

# Isaac Chauncey Haight



**Born:** 27 May 1813: Windham, Green County, New York

**Died:** 8 September 1886: Thatcher, Arizona

**Married:** (1) Eliza Ann Snyder: 31 December 1836

(2) Mary Murry: n.d.

(3) Eliza Ann Price: 10 October 1853

(4) Annabella Sinclair Macfarlane: 16 October 1853

(5) Elizabeth Summers: 24 January 1858

**Father:** Caleb Haight

**Mother:** Keturah Horton

## Early Life and Religious Conversions

Isaac Chauncey Haight was born on May 27, 1813, to Caleb and Keturah Haight. Caleb and Keturah farmed in Green County, New York, and brought up Isaac in this farming atmosphere. Isaac has been remembered as being a “carefree and happy youth” who found pleasure in socializing with the local community.<sup>i</sup> Although much of his time was spent laboring with his father and brothers on the farm, Isaac did have the opportunity to attend school during the winter. Reading the Bible supplemented Isaac’s education.

Isaac developed a special fondness for the New Testament and converted to the Baptist Church when he was eighteen, to be baptized shortly later. While studying with the Baptists, Isaac desired to go to Burma with other Baptist missionaries and preach the gospel there. Eventually he became disaffected with the Baptist movement, lamenting the fact that the churches of the time had lost the “primitive purity” of antiquity. He decried the fact that the Burma-bound “baptized missionaries preached for hire” rather than “without purse or script.”<sup>ii</sup>

Isaac decided to stay in New York and farm with his family. During his early twenties, Isaac developed a severe case of pneumonia that left his lungs permanently scarred and his breathing impaired. This condition effectively ended his farming career. Isaac was able to educate himself enough to obtain a teaching job in Moravia, New York. He enjoyed teaching and immersed himself in the social scene in Moravia. In the winter of 1837, Isaac married Eliza Ann Snider. The two soon relocated back to Isaac’s family farm where Isaac helped farm in the summer and taught school in the winter.

Isaac still retained his religious fervor, even though he was no longer officially affiliated with the Baptists. He searched for pure New Testament teachings, and dabbled for a time in the Universalist movement. In the winter of 1838 Isaac found what he was looking for. An itinerant preacher named Pelatish Brown came to Isaac’s community and preached a sermon on Daniel chapter seven. Brown impressed Isaac, and after study and contemplation, Isaac embraced the Latter-day Saint movement. Isaac was

baptized in a nearby lake in the middle of winter. Although it was so cold that his clothes froze to him as he emerged from the water, it was a joyous experience for Isaac. Isaac was then ordained an elder and presided over a local congregation of Latter-day Saints. Shortly thereafter, the Baptist Church formally excommunicated Isaac for heresy.

### **Travels With the Latter-Day Saints**

Isaac went on his first mission during the winter of 1841. He journeyed back to his home in Green County, New York. Although many were prejudiced against his message, Isaac did have some success. In 1842, Isaac decided to bring his family and join the main body of Latter-day Saints in Nauvoo, Illinois. They arrived on July 24, 1842. After a year in Nauvoo, Isaac was again called to preach in Green County. Although his former community harbored ill feelings towards the Latter-day Saints, Isaac's parents did join the Church.

Upon returning to Nauvoo, Isaac was chosen to be one of forty bodyguards to Joseph Smith, as well as a member of the local police force. He only served in this position for several months, however, as Joseph Smith dismissed the guard in the spring of 1844. This did not end Isaac's public service, however. Isaac joined the city militia, called the Nauvoo Legion, and was one of twenty close friends of Joseph Smith's who were chosen to accompany him to Carthage Jail. On the way to Carthage, where Joseph Smith would ultimately be killed by a mob, the group was stopped by the governor of Illinois, Thomas Ford, and ordered to return to Nauvoo. Several days later, while guarding the Nauvoo Temple, Isaac was informed that Joseph and Hyrum Smith had been martyred.

