

James J. Adams

Born: October 2, 1848, in Springfield, Sangamon County, Illinois

Died: March 2, 1922

Married: Caroline E. Redd on March 14, 1888 in the St. George Temple

Father: William Adams

Mother: Mary Ann Leech

Childhood

James J. Adams was born on October 2, 1848 in Springfield, Sangamon County, Illinois. His parents, William and Mary Ann Leech Adams, lived in Nauvoo for two years before they moved to Springfield and little James was born. One year later, the family decided to head west. They got to Salt Lake City, Utah in 1849. In January, 1851, James' father William moved to Parowan with fellow pioneer Samuel Hamilton. James, his mother and his siblings moved down to join him in May of the same year.¹

James was a hard worker and loved to help. When he was seven or eight years old, he helped to build the Fort in Parowan. Boards were mounted on either side of a trench, and James's job was to fill the space between the boards with mud, to create a wall.² As a young boy, James also enjoyed helping herd the cattle. He would ride his little horse named Sam and herd the cattle with his friend Tom Richards. The two boys knew how to have fun, while still keeping an eye on the cattle. They loved to roll over and play in the tall weeds, until someone warned them that they might roll over a snake if they weren't careful. That was the end to playing in the weeds! They would herd all over the area during the day, and at night would bring the cattle back to the corral that had been built in the Fort.³

As a child, James did not know what sugar was. To sweeten their food, his family used molasses instead and a little honey whenever they had bees. James remembered the first cake his Mom ever made out of sugar; he didn't even want to taste it because it looked so different from the molasses cakes he was used to.⁴

His Mother and his Aunt Anne would weave all the cloth for their clothes.⁵ James always ran around barefoot as a kid. When he got a little older he wore moccasins and when he was about sixteen, James got his first pair of buckskin pants and button shoes. Not knowing that the leather in his pants would stretch, James wore them up into the mountains the day he got them and it started to snow. His new pants got so wet that they stretched out and from then on, he always had to roll them up.⁶

James loved to learn. When he was just a little fellow, he started attending school. Aunt Sara Ann sent him to the head of the class and said, "you work hard and you can stay."⁷ And stay he did, for the next two years, until it was time for him to start working. James was a great reader. He got the measles and it

affected his eyesight for a time, but when his eyes recovered, he was back reading anything he could. He was also a whiz at arithmetic; no one could beat him!⁸ Several of his uncles and some of the neighborhood boys would stay at his parents' home during the winter, and come to school with him. The family earned fifteen dollars for provided room and board for the boys.

Every spring and fall, James would accompany his father and brothers to Salt Lake City. James' father would take barrels of tar to trade for whatever the family needed. They were a resourceful family, as were most. They got their salt from the Great Salt Lake, they gathered aluminum for aluminum coves, and copperus from under the yellow sandstone on the sides of the canyon, which they would also take with them to Salt Lake to trade.⁹

Going Back Across the Plains

In 1864, when James was sixteen-years-old, he made his first trek back across the plains with his father. They drove four yoke of oxen and two steers to help them bring back two loads of stoves.¹⁰ They left in April and didn't get back until the 10th of December.

James and his father lived on the basics-bacon and bread. They made bread out of flour, salt and baking powder, then fried it in a frying pan. James remembered his father being pretty hungry, but he did not seem to mind the simple, scant food. When they came across ripe grapes in their journey, they would mix them with molasses for a little treat. Once they bought fifty-cents worth of eggs and they had so many they could not all fit in their water bucket, the only thing they had to carry them in.¹¹

James enjoyed being out on the plains with his father. On their journey home, they came to the South Platte River and the water was rough. James' father was nervous to cross the cold, raging water. He asked James if he thought his oxen would make it. James knew they would. His father trusted his judgment, and allowed James to drive them across the water first and he followed. They all arrived safely on the other side. In 1868, James and his father crossed the plains again. This time they went for a threshing machine for old man Webb. In the evenings, after a long day of walking, they would play music and dance by the campfire.¹²

