great grandson of William Mercer and Isabella Parkinson, and the great-great grandson of Henry Mercer and Janet Hesketh.

Bashelheaves, near Preston, was the name of the farm where he was raised. It was here the light of truth was first shed. H. C. Kimball, Willard Richards, Orson Hyde and Joseph Fielding being the first Missionaries to England and the scene of their first labors being Preston where four hundred were converted. It truly was like the day of Pentecost of old. Truth pierced the hearts of these English souls and they cried out, "What shall we do to be saved?" They were answered, be baptized, everyone of you.

While only 19 years of age at that time, having no definite record to go by, we do not know when he was baptized nor by whom, but church records like Pres. Kimball's History etc., specify that he and others visited at the home of James Mercer, grandfather of John.

Taken from Willard Richards' Journal (he was Pres. of the branch)

Feb. 17, 1838 Lodged Bro. Mercer's Feb. 21, 1838. While walking in Thornley plucked a snowdrop from thru the hedge and carried it to James Mercer and hung it up in his kitchen. Nov 5, 1838 preached at James Mercer's. We then assumed that he, John Mercer, was among the first to embrace the truth. Oh, How great was their joy when their hearts were touched by his unquenchable fire. This truth, this light that was to be a beacon to their souls and a light to their feet in leading them to an unknown land for truth's sake.

Between 1842 or earlier he married Nancy Wilson. In company with others, with saints, they emigrated to America the gathering place of the saints, at the Nauvoo, Illinois, where he located on the Mississippi River, just north of the city. He remained here during all the hardships and persecutions the saints had to under go. All thru the trying times of the Martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum and all the

prophet said, "As soon as they shed my blood they will thirst for the blood of every man in whose heart swells a single spark of the fullness of the gospel." No sooner had they been killed, this prophecy commenced fulfillment. Mobs arose and threatened the saints' lives if they did not leave. Mrs. Mercer, John's wife was washing a feather bed when the mob came to drive them away. They threatened to burn the house if they didn't go quickly. She put the bed all wet in a box and they left. They forgot a little chair of baby Margaret's so she went back for it, and the mob was drinking and carousing. They pitched their tents on the river banks. From exposure their only child, Margaret, took sick and died. She was buried between Nauvoo and Winter Quarters, her grave is somewhere between these two places. Another victim of truth.

Then the Mercer family remained at Winter Quarters with the body of Saints going thru all of the most terrible experiences that has no parallel in history. Sunday evening Oct. 18, 1846 at a meeting held in Winter Quarters, Pres. B. Young asked for men to volunteer to winter 100 head of cattle, those lost by morning or straying will be the herdsman's loss those by disease mine, we wish men to take the cattle of the sisters whose husbands are in the Mormon Battalion and also those of the sick. John Mercer was one of those who volunteered. Dec. 30, 1846 Mariam was born to John and Nancy Mercer at Winter Quarters. John Mercer was one of the early Pioneers coming in Dr. Willard Richards Company, which arrived in Great Salt Lake Thursday, Oct. 19, 1848. This company was generally known as the 3rd division of the July emigrating camp of Israel.

On May 25, 1848, Thomas Bullock writes in his journal "The wolves howled considerably through the night." On arising in the morning we found the heavy dew and the birds were singing merrily and the doves cooing, lovingly. How he fed the cattle and then hitched them to the record wagon and drove to the first camping place before we got within a mile of our camping place the Mercer's steers gave out so we drove them separately. On May 29, 1848, one of the Mercer's steers got stuck in the mud.

Writing again from the records of the church Monday Aug. 28, 1848. Willard Richard's Co. traveled nine miles to deer creek, a

buffalo heifer was killed. In the evening Dr. Richards called the camp together, some of the brethren were appointed to build a tar kiln, others to look for dried timber, some to hunt and others to guard against wild beast and Indians. John Mercer was chosen Captain of the hunters. He had cows coming over the plains. In the morning when they milked they put the milk in the churn and by evening they would have a nice pat of butter.

Writing again from the church record, Oct. 11, 1848. Willard Richards Co. traveled 13 miles down Echo Canyon passed Amasa M. Lyman Co. on the road in camp and stopped for the night on the Weber River about a mile below the mouth of Echo Canyon. Nancy, wife of John Mercer was delivered a daughter, 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ (one and one fourth) miles before the camp struck in Weber. This circumstance only delayed the Co. five minutes. Dr. Richards attended her. The child was Elizabeth Echo Smith, Aunt Libbee.