### **Emigration to Utah and Missionary Journeys**

After a brief trip to New York, to conduct church and personal business, Isaac and Eliza Ann decided to go west with the main body of church members. Although initially appointed to lead a company of ten families, Isaac was asked by church leaders to stay behind in Nauvoo and help the citizens there sell their property. After fulfilling this assignment, Isaac departed Nauvoo on June 6, 1846. By July 13, Isaac and his family had caught up with the Saints in Winter Quarters. While there, Isaac volunteered to join the federally organized Mormon Battalion, but Brigham Young asked him to stay in Winter Quarters to build homes and take care of the needy. Conditions there were poor. Eliza Ann, and their daughter Keturah, became very ill, and only recovered their health after moving into a crude house. Isaac rejoiced when a son was born November 19, 1846, but was crushed when the baby died shortly thereafter.

Isaac and his family left Winter Quarters June 13, 1847, and arrived in the Salt Lake Valley on September 22. Although the family had only a rough timber house to live in, these initial days in the Salt Lake Valley were happy for Isaac and Eliza Ann. Isaac continued to play a prominent role in the Latter-day Saint community. In 1850 he was elected to the Territorial Assembly and assisted church leaders in local rescue and exploratory missions.

On September 11, 1850, Isaac Haight was called to serve a mission in England, where he served until January 8, 1853. Although strenuous, this mission was very successful and Isaac was instrumental in bringing many converts to the United States. Once released, Isaac was assigned to stay in the eastern United States and coordinate the emigration of thousands of converts to Utah. In this, Brigham Young gave Isaac stewardship over thousands of dollars of the Perpetual Emigration Fund. After organizing the companies and securing wagons, food and other supplies, the trek left on June 20, 1853, under Isaac's direction. In August, Isaac arrived and was reunited with Eliza Ann and their children, including a daughter that was born just weeks after Isaac departed for England.

### **Iron County Mission**

While Isaac was in England, Brigham Young, with the assistance of Erastus Snow and Franklin D. Richards, established the Deseret Iron Works (later to be renamed the Southern Utah Iron Works). These leaders asked Isaac to lead the enterprise upon his return to Utah. It subsequently became known as the "Iron County Mission." On October 8, 1853, Isaac recorded, "I was appointed by President Young and Brothers in Council to move to Iron County to take charge of the iron works. I would much rather have stayed here, but am willing to obey the council of my Brethren."<sup>iii</sup> At this time Isaac took two additional wives, Eliza Ann Price and Annabella Macfarlane. He had become acquainted with Eliza Ann while on his mission in England. Eliza Ann had at one time been a maid to one of the queen's ladies-in-waiting, and was quite refined in her demeanor. She was only four years older than Isaac's oldest daughter, and the two women became close friends. Annabella was a widow with three children; she and Isaac became acquainted during the journey from England to Salt Lake City.

Isaac played a prominent role both in the iron works, and the community. In late November, Isaac was ordained a high councilor as well as one of the iron company's directors. In December of that same year, Isaac recorded in his journal that he had been elected the first mayor of Cedar City. Isaac's journal illuminates some of the struggles he faced in making the iron works successful. The company's first furnace was of such low quality that it had to be quickly replaced by another. The furnace, so important to iron smelting, eventually had to be replaced more than four times. In time, however, the enterprise became successful and many tons of iron were produced. In May of 1855 Isaac was given the prominent position of stake president. Isaac went on to represent the community in both the Territorial Assembly and the state's constitutional convention.

### **Mountain Meadows Massacre and Excommunication**

By September of 1857, tensions in Utah were running high. Rumors that the United States government was sending troops to Utah, and fears that an approaching wagon train intended to stir up Indians against the Latter-day Saints, ushered in a crisis. Isaac Haight, a prominent military, civic and church leader, was thrust into the middle of the situation. A century and a half later, Isaac's role in what became known as the Mountain Meadows Massacre is still a matter of controversy. Some believe that Isaac was in part responsible for the massacre; others argue that he had urged his fellow

militiamen to be patient and wait for counsel to arrive from Brigham Young before taking action. Nevertheless, one thing is certain: Isaac's life course was forever altered by the fateful events of that day.

