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Biographical Sketch

of

Josiah Nicholes

by Bertha N. Sager

Pioneer Year 1851

Born: 11 Oct 1815, South Newington, Oxfordshire, England

Died: 27 Feb 1893, American Fork, Utah

It is with pleasure that I write a biographical sketch of my Grandfather, Josiah Nicholes, who was born in South Newington, county of Oxfordshire, England, October 11th, 1815.

He was the eldest son, born to James and Harriet Smith Nicholes, the others being Jemina, Job, Alice, David, Sarah and Keziah.

James Nicholes and his wife were very pious and religious parents believing in the Church of England and raising their children to believe in the same.

Great Grandfather was chimney sweep by trade and it is the custom in England the eldest son followed the trade or is heir to the trade of the father.

This occupation did not appeal to him and his young mind was filled with the wonders of the steam engine and at the age of fifteen years he had left home going to the construction camps that were laying the first ties and rails from Manchester to Liverpool for the operating of the first steam engine.

It is amusing to think that this first locomotive weighed but 4 ½ tons and with its coal tender 7 ½ tons. On its trial trip it hauled a load of 9 tons at a speed of 15 miles an hour.

But, never the less, it proved the practicability of steam power for railways and filled the minds of the English with enthusiasm, and other lines were laid and Grandfather, with others, received the contract to lay the ties and rails from Manchester to Glasgow the first Railroad from England to Scotland.

From this work of railroading he roamed from place to place, not marrying until he was nearing 20 years old, his exact age we do not know, but at any rate he met Harriet Elizabeth Dean and was married to her in the Church of England.

The next we know about him is that he and his wife were baptized in February, 1848, by Alfred Cordon, an Elder in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

He often related how the Saints were mistreated in England by being stoned in the streets and when they gathered for worship how they were tormented, often rotten egged.

Se was the call at this time to gather to Zion and believing that Brigham Young was actuated by one desire to gain for them their temporal and spiritual welfare when he advised them to leave their homes in England and brave the rigors of an uninhabitable land for the building of a commonwealth that would give to them privileges of religious and political liberty that they had not enjoyed hereto fore. They decided to go to American and in February or March of 1851 they left Liverpool in a sailing vessel with many other Latter Day Saints, among whom were the Lees, Shellyes and Britton families.

After sailing for six weeks they arrived in New Orleans, where they took a riverboat for St. Louis. Sister Nicholes was washing the day that Sister Shelley went to dip a bucket of water from the river, over balancing and drowning in the Mississippi River. Leaving her husband and five children to continue the journey without a mother.

Thus a saddening gloom was cast over them all for they had become as a band of brothers and sisters, sharing alike the joys and the sorrows that came among them.

At St. Louis they secured wagons and oxen with provisions to start the long journey westward. This long journey performed with nothing more than the daily fatigue and small happenings of each day, and all seemed satisfied when at the end of the day they lifted up their voices in gratitude and song that they were on their way to the gathering place of God's people, and they cared not what was before them, that they might finally get to Zion. Which was accomplished when they arrived in Salt Lake City in October of 1851, just at conference time.

Grandfather did not stay only a few days in Salt Lake City, but came right down to American fork, which was then called Lake City, and finding that the Chipmans and Adams and some others had already settled here the year before. He immediately set about to erect a log house and make ready for the winter that was upon them.

All went well through out the winter but when the warm days of summer came his wife took down with mountain fever and died. This was a shock that he felt he was unable to stand. They had been married for ten years and no children had blessed their union and naturally they had become more and more to each other in their simple but God trusting life.

To be left alone in this barren and lonely place with nothing to give her even a decent burial was indeed a sorrow, but looking it square in the face and exercising his faith, he took his wagon box and made a crude coffin, dressing her in her best black silk dress. They buried her in the "valley verdant sod" surrounded by these silent mountains that had been such a beacon light to their believing souls.

The months roll wearily on and Grandfather has been here two years, he has proven to himself that he was unable to clear and break up and till the soil, cook, wash, weave, and sew and care for himself. So, becoming discouraged, he decided to go back to his home over the sea. Therefore he loaded his wagon with native hay, locked his cabin door, and said good bye to all that was his in the New Country and journeyed to Salt Lake City, arriving there October 6, 1853, just at conference time.