Employment

In 1865, James worked at his Uncle Nathan's mill. To get the highest price he could on grain, James would ride across the desert from Deseret Springs (Modena) to White Pine, Nevada and sell it for 18 cents a pound. One night he was getting sleepy, and thought his team stay close by, so he fell asleep. The team strayed from the road and was at the edge of a deep ravine when James was awakened by his grandfather's voice calling in his head, "James, James." He never fell asleep on the job like that again!¹³

In 1868, when he was 18, James went to Beaver to help teach at the local school. The next year, he taught in Rose Creek, and never received any money for his teaching. He liked the experience it gave him and that was compensation enough. He would live with various families in the area, and even slept in a granary one winter with his friend Tom Butler. In the morning, James would have to break the ice on the tub to take a bath. In 1869, James and some of his friends, Will and Hugh L Thomas, formed a company and divided things equally. They all got along well until Will and Hugh got married. Then all kinds of trouble started brewing. James' mother was the head of the company so when James was about to get married and it appeared the company was not going to work out, she divided everything and gave everyone what she thought they needed.¹⁴

James went east during the Civil War to witness the action for himself and saw some of the soldiers. It was a tense, uncertain time in history. Every week they used to get a little paper called "The Dispatches About the War," and everyone in town would meet to hear it read. They felt badly when they heard that Lincoln had been shot; they knew they had lost a friend. James couldn't believe that some people sympathized with the murderer John Wilkes Booth.¹⁵

James was "a self-made man."¹⁶ He worked hard every day of his life to provide the necessary comforts for himself and his family. Later in life, he served as sheriff and attorney of Iron County. He held many callings and was always active in church affairs.

Missionary work

In 1879 James was called to be part of the initial exploring party to the San Juan. On his return trip to Bluff, he did not travel with the main body of pioneers through Hole-in-the-Rock, but instead went southward again through Moencopi with those who drove the cattle. He only then remained in the area for about a year before returning to Iron County.¹⁷

In the early eighties, he was called on his first mission to Tennessee.¹⁸ After he married and had five children, James was called to leave his work and family and serve the Lord yet again. This time he was called to the northern states and spent most of his time in Michigan. On January 11, 1900, his sixth child, a boy, was born, while James was still in Michigan preaching the gospel.¹⁹ He was a faithful missionary and answered the call to serve, even when it came with great personal sacrifice.

Marriage and family life

When James got back from his first mission to Tennessee, he met Caroline E. Redd, a daughter of Lemuel H. Redd from New Harmony. The two didn't have much time together because Caroline was headed to Paragonah to teach school. The next winter, James took two of his nieces and went to spend Christmas with her. They got snowed in and no one seemed to mind spending the next three weeks together while they waited for the snow to melt! After that, James knew

he never wanted Caroline to leave his side. When spring came, James and his niece Francella Adams again traveled to St. George. Brother McAllister married James and Caroline in the St. George Temple on March 14, 1888. When they returned to New Harmony, the whole town met to congratulate and show them a good time.²⁰

The newlyweds decided to set up a life for themselves in Parowan. They lived with James's mother for a short time, then lived in the Old Wool house while James built a home of their own. Before a year had passed, James had completed their home, and they moved in just in time to welcome their precious first child. On March 13, 1889, their daughter Luella was born.

In time, James and Caroline would have eight children, five girls and three boys: Luella, Ancel James, Josephine, John, Pauline, Paul, Mary and Verene.²¹ When the boys got old enough, they would help on the family ranch by running the sheep.²² In the fall of 1905, James and Caroline went down the canyon from their ranch to harvest some fruit. On the way back they got caught in a rainstorm. Soaked to the bone, Caroline caught a fatal cold. She quickly developed pneumonia. James brought her into town to see the doctor, but nothing could be done. His beloved Caroline died September 3, 1903, leaving him to raise the eight children alone.²³

Memories From James's Oldest Daughter

Luella Adams Dalton, wrote the following tribute to her father:

"Father was father and mother to us until we were all grown, when he finally went to meet his sweetheart on March 8th, 1922 after a few days illness of influenza. He was one of the stalwart pioneers of the south, an active church worker until his death. He was president of the 69 quorums of seventies for many years. He also held a number of civil offices-sheriff and county attorney. His schooling was very meager but he was a thorough student. James J. Adams was a self made lawyer and almost a walking history book. He stood shoulder to shoulder, with the men and women who helped to build this great common wealth, subdued the desert and conquered the Indians, leaving it all for us to enjoy. He was a self made man and a great reader. He had a rare knowledge of history and a wonderful memory. It was said of him at his funeral that few men had a greater knowledge of the gospel. He was a strict observer of the Word of Wisdom and full of faith till the last."²⁴

A Tribute to James J. Adams

By Elenor G. Bruhn²⁵

The portals of heaven have opened again,
To let Brother James J. Adams in,
A stalwart student and God fearing too
A wise upright father ever were you,

A man who lived faithful to what he thought right
Serving his God with all his might,
An example was he, no matter what came,
He loved God and glorified ever his name.

His life was the gospel he would preach,
His life was the lessons he would teach
In every day walk the gospel he taught
In words, in manner, in deed and in thought.
A pioneer boy in our Parowan town
He lived in the days when the wall went around
He pastured the cattle in our very first field
Helped plow the ground to make its first yield.

He lived in the days when the Indians wild
Brought sorrow and fear to man, women and child
When wool was washed and spun to yarn
And children were taught to knit and to darn
When Saints lived for God and not for gold
Their lives are all stories; the best ever told
He grew to a man, in time he was wed
To a noble woman, Caroline Redd.

Yes, a noble woman, a God fearing saint
Evil and sin her life did not taint
Eight precious babies came to their home
Her mission was ended, she left them alone,
Alone did I say-no the father was spared
To pilot through childhood and have them prepared
For their mission, to live right, and teach them God's will
That noble lives on earth they might fill.

He's gone to join her, the wife and the mother
Happy they'll be to meet one another
He said, of the years that he spent with his wife
"They were fifteen years of Paradise"
Now on to perfection the good couple go
We can't even dream of the joy they will know
There wasn't a thing they left undone
To prepare for the future, the life that's to come.

And you dear children who are left to mourn
Thank God, to such parents you were born
Forget not the lessons they taught while here
Try to grow like them, each day and each year.
Prepare for the time when we'll all meet again

Where we shall never know sorrow or pain
Today we feel sad-let's not hope for the morrow
When we shall have joy and feel no more sorrow.

*Researched and written for the Hole-in-the-Rock Foundation by:
C.S. M. Jones LLC, Family Heritage Consulting.*

¹ James J. Adams autobiography as dictated to his daughter Luella Adams Dalton, "History of Grandpa's Life," Special Collections, Merrill-Cazier Library, Utah State University, Logan, Utah. Mrs. Dalton submitted this autobiography to the Daughters of Utah Pioneers, Camp Elizabeth, under the title "A History of James J. Adams." This version of her father's autobiography is missing the poem written by Elenor G. Bruhn that is given at the end of the USU typescript, but is otherwise identical.

² James J. Adams autobiography, 1.

³ Ibid., 1.

⁴ Ibid., 2.

⁵ Ibid., 3-4.

⁶ Ibid., 4,

⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁹ Ibid.,

¹⁰ Cornelia Adams Perkins, Marian Gardner Nielsen, and Lenora Butt Jones, *Saga of San Juan* (Monticello, Utah; San Juan County Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1957), 294 .

¹¹ James Adams autobiography, 4.

¹² Ibid., 5.

¹³ Ibid.,

¹⁴ Ibid.,

¹⁵ Ibid., 4.

¹⁶ Perkins, 294.

¹⁷ Ancil J. Adams letter to Amasa Jay Redd, 21 Dec. 1965, published in Amasa Jay Redd, ed., *Lemuel Hardison Red, Jr., 1856-1923: Pioneer, Leader, Builder* (Salt Lake City, Utah: privately printed, 1967), 145.

¹⁸ James J. Adams autobiography, 6.

¹⁹ Ibid.,

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Perkins, 294.

²² James J. Adams autobiography, 6-7.

²³ Ibid., 7.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 8.