By 1870, the events of the massacre had come under investigation by Latter-day Saint leaders, led by Brigham Young, and the United States government. Isaac and several others were excommunicated by the Church in 1870. In the summer of 1871, Isaac went into hiding to escape both public and government persecution for his role in Mountain Meadows, as well as his continued practice of plural marriage.

Although he did go on numerous expeditions to the Indians with several Latter-day Saints, Isaac kept a low profile. Because the reasons for his excommunication had been made public, he feared that, if found, federal officials would take him into custody. During 1873 and 1874 Isaac worked as the foreman of the lumberyard that supplied wood to the St. George Temple, which was under construction at the time. This job brought him into frequent contact with church leaders, including Brigham Young, who had a winter home in the St. George area. Samuel Lorenzo Adams, "one of Isaac's dearest and most loyal friends," recorded the events that led to Isaac's reinstatement into the LDS faith in 1874. According to Adams, Brigham Young was invited to the Adams home in the late evening to discuss Isaac's membership. Upon realizing this, Brigham responded: "Where is Isaac? I want to baptize him with my own hands."<sup>iv</sup> Adams then sent for Isaac, who was warmly reunited with Brigham. After this cordial visit, the three went to a nearby creek and Isaac was re-baptized that very night. Afterwards, Brigham Young blessed Isaac and restored him to full fellowship.

### **Hole-In-The-Rock Pioneer and Later Life**

Although Isaac was rebaptized, he was still wanted by civil authorities and looked-down upon by many. Because of this, Isaac often lived in hiding and was rarely able to visit his wives and children. When Church leaders called a hardy group of settlers to go to the San Juan, Isaac and his son Caleb joined the expedition. He had asked his wife, Eliza Ann Price, to go with him so he could be a better father to their ten children that he hardly knew, but she had rejected him. She did not want to face the hardships of the journey, nor risk putting her children's lives in danger by traveling openly with her husband, a man with a price on his head. For seven years she refused to have any communication with Isaac, though he wrote to her and his children.

Although older than most of the expedition's members, Isaac's pioneering experience and the respect he garnered from the younger members made him an asset to the group. Also, this would give Isaac welcome relief from federal officials, who still sought him. Still fearing discovery, Isaac spent a good part of the trek concealed in Caleb's wagon to avoid detection. In fact, many participants did not realize Isaac was among them, though no doubt many of the travelers who had come from Cedar City did. However, most records of the trek do not include the Hights as being among the participants. Although the trip took the pioneers across seemingly impassable terrain, the company made it to the San Juan and established a city there named Bluff. Isaac

used his many talents to build homes, churches and other improvements in Bluff. He came to love and admire the singular beauty of the Four Corners area.

Eventually, federal officials stopped pursuing Latter-day Saint leaders for their connections to the Mountain Meadows Massacre. This, unfortunately, did not stop Church members, and non-Church members alike, from ostracizing and harassing Isaac. Once, in his final years, he was even driven from the steps of the St. George Temple by a mob of enraged Mormons who believed he did not belong there with them to worship God. Nevertheless, in spite of all the persecution and danger he suffered during the last quarter-century of his life, Isaac remained beloved and befriended by many. The fact that his presence in the Hole-in-the-Rock party was never disclosed, even in writing, by members of the group attest to the loyalty of his friends.

Eventually, though, Isaac decided it would be best if he left Cedar City, and Utah, for good. He traveled first to Mexico, and eventually to Arizona. It was in Thatcher, Arizona, in 1886, that Isaac Chancey Haight, who had witnessed and figured prominently in much of Latter-day Saint history, finally passed away.

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

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<sup>i</sup> Caroline Keturah Parry, "A Brief Sketch of the Life of Isaac C. Haight," L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, 1.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>iv</sup> Caroline Keturah Parry Woolley, *I Would to God: A Personal History of Isaac Haight*, ed. by Blanche Cox Clegg and Janet Burton (Cedar City, Utah: Southern Utah University Press, 2009), 139.