

MY GREAT, GREAT GRANDFATHER GEORGE JARVIS

BY

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George Jarvis was born in Harlow, Essex, England 25 March 1823. He lived on a farm and learned to feed and milk cows. When he was about eleven years old he went to work in a grist mill. George was always talking about wanting to be a sailor and see the world. The owner of the grist mill got George a job on a ship that hauled freight. George was seventeen years old when he left home and became an apprentice on a ship heading for South Australia. They loaded their cargo in Australia and then visited China, India and South Africa. They returned to England one year later.

The crew of the cargo ship rested for about six months and then began another voyage to deliver goods from England and pick-up cargo from, West Australia, China and the Malay Islands. They returned to London, England almost two years later (twenty-two months) with their ship full of oriental tea. In those days oriental tea was considered a treasure. The ship docked in London, unloaded and loaded again with soldiers that had to go to South Africa. George didn't even get to see his parents. The ship went from South Africa to Ceylon and then to Calcutta.

When George was in Calcutta, he was asked to help another ship going to China so he left the ship he had been working on and went to China a second time! In China the ship was loaded with tea and then returned to London. After being home for about a year he got a job on a ship going to North America! The ship was filled with American lumber and returned to London. It took them four months to sail to America and back to England.

George joined the British Navy. His first trip as a sailor for the Royal Navy was to the West Indies. Two bad things happened to him on this trip. First, his big toe was crushed by accident while working with cargo. Second, he got infection in his eye and had to

leave ship. He was put in the hospital in Jamaica. He had to stay four months. He lost his sight in the infected eye. But, the infection didn't spread past the one eye. When he returned to London, a Navy surgeon checked him and told him he could not be a sailor because he couldn't see out of one eye. He was given a pension of sixpence a day for life. Sixpence is about fifty cents in American money, but in that time, 1846 it was quite a lot of money. George was twenty-three years old and he had sailed the seven seas and had done the very thing he dreamed of doing when he was young.

George got married and was trying to earn enough money to come to America. There was a ship sailing to China to get tea. The ship was going to be gone one whole year. If the captain would let George work on his cargo ship, George could make enough money to pay for tickets to America. George and his wife decided he should go. One year later they were on a ship to Boston, Massachusetts.

Boston was a busy city and full of Irish immigrants who hated the English. They were Roman Catholic and had no use of anyone who was not Catholic. George and his wife, Ann, were not treated kindly. Sometimes they were afraid they might be killed. They earned enough money to take the train to Florence, Nebraska. They waited for a wagon train going to Salt Lake City, Utah. George and Ann had no money, no wagon and no oxen. They did have food and blankets and Sunday clothes. So people in wagons carried their food, blankets and clothes and George and Ann walked ALL the way to Salt Lake City! Ann had a baby boy six weeks after they arrived.

George and Ann volunteered to come to St. George and help settle this part of Utah. They had a drawing to choose lots. George and Ann got a huge lot on 200 South between

Main Street and 100 East. George and Ann were the very first pioneers to move on to an assigned lot in St. George.

George worked on the tabernacle and the temple. He was responsible for all of the scaffolding on the St. George Temple. His ability to tie all kinds of knots and swing from ropes high in the air made all of the workers on the temple and tabernacle feel safe. He planned how to get the huge baptismal font into the temple. He and the workers moved it with ropes and pulleys and placed it without any problems and it remains in the same place they put it to this day.

George and Ann had a boy named Willie. He went to school in the basement of the St. George Tabernacle soon after the tabernacle was built. One day in the spring of the Year an electrical storm started when the children were out-side for recess. Willie was playing on the steps of the tabernacle when he was struck and killed by lightening. He was eight years old. Some years later, his headstone was struck by lightening! Now, there is one headstone in the St. George Cemetery. The one stone is for George Jarvis who died at the age of ninety and Ann Pryor Jarvis who died four days after George died and for Willie their son. I have seen this headstone. I have been to the tabernacle, the temple and the lot where he lived. I am proud to be a great, great, great, grandson of George Jarvis.