

DUP AF Book 1 page 231

Biographical Sketch

of

Samuel Wagstaff

by Ada W. Barratt

Pioneer Year \_\_\_\_

Born 20 Oct. 1820 in the village of Caldicot, Befordshire, England

Married date \_\_\_\_ place \_\_\_\_

Died 13 Apr. 1897 in American Fork, Utah

Buried date \_\_\_\_ place \_\_\_\_

Samuel Wagstaff is among the exceptionally interesting characters of our Utah history. His entire life is a panorama of energy, determination and ambitious climbing to gain faith, knowledge and supremacy over his human body. Never for a moment did he strive for social recognition or worldly preferment, but found in the every day pursuits of life the worth while things.

He worked the soil for his living and knew the hard work, the aching back and dripping brow mother nature requires in turn to give of her productiveness. He also knew the joy the independence and manly strength that comes to him who lives near to mother nature.

With his pleasing manner and his singing, he brought comfort to the depressed and joy to the festive. Before coming to Utah he labored 12 years for the gospel in his native England. Brother Wagstaff was capable of traversing those stable, uncharted paths of spiritual experiences which each man treads alone, and which had to the ultimate reality.

By his constant good deeds, his charity his unwavering support of those in authority, he kept himself always open to spiritual suggestion.

Samuel Wagstaff was born October 29, 1820, in the village of Calidicot, county of Bedfordshire, England. The seventh child of Isaac and Mary Bisnahua Gillons, Wagstaff, who were the parents of eleven children, all living until the youngest was over 40 years of age, also seven out of the the elven joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Satins, through their own investigations and the Mother and six of these children, William, Samuel, John, Rachel, Mary and Sarah emigrated to the United States and made their way to the vallies of the Rocky Mountains.

Samuel Wagstaff never knew the pleasure of attending school, in his journal he says, "I received no schooling, had to go to work when very young for six cents per day. All the learning I ever received was from my grandmother Wagstaff, who was a widow and live alone and for several years I had to go to sleep at her house for

company. While there she made me read at night and she was my teacher."

His parents belonged to the Church of England and were devoutly religious, also very firm in the training of their children in the duties of their religion as they understood them, and to be regular and punctual in attending the Sunday School. The only excuse for absence was the cows, the boys took turns in herding them on Sunday, and the boy who's turn it was to herd the cows was excused for that Sunday.

His Father's health was not so good, he had Asthma on his lungs, which he contracted from a cold, caught by sleeping out of his bed when Samuel was born. Because of father's health the family went to live on a rented farm, where they procured cows, pigs, a horse and a cart, planted gardening stuff and became very successful in raising and marketing onion seed.

On December 25, 1840, being twenty years of age, Samuel was married to Lucy Maria Webb, daughter of John and Jane Webb, who lived in the same village. His Father's place being small, he was now compelled to leave and find employment that would support himself and wife. In his journal he writes, "I feel like a bird (bound) turned out of a cage not being used to providing for myself and now a wife and to paying house rent which had to be paid twice a year and everything to buy for housekeeping and at that time work was hard to get and when I did get work, I only had 20 pence or about forty cents a day to keep a wife on, but bought all we need to keep house with and on the sixth of November, 1841, my wife presented me with a son and we named him John."

They were very happy, the baby grew and they were doing well, perfectly satisfied with their little world, which caused them to drift away from the religion they had been raised in, until 1844 when his father died. This shock causing serious thought about things spiritual, which sent him back to the Old Church, but with no satisfaction. Hearing about the Methodist he drifted over to them, but their continual call for money made him feel that money was all they preached for. When a fine gentleman came to their place and

organized the Calvinists, and he went there until their Minister was offered more salary in Manchester a larger City to the North. The little flock felt very badly in losing him and to satisfy them he said he would stand the poker up on the table and whichever way it fell he would go, needless to say it fell north and he went to Manchester and the large congregation he had gathered scattered like sheep without a shepherd. Brother Wagstaff went down to Southill to the same denomination and began to think seriously of being baptized in that Church when the preacher, John Warburton, wanted more money for his church and undertook to raise the Pew Rent on the poor, he said, "The rich can give what they please but the poor if they cannot pay for their seats would have to bring a stool and sit in the aisle" which caused the old thought to bring distrust and the feeling that religion was a money making system and again he drifted unto himself.

In 1849 his brother, William, joined the Mormons, causing quite a stir in the family. William was the oldest son in the family and not married at the time of his father's death and had promised to live on the farm and support his mother and Sister Rachel who had been confined to her bed for three years. They felt very sorrowful to think William would leave them and go with this new religion, when one day a small book came to them from them it was "The Voice of Warning." The mother and Rachel read it and give it to Samuel to read. Its message filled his soul so full of longing to hear more he walked 2 ½ miles to hear John H. Farnham who was preaching in a barn tell of the authority of God which he had again given to men on the earth. The more he heard the more interested he became and on July 1, 1849, he asked to be baptized. He writes, "I shall never forget one beautiful summer evening I went with Brother John Sears on the first of July a little before sundown in the year 1849 and was baptized by Elder Thomas Layse in the river Ivel, and I think there were over 300 people on the side of the river to witness the scene and everything was as calm as a summer's morning and two weeks later on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July I was confirmed a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and received a testimony of the truth of the Gospel which testimony I have never lost sight of."

Early in 1850 he was ordained to the office of a Priest and became an active worker in the new church and suffered many persecutions because of his belief. At this time they were refused even the use of a barn to hold their meetings in and Brother Wagstaff took them to his home, which was a very humble one, with a thatched roof and brick laid for the floor, and for 12 years his home was the meeting house. In 1854 he was ordained an elder and called to preside over that branch which was called the Caldecot branch.