Going to the home of Bro. Britton to stay the night, he tells his friends of his purpose of going back to England and Sister Britton answered, "Ah, Josiah. It took all we had to get here and there is no way to go back. Wait until morning and we will see what can be done."

Sister Britton had, that day, met the immigrant train and had taken home for the night Ann Rachel March, an orphan girl 29 years old who had heard the gospel on the Isle of Jersey and thinking of nothing but live more justly the Latter Day Gospel, had come to the valleys of the Mountains.

The next morning Grandfather was introduced to Ann March. She told him her qualifications, that she had been a cook in major Pace's home in Jersey for seven years and also was a tailoress by trade.

Therefore an agreement was made and after conference was over Grandfather brought Sister March back home with him and she proved herself truly efficient. Grandfather, seeing her good points and knowing she was an orphan without a home and he alone and lonely, offered her the protection of his name, telling her his sad story of his beloved wife, and she with no people, no friends and no place to go. She accepted his offer of a home and again he hooked up his oxen and journeyed back to Salt lake City and were married by Brigham Young in November 1853.

Another winter passes and as Auntie Nicholes has often said, "This friendly experience was turning out well for she could see that from day to day Grandfather was more absorbed in farm and the activities of the settlement.

She as his wife was quietly performing her daily duties and proved that she didn't need very much instruction to become a good pioneer wife.

When spring came it required that he be busy early and late, to put the seed in to assure a harvest. This brought new hopefulness, his freedom from house-hold worries prompted him to clear more land and plant extra acres.

In fact, it seemed a good proposition that fate had given to him for he respected this noble woman and when on September 19th, 1854, a son was born, his joy knew no bounds for there is no pleasure that comes to a father and especially to an Englishman as the birth of a son, an heir and name sake to carry on the name of Nicholes in the new world. He was now 40 years old and he named his son Josiah.

As there were but few families here and help was hard to get and he must find some one to care for his wife and baby. Sister Nicholes hearing that the little French lady that came with her son in the same company as herself, was still without a home and work so Grandfather went to find and bring home Ernestene Douerin Jacob and her son, to care for his wife.

After Sister Nicholes was well and able to care for herself the little French lady had no work in sight and no one had room nor

means enough without they needed help to give her a home. Acting on Bishop Harrington's advice, Grandfather married her.

It was at this time that Indian uprisings and territorial troubles with the United States Government began and the feeling among the Saints were very keen and on March 10th, 1855, Brigham Young acting Governor of the Territory of Utah, appointed Josiah Nicholes Second Lieutenant of Co. Co of Battalion of Infantry of Pleasant Grove Post of Utah Military District of the Nauvoo Legion.

In 1856 Grandfather renounced his allegiance to Great Britain and received his citizenship papers as a citizen of the United States. His one great desire then was to make this little settlement a prosperous place for others. There wasn't scarcely a committee appointed for ditch work, roadwork, meeting house building and what not that he wasn't one of its wiling workers.

He early advocated public schools and supported them. The first public meat market was run by him and George Cunningham. And, in 1868 when Brigham Young encouraged the cooperative of mercantile institutions there were a great many organized but the Z.C.M.I. in Salt Lake City and our own store are about the only two of the original stores left that were started.

To start this store in American Fork, Grandfather donated this lot and the building that was his butcher business and acted on the board of directors the rest of his life.

Although he came for the Gospel and he loved it with all his heart and could always be seen in his meetings and on one occasion possibly the only one, when asked to the stand to say a few words, his family tell he said, "I do not know why Bishop Harrington has called me here to day, because I am no public speaker. But, if I could meet you outside or on the ditch bank we could have a very pleasant chat, but to talk to you here in front of me I have no thoughts to give you."

And so it was he spent his life in hard work of reclaiming this land and raising his children which numbered 17. And has he not left a noble heritage to all that have come after, to enjoy the fruits of his labors for it was by the struggle and sacrifice that he made that we,

his grandchildren, enjoy the bounties and peace of this wonderful mountain home.

He died in American Fork, Utah February 27th, 1893.