Thurs, Oct. 19, 1848. Dr. Richards Co. known as the 3rd division of the July Immigrating Camp of Israel, arrived in Great Salt Lake. Two births and 13 baptized, reported. John Mercer lived in Salt Lake City on a farm near Mill Creek until July 1850 when he went in company with W.H. Adams and Stephen Farnsworth into Utah Co. They staked out the first three farms in Pleasant Grove and decided to live there. John went back to Salt Lake to get his family and camped on Dry Creek. They thought it a good place to settle and persuaded Henry Royle, David Clark and others to come there (Lehi) to live. When returning that fall John took a fancy to American Fork, gave up his claim in Pleasant Grove and took the one on the slough or a branch of Spring Creek between Dry Creek and American Fork and settled there. The ruins of the yards and dugouts are to be seen there on Curries Slough to this day. They also owned and operated the Saratoga Springs.

Arza Adams came with him and located further down on the Spring Creek, south of where the Sugar Factory now stands. Wm. H. Adams and Stephen Farnsworth went to Pleasant Grove with their families. John Mercer was married five times. First, Nancy Wilson by whom he had nine children; Second, Ann Capstick Royle, one child,

Third, Emma Julian, three children; Fourth, Mary Ann two children; Fifth, Jane Capstick Adams, no children.

He took a very active part in the early pioneering and building of American Fork. He was of medium or above the average height and was a great admirer of live stock, taking prizes at the State Fair at an early date. He did some farming but most of his time was spent with his stock and riding the range. He loved sports of all kinds. He was a man of good judgment, opposed to all kinds of bribery, and according to several men who were personally acquainted with him, was one of the most influential men of his time in American Fork. He lived in the southwest corner of the Fort built to protect the early settlers from Indians. He was a great trader and would buy or trade from immigrants, going to California, going thru the country always seeking to get better animals to improve his stock he owned. July 4th, 1853, with Bishop Harrington and others he organized Sunday School in American Fork. April 16th, 1853 when they made a call for help in order to pay off a heavy debt, he gave a yoke of cattle and many other things to help. Dec. 28th, 1852 he was chosen 2nd counselor to Bishop L.E. Harrington. Bro. Guyman moving away caused the vacancy. Arza Adams 1st counselor too resigned Dec. 1852 and John Mercer was promoted to the position of 1st counselor. July 8th, 1852 he was elected as Alderman at Lake City (as American Fork was then called). The appointment was signed by Wm. Greenwood, clerk of the election. Nov. 5th, 1854 he was made a member of the school committee of Lake City, that same month he presented the school with a new stove. The early records of the church show that he was generous on his giving to help where ever called upon. He helped several people to get started after coming to American Fork. Jos. Alston, John Hacking, Owen Owens, Ellen and Jack Chalburn, giving the later two land and building them a home. He would let the early Saints who came to American Fork go in his yard and take a horse or cow and let them make his home their home. He was generous to a fault. He was a father to the fatherless and a true friend to the poor and others. April 27th, 1856 he was appointed a member of the Utah Stake High Council.

Copied from church records Jan. 17th, 1930 – dated Jan. 17th, 1858 John Mercer was appointed chairman of the committee, with John Bowen, Thos. McKenzie, to draft resolutions approving the attitude of Pres. Young in regards to his course toward the Johnson Army and they all pledged themselves, their means and all their energies to sustain all constituted measures for the welfare and prosperity of the territory. Signed John Mercer chairman. John Bowen, Thos. McKenzie, Thos. Midgley, Arza Adams, John Currie, Thos. Allman, Wm. McFarlen, Alex Walker, Stephen Chipman, as members and Wm. Greenwood, Sec.

When Col. Thos. Kane was going to Salt Lake to visit Pres. Young, under an assumed name in 1858 he stayed over night at Bishop Harrington's. When he first came to the Old Fort Wall as Dr. Osborne, he was halted by Eugene A. Henroid and Owen Owens who were on guard as the territory was under martial law at that time owing to the coming of Johnson Army. John Mercer was in charge, he was sent for. He recognized the distinguished visitor as his old friend of Winter Quarters. He was allowed to enter the fort and the next morning he was furnished a military escort by Bishop L. E. Harrington and John Mercer. July 24th, 1856 he was appointed chairman of the 24th of July celebration. Nov. 3rd, 1856 he was put in command of ten, four horse teams and wagons that went to the rescue of suffering immigrants who were snow bound in the mountains (hand cart people, mostly). Bro. Robinson, June 1st, 1857 in company with Bishop Harrington, John Mercer was selected to go with the Pres. of the church and a number of the Twelve Apostles with the Salmon River Co. into Oregon Territory. He took active part in all church activities as well as civic affairs. He died March 8th, 1860 at 1 a.m. age 41 years and 6 months. True to the Faith at last.