He was kept very busy looking after the welfare of the members, preaching in surrounding towns, holding sacrament meetings and helping those to get away who were able to go to Zion. The steady leaving of the new converts kept the branch a very small one, about 40 to 50 members. Learning of the activities of his tenant, the owner of the place tried to break them up by ordering him to leave the place, this he refused to do until April 19, 1862 when he and his wife and family of 8 children, John, David, Ruth, Amos, Ellen, Mana, Isaac, Mary Jane and Heber Jonathan left England to gather with the main body of the Saints in Utah. They sailed from Liverpool in the sailing vessel, 'John J. Borad' and were 9 weeks crossing the ocean, landing in New York, where they boarded the railway going to Omaha, this route took them by the Niagra Falls, well did the children remember the train stopping to let them see and hear the falls. At Omaha they took a steamboat up the Missouri River to Florence, Nebraska where they remained a few days waiting for the teams to arrive from Utah to take them back with them, while waiting witnessed rain storms such as they had never seen before. By this time the Church had erected some small shanties at Florence, Nebraska, to accommodate those who were detained there, and the Wagstaffs never forgot how the rain ran through those shanty roofs soaking them the same as if they were out on the open plain. At last they were all ready for the trip, their things were loaded into Elisha Davies wagon and he is their teamster, in Captain Omer Durken's company. Lucky for John, David and Amos they could drive and many times they relived the teamsters but father, mother and the girls walked the entire distance.

They landed at the old tithing yards where the City and County building now stands, in Sale Lake City, September 24, 1862, where his brother William met them taking them to his home where they stayed for about 30 days, going to meeting in the Tabernacle, hunting up old friends and neighbors to shake their hand and share again their love for one another. It was during the time they were in Salt Lake City the old Salt Lake Theatre was opened, and he took his entire family to see the first performance, they also saw Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball and others dance the first Quadrille on the stage. Hearing Bishop Edward Hunter wanted someone to take his farm in American Fork, he applied, was accepted and moved his family to that place in October 1862, where he lived for five years, his son Ephraim Newman was born there. His mother, Mary B. Gillons Wagstaff came to Lehi and spent the remainder of her life there. Always made her home with Rachel and 1865 she left this life and was laid to rest at Lehi. David had been called to go to Sanpete to fight the Indians, who under Chief Black Hawk were causing serious trouble. Amos had gone back to the Missouri River to bring immigrants in and although he was only a boy of 19 years, he had no difficulty in handling 4 yoke of cattle and enjoyed the thrilling yet hard and hazardous trip; of 5 months, to bring others like themselves to this goodly land where they could establish themselves with homes, lands and stock as well as enjoy religious and political privileges they had not known before. This year was also the last year of the pioneer emigrant, the railroad came in the next spring. 1869 brought them in a few days from the waters edge to their destination.

He with his son, David, had taken up bench land (in section 11 and 14) and had built a molasses mill which was the first on the bench. He had also built a little home in what is now the Third Ward. In 1862, just two months after arriving here, he was ordained a seventy in the 67 Quorum, and also set apart as a teacher in the American Fork Ward, which was then a part of the Utah Stake with A. O. Smoot of Provo, President.

May, 1864, he was called to go to the endowment house, to receive his endowments and have his wife, Lucy, sealed to him for time and all eternity.

In July, 1865, he married for time, Ann Carling, a widow, her husband John Carling dying soon after coming to Utah.

Some time in the sixties the Sunday School was organized in American Fork, with William Paxman, Superintendent. The school grew so large the meeting house could not hold them. Brother Wagstaff was asked to take part of them and hold his Sunday School in the west school house. He was very successful and kept his attendance up until the Meeting House was enlarged, then they were called back.

January 11. 1870, he was called and set apart as a Home Missionary, to visit the district in Utah County.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of October, 1876, he married his third life's companion, Hannah Dilworth, who was blind. She had come some years previous with her parents from England, for the Gospel's sake.

In the year 1886 he married Isabel Adamson and in 1888 he was fined and sentenced to serve a term in the Penitentiary for living with more than one wife. His journal is an invaluable document of that chapter of our Church History. It harbors no resentment nor bitterness. It casts a halo of gloriousness over the entire proceedings. So firm were these men in their convictions of the righteousness of their conduct, that they accepted this type of martyrdom almost with fervor.

Brother Wagstaff spent his sixty-eighth birthday and began to write his memories while a prisoner, to help pass the time away. In the evening 15 or 20 of these brethren would meet and sing some of the songs of Zion. Never before, in history, had there been a prison scene like those in the Penitentiary of that period. Righteous men imprisoned for their convictions along with murderers and low criminals of every description. Indescribable evil in certain quarters in others, groups of sober, old gray haired men, reading the Bible, the Book of Mormon, Key to Theology, Doctrine and Covenants, and other works of like nature, and discussing such questions as the principles of the gospel, monarchical and republican forms of government.

As the twilight of mortality crept on Brother Wagstaff's testimony of this gospel became more pronounced until his death, April 13, 1897. At this time he has a posterity of 10 children, (Amos and Mary Jane still living) fifty-six grandchildren, 210 great-grandchildren, 74 great-great grand-children, 4 great-great-great grand-children.

A man of spiritual, not material wealth, a friend to all and also a laborer, we have in Brother Wagstaff, one of the unique characters developed by the "Mormon" religion, and possible to find only in the "Mormon" history of this dispensation.

Sketch written by Bertha N. Sager  
of American Fork, Utah