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Biographical Sketch

of

James Shelley

by Maud Shelley Wild, daughter

Pioneer Year 1851

Born 14 May 1828 in Claverly, Shropshire, England

Married to Mary Lee 29 Oct 1853

Died 23 Jan 1907 in American Fork, Utah

James Shelley, son of James Boyer and Elizabeth Bray Shelley, was born May 14th, 1828 in Claverly, Shropshire, England. He was the third child in a family of seven. He, as a boy, was always cheerful and optimistic. These characteristics remained with him throughout his life and were a great assistance to him in surmounting difficulties that came to him later in his pioneer days.

One incident I would like to mention of his boyhood days. He had four brothers and two sisters. His father had favored him above his brother in buying him a new pair of boots. Lots of chores outside were necessary as they lived on a farm and it fell to the lot of the owner of the boots to do a large share of them. James was happy for a while, but he was kept busier than any of the other boys. One day when another chore was mentioned he was seen busily removing his boots. When asked the reason he answered very quietly and in his usual kind way, "Anyone willing to do the chores can have the boots, I don't want them."

James later was sent to learn the shoemaking trade. His mother and brother Thomas were the first to be impressed with the truth of the message brought them by humble missionaries and were baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The other members of the family except one sister, Martha, were later baptized. Martha married a man named Edward A. Banks and lived in England until her death in 1878.

In February, 1851, the Shelley family including father, mother, William, Thomas, James, John, Joseph and Sarah left their native land to come to the land of Zion and be with the Saints of God. They arrived in Salt Lake City, October 3rd, 1851, and came to American fork October 25th of that year. We are forced to record a sad thing that happened on their journey. While crossing the Mississippi river near Memphis, April 13th, the mother while attempting to draw up a bucket of water was drawn into the swift current and drowned, which was a great sorrow to the members of the family.

James, two years after their arrival here, October 29, 1853 was married to Mary Lee, daughter of Thomas and Mary Burbridge Lee, who was born May 1st, 1827 in Southam, Warwickshire, England.

They too had received the Gospel of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Mary being baptized in 1848. Their home was a home for the Elders for some years. Soon after their baptism they received the spirit of gathering and early in the year of 1851 left their native land and set sail for America to help to establish the House of the Lord in the valleys of the mountains, and make their family partakers of the blessings that the Gospel holds for those that serve him.

They arrived in Salt Lake City late in the fall of 1851, and were told by President Brigham Young to come to American fork, at that time known as "Lake City." The marriage of James Shelley to Mary Lee by Bishop L. E. Harrington, October 29th, 1853 was the first couple married in American Fork. To this happy union seven children were born: James M., Mary E., Sarah A., Leo T., Alma G., H. Maud and J. Heber. Two died in infancy, James M. and Alma G.

James followed the trade he was apprentice to in England, that of shoemaking. His optimism and cheerfulness won him many friends. He was a consistent, faithful Latter Day Saint, a kind and loving husband and father.

He was seventy at the time of his death, which occurred in American Fork on January 23rd, 1907.

Mary was a faithful teacher in the Relief Society ever since its organization in American Fork in the year 1868 up to the time of her death, a space of 22 years. She was also treasurer of the Silk Industry or organization. She was a lover of all the beautiful in nature. We see her now in her flowers with her cheerful smiling face, explaining the different varieties. She was a devoted wife and mother, quiet and unassuming, full of charity and love. She took pleasure in visiting the sick and comforting the afflicted. She always had a kind and loving word for all her associates. Her family never waned in their devotion to her, which was a source of great happiness to her. She was called to meet the reward of a well-spent life, May 19th, 1890.