

DUP AF Book 2 page 219

Biographical Sketch  
of  
William Boyer Shelley

by June Shelley Wright, his granddaughter

Pioneer Year 1852

Sailed on the Ellen Maria

Born 2 Aug 1819 Cheatton, Shropshire, England

Married Jane Dunn 10 Nov 1845 at Bridgeworth, Shropshire, England

Died 2 Feb 1868

William Boyer Shelley, son of James Boyer and Elizabeth Bray Shelley, was born August 2, 1819 in the parish of Cheaton, Shropshire, England. He was the oldest child of a family of seven; five boys and two girls, William, Thomas, Martha, James, John, Joseph, and Sarah. As his father was a farmer, William assisted him on the farm.

At the age of 26 he was married to Jane Dunn, November 10, 1845 at Bridgeworth, Shropshire, England. To this union 13 children were born. The four eldest were born in Shropshire, England: William, Hannah, Stephen and John Lyon. His mother, Elizabeth, and brother, Thomas, were converted to the Gospel by listening to the teachings of the missionaries and reading the Book of Mormon, and were baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints on December 11, 1848 by Elder Joseph Hall. A little over four months after, William was baptized, April 22, 1849; and on the 8th of July 1849 he was ordained a priest by John Lyon, and on February 5, 1850 he was ordained an elder by John Lyon.

William and wife with their 4 children left England for the Gospel's sake to come to the land of Zion in February 1851, accompanied by William's father, mother, brothers; Thomas, John, James, and Joseph, and sister Sarah and the wife of Thomas (their entire family except one sister, Martha). They sailed on the ship "Ellen Maria," landing in New Orleans April 5, 1851. Within a few days the party proceeded by steamer up the Mississippi River. When near Memphis, Tennessee, April 13th, his mother was drowned while attempting to draw a bucket of water from the swift stream. This was a great sorrow to the family. Every effort was made to find her body, but it was never seen again.

William stayed in St. Louis that summer and winter to work to earn money to continue their journey across the plains. While coming to Salt Lake Valley, their son, John Lyon, died April 27, 1852, age 17 months and 3 weeks. They arrived in Salt Lake City August 13, 1852 and came direct to American Fork and made this their permanent home.

He was soon engaged in farming, freighting, and assisting his father in his sawmill. He was re-baptized September 5, 1852. The following children were born in American Fork: Samuel Levi, George Heber, Jane Elizabeth, Joseph Moroni, Ellen Mary, James Boyer, Sara Ann, David Edward, and Emeline.

When the Shelley family located at American Fork they helped to build the old Fort Wall to protect them from the Indians. James Boyer, William Boyer and Thomas Shelley lived inside of the Fort, and part of the old fort wall stood for a long time in the lot of William.

Grandfather received his patriarchal blessing from John Young in Salt Lake City, February 17, 1858, and in it he was promised that he would have the power to control for good those who came under his jurisdiction, and he was told the he was a literal descendant of Joseph and Ephraim. The writer asked Brother William S. Robinson, one of our Pioneers, if he could tell her anything about her grandfather. He replied, "All that I can tell you is that he was an honest, hard working, religious man, and he died young." It was always said of him that his word was as good as his bond. What greater tribute could be paid to him? The poet says, "An honest man is the noblest work of God."

He was loved by all who knew him, a kind and loving husband and father, a good neighbor and a true citizen. Many of his descendants have held prominent positions in the Church and Town, and several have filled missions. The Shelley family has been associated with the up building and growth of this community; its civil, social and spiritual life. William was among the first to advocate free schools.

Many of the older people remember the Shelley dances. The members of the Shelley Family were great lovers of dancing. They used to take turns going from one home to another, taking up the carpets and dancing. Later they built the Shelley Hall, which was located where the Presbyterian Church now stands, and the rock from which the house just south of the Presbyterian Church is built, was a part of the walls of the Shelley Dance Hall. The Hall was

sometimes called the Bate Hall, as Herbert Bate had charge of it for sometime. After the Hall was built, the Shelley dances were held in it, often lasting for 3 days. They would start to dance in the afternoon and dance all night, take their picnic and have lunch during the recess, then go home in the morning, cook again and come back to dance again. The music was usually furnished by the Kirkham band of Lehi. The people were like one family; both young and old attended these wonderful dances.

In 1867 William's father fell from a stack of hay and hurt himself. He was bedfast for sometime and it was necessary for his boys to move him and help to care for him. In attempting to lift his father one day, William sustained an injury to his neck from which he died about a year later, February 2, 1868 at the age of 49 years and 6 months.

Three of his children are still living, David E., Sarah A., of American Fork, and Samuel L. of Mount Pleasant. His descendants number, as near as we can tell,

13 children

66 grandchildren

151 great grandchildren

66 great, great grandchildren.

Many of these have joined him in that better land.

To us as his lineal descendants he has left a message as a legacy, lessons of industry, thrift, and economy, but above all, lessons of honesty. May we all profit by them and with our increased opportunities for knowledge, honor the name and memory of our beloved ancestors and grandparents.

*Written by his Great Granddaughter, June Shelley Wright June 8, 1933.*