

Thomas Robert Owens 14 June 1830

By Kami Bliss

Thomas Robert Owens is my great great great grandfather. He was born June 14, 1830 in Gillydig, Glamorgan, Wales. His father was Edward Owens, his mother Sarah Robert. He married Margaret Evans Dec. 16, 1850 in Wales. He and his wife were converts to the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. They were baptized by L.D.S. missionaries. Their faith was strong, and they had a desire to gather with other church members in America. Thomas was a coal miner in Wales. When they had enough money for him to emigrate to America in 1858, he left his wife and two sons, Edward Moroni and William Thomas, to follow later when there was enough money saved to pay their passage across the Atlantic Ocean.

Thomas settled in the state of Ohio and worked in the coal mines to save the money for his family to come to America. In two years he sent for his family. After bidding farewell to their loved ones, they made the journey in an old sailing vessel. There were other Latter-Day Saints aboard. On the vessel they held their meeting and did a great deal of singing. The Welch members of the church are good singers. Following the wind currents the boat got caught on a coral reef for days. They thought they were going to die. They had very little. There was a cow on board to give milk. Each person got a ration of water and also the ewe. It finally rained and they gathered the water in every thing they could find. Finally the winds blew hard enough and they put up the sails and got off the reef. They were in the Atlantic ten weeks before reaching New York. Thomas met his family at New York it was a very happy time for them.

Thomas Robert Owens only had the privilege of attending school for a short time, yet he became a very good reader, a good mathematician, and a good penman. He spent time helping himself in home study. His Book of Mormon was written in English and Welch. He and his wife Margaret were very religious, and they practiced what they believed.

In Wales their home was the home of the Latter-Day Saint missionaries. Thomas's wife did the washing, ironing and mending for the missionaries. She was an excellent cook and enjoyed having the missionaries in her home. She and Thomas made many visits to see the widows and

fatherless in their afflictions and they always administered aid where they could.

They had a religious pattern in their daily lives. They were prayerful, they respected the priesthood, attended their meetings, and taught their children to do the same.

They stayed four years in Ohio and then he and his wife and four children, three boys and a girl started again westward for Utah. In the spring of 1862 they reached Florence, Nebraska where a number of Saints were settled trying to do a little farming. Thomas signed up with John R. Murdock in his train of 50 wagons, drawn by three or four yokes of oxen. Though the boys William Thomas age 8 and Edward 10 had to walk barefoot most of the way they thought it a great adventure. They saw lots of Indians, most of them being friendly and delighted in seeing large herds of buffalo and antelope. After four months of travel, they reached Salt Lake City on October 1862. Thomas's brother John Owens was there to meet them, he took them north to Ogden. Latter Pres. Brigham Young sent the Welsh group two hundred fifty miles south to Paragonah.

Because of the Indians there were no families living outside the fort.

The farmers soon began working outside the fort building homes and improving their lots. All the men would work in groups on one man's lot, and many times they were forced to run for the fort at the sight of Indians.

The small boys had to work, helping in many ways to support their family. Thomas's boys herded sheep and cows and gathered plants, such as thistles, sego lilies, and a plant called "Peake." They lived almost entirely on these plants. At twelve years of age many boys were called into helping guard the town. Thomas's son Edward was one of these boys. It was always in danger of the Indian scalping knife.

The summer of 1867 one of the largest raids on cattle and horses that is recorded in the history of southern Utah, took place. The men of Paragonah were notified to get all the men they could at the mouth of Little Creek Canyon two and one-half miles north of Paragonah.

By sundown

the Indians had gathered one thousand head of horses and cattle and were ready to enter the mouth of the canyon. They were met with a volley of rifle shots and the Indians only succeeded in getting forty to fifty animals into the canyon. All night long the fighting continued. About sunrise

everything became quiet. Eight Indians were killed and not one white man was harmed. The forty head of cattle were taken out of the country across the Colorado River.

Thomas and Margaret had eight children four boys and four girls. Thomas died March 8, 1899. He was buried at Parowan City Cemetery, Utah, by his wife who had died five years earlier. Thomas Robert Owens worked hard his whole life and provided a good living in hard times for his family, he was included in the book "Prominent men and pioneers of Utah," along with a picture.