

James Lewis



Born: January 12, 1814

Died: May 29, 1898

Parents: James Lewis and Hanna Harding

Married: Emily Jennison Holman, May 9, 1847

Married: Emma Bateman, April 5, 1857

The Lewis' first immigrated to America from East Greenwich, Kent, England, landed at Plymouth and in 1640 removed to Barnstable. The Lewis' produced a long line of prominent citizens. Several took part in the organizing of the state of Maine, while subduing the Indians. In fact, an uncle, Lathrop Lewis, was killed by Indians while he was surveyor General of the Province. James Grandparents, George Lewis and Mary Davis Lewis settled in the town of Gorham, Maine.

James wrote a brief history of his life stating he was born 12 Jan 1814. He lived with his parents, Rev. James Lewis and Hannah Harding Lewis, in Gorham, Maine until he was about 20. He then tried "following the sea", as some of his relatives had, out of Portland, Maine; but it was not to his liking, and "being of a roving disposition", he went west, stopping in St. Louis, Missouri in 1840.

He became acquainted with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, "sympathizing with them in their distress and affliction" after their persecutions in Missouri. He heard the doctrine taught by them and feeling it was the same as that taught by Jesus Christ and his apostles, he "sought to know the truth comparing the principles taught with the bible". Believing the Church to be the restored Church, he was baptized in Keokuk, Iowa by Elder McAllister and confirmed an Elder by Brother Abraham O. Smoot, in February 1842. Moving to Nauvoo he became acquainted with leading Church members, including Joseph Smith. In 1843 he was called on his first mission to the Eastern States to "gather money for the Church". While in Maine he heard of the Prophet Joseph's martyrdom in 1844.

His father was a Methodist minister and greatly opposed to the Mormons. In June of 1843 James wrote his father giving several reasons for his belief in the Church. But he also stated in the letter, "I have fancied you will rather consider I am, as it were buried to all my friends." He was correct in his fears. During James' trip to the east he visited his

parents and later told his children and grandchildren of his last visit with his parents with his father shaking his fist and telling him “to never darken their door again. His mother, with her apron to her eyes in an effort to staunch the flow of tears.”

Mission to China

James returned to St. Louis, Missouri and found employment with the publishing house of Chat Keenel. On May 9, 1847, he married Emily Jennison Holman. Jedediah M. Grant married them. They had one child the following year while still living in St. Louis. The little family immigrated to ‘the valley’ in Brother Richards Company arriving 1 Nov 1849. One month later their second child was born. A year later they were called to go on “a mission to Southern Utah”, arriving in Parowan the 13th of January 1851. The Indians were hostile and food was scarce, and then in 1852, James was called on yet another mission along with Hosea Stout and Chapman Duncan to be the first missionaries to China. “This was a great trial of my life while in poverty with helpless children, another expected any day”. In fact, Emily gave birth to another child one week after James left on his mission. The mission itself was also a trial, as the people in Hong Kong were unwelcoming, they could not learn the language, and the British military were distrustful and rude to them as newspaper stories had preceded their arrival about how bad the Mormons were. As a result they decided to return to Utah reporting to Brigham Young their problems. Their report was accepted and the missionaries were honorably released.

After his return from China, being \$400 in debt (in 1854), he returned to Parowan and his family. In 1855 he was selected Representative to the Legislature. He also held the office of Probate Judge in Iron County for ten years. On 5 April 1857, Emma Bateman was sealed to James by President Brigham Young in Salt Lake City. Emma is not on the 1860 or 1870 Census with James and Emily. She did have one child recorded with James, James Nephi Lewis born in 1859 in West Jordan, Utah. Some records say she married again.

He “kept school in Panacha to support my family where I was sent as a Missionary”. James and Emily had fourteen children – two of which died at an early age. the family resided in Parowan, Utah for eleven years. He was a respected and active citizen, entered politics as a State Legislator in 1854-55, acted as Probate Judge for 10 years and helped in many ways to settle Parowan. On 5 April 1857, while still living in Parowan, he was sealed by Brigham Young to a second wife, Emma Bateman.

Cotton Mission - Hole-in-the-Rock – Arizona - Kanab

The family was called to leave their home again, this time on a ‘cotton mission’ to Harrisburg, Utah, where they lived for about seven years, and once again were asked to

move, this time to Kanab, Utah to help settle it. He was County Commissioner there for many years. But, once again, they were called on another mission where he lived until 1891 settling Taylor, Apache, Arizona. James helped cut the 'Hole in the Rock'. Their time in Taylor was challenged by warring Indians. Finally in 1891 he and his family returned to Kanab. There he was set apart as a Patriarch and held other offices in the Church. He and Emily worked in the St. George Temple and did hundreds of names of their ancestors. James passed away at the age of 84 and is buried in Kanab.

Biographical Sketch provided by descendant Shauna Hart:

Sources used for this history: "Autobiography of James Lewis" (Shauna Hart files) "Ancestors and Descendants of George Frederick Lewis and Mary Adalaide Huff", pages A16 - A22, by Lloyd M. Dalton; Records from Nauvoo, Illinois; Rootsweb – Barfield genealogy histories of James and Emily.