

DUP AF Book 2
Biographical Sketch
of
Edwin and Mary Pitt Okey

by Cynthia Adams Okey

Pioneer Year 1848
Alfred Cordon Company

He was born 7 Jun 1815 in Gloucester, England

She was born 19 May 1820 in Leigh, Gloucester, England

They were married in 1839 at Leigh, England

He died 10 Oct 1855, in Utah

She died 20 Feb 1906

Edwin Okey was the son of William and Elizabeth Okey and was born June 7, 1815 in Gloucester, England. Mary Pitt, the daughter of William and Mary Pitt was born May 19, 1820 in Leigh Gloucestershire, England and was married to Edwin Okey in 1839 at Leigh England. Having heard the Latter-day Saint missionaries preach in their neighborhood they were much impressed with the principles of the gospel and felt that they had found that which was lost. They were soon converted and joined the Church in very early days.

Brother Okey (whom we shall call Grandfather) was an apprenticed boot maker and was so expert in his work that he made many pairs of boots for the aristocrats of England.

Soon after they embraced the gospel of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints they had a desire to emigrate to America to be with the main body of the Church. Grandma's parents told her if she joined those people she need never step inside their door again. They were very wealthy and could have been a great help to the young couple financially, but not a penny did they receive. Nevertheless they chose to serve the Lord, sacrificing friends, loved ones and all. With their first child, Daniel, who was born November 25, 1840, and who was then just three months old, they set sail for America in February 1841. They were six weeks on the water and after landing went directly to Nauvoo. Grandfather assisted at one time in the erection of the Nauvoo Temple.

They became personally acquainted with the Prophet Joseph and his wife Emma, and Hyrum Smith. Grandfather Okey made shoes for the Prophet and Grandma did the sewing of them. They suffered the early persecutions of the saints at the hands of wicked men. They were in the same room with two or three other families when the mob came and shot through the door and windows. Frightened and terrorized by the passing bullets they barely escaped death. When the saints were being driven from their homes in this beautiful city, Grandma escaped the mob by concealing herself in her home.

They viewed the bodies of the Prophet and Hyrum after they had been ruthlessly martyred by the wicked mob. They shared with the saints the sorrow and terror of that awful tragedy.

Grandma has often told the interesting and inspiring story of being present at the meeting when the Prophet's mantle fell upon Brigham Young and had she not known of the Prophet's death she would have thought him present at the meeting for Brigham was exactly like him in both appearance and in tone of voice.

Their second child, Elizabeth was born in Nauvoo, November 23, 1843. Soon after they moved to Burlington, Iowa and remained in the state for a number of years. Grandfather following his trade and endeavoring to save means to bring them to Utah.

October 28, 1846 in Burlington their son Hyrum was born. He lived to be only about one year old. Their second daughter, Sarah Celestia, was born in Des Moines, Iowa, September 5, 1848.

Perhaps from the fact that they must leave one of their number buried there, their move from the state of Iowa was attended with sorrow and reluctance. But like Ruth of old, they took up the cross and wherever the saints were they desired to be also. They managed to get a wagon, a yoke of cows and a yoke of oxen to haul their belongings and with their three young children they began the long, wearisome trek across the plains in Alfred Cordon's company.

Grandfather would have to wade the streams at times to keep the cattle from turning aside and tipping over the wagon, and as a result of getting wet and being compelled to let his clothes dry on him he contracted ague which caused him much pain in later life. On their journey over the plains they would milk the cows, put the milk in the churn, and after the day's jolting in the wagon they would have a nice piece of butter when they stopped at night. The old wooden, hooped churn is still in the family's possession and is an invaluable relic.

On their arrival in Utah they settled in Kaysville. They had little of this world's goods but had a burning testimony of the gospel, which helped them through many difficulties and gave them a

determination to press on and help build up the country they had chosen for their own.

Grandfather worked at his trade as a shoemaker and at times worked for President Young and other Church leaders at whatever they found for him to do.

March 10, 1852, Edwin Jr. was born at Kaysville, and after moving to Salt Lake City their fourth son, Joseph, was born, March 27, 1855. That same year, October 10, grandfather passed away going to a well-earned reward, but leaving his wife and five children, the youngest hardly seven months old, to face the hardships of a new country without a father's help and protection.

The rearing of a family amid poverty and distress was not an easy task but through it all this good woman instilled into the hearts of her children the principles of the gospel and the value of living honest lives. She trusted in the Lord to be a father to the fatherless. She was always courageous and knew He would help and protect her.

Many times they would go to the eighteenth ward square and gather thistles and greens for their breakfast. When asked by her bishop if she needed help she always replied that as long as she had health and strength she could get along. The bishop remarked that if all the saints were as independent as Grandma Okey they would need no help.

Her oldest son took his turn standing guard when Johnston's Army came through Salt Lake City. At the time of the move Grandma was counseled to go to the country with her boys and consequently came to American Fork in 1858. Here the struggle for a livelihood was continued and the children grew into manhood and womanhood.

They joined in the pleasant pastimes of the early days in this little farming community, and with the neighbors, enjoyed such sports as skating in the winter and swimming in the summer in the pond known as Greenwood's hole. Watermelon feasts were another means of good times and Grandma Okey was known to have the choicest melons in the settlement.

Soon her daughter, Elizabeth was married to James Spratley and they took up their abode where the Mutual Creamery building now stands. Grandma thought her daughter was moving far away as the growth of cottonwoods and brush made the distance appear between them so great.

Then in 1868 her daughter, Sarah married Albert Marsh and moved to Alpine and the separation brought to both mother and daughter many lonely hours. Though the distance was less than six miles, the mode of travel was slow and visits were not frequent. Her son, Edwin married Mary Ellen Clark of Alpine and he made his home in Alpine also.

One great sorrow of her life was the death of her son, Daniel, who was killed in a mine accident and left a wife and several children. But through it all she trusted in her maker and said, "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be His name."

She then had left at home only her youngest son, Joseph, with whom she lived until he wooed and won the writer of this sketch.

He took me to live with them and as I came to know Grandma Okey, I found her to be a woman whose life had been devoted to helping others. She sought no public work but chose rather to serve the Lord in humble places. She lived a widow for 51 years. She was a consistent, faithful Latter-day Saint and her life was mellowed by the persecution and hardship through which she passed.

She was called home to her maker February 20, 1906 and their descendants at this writing March 1934 number exactly 400. Those living are one son, 21 grandchildren and 123 great grandchildren, 173 great great grandchildren and 24 great great great grandchildren.

Those who have passed away are 5 children, 24 grandchildren, 22 great grandchildren and 7 great great great grandchildren.

May the descendants of this good couple ever keep in mind the blessings they made it possible for us to enjoy and may our lives be such that we can dwell with them eternally.