
A Sketch of the Life of William Morton Harris

Written by his daughter Sarah Ellen Harris Bunderson

William Morton Harris was born the 29th of October 1839, in Woolhope, Herefordshire, England. He was baptized the 17th of October 1855 at Cassion, St. Ledbury, England by his father William Thomas Harris and confirmed the 21st of October 1855 by Elder Richens.

He is the son of William Thomas Harris and Rebecca Morton. His father William Thomas was the son of Thomas Harris and Lucy Noble.

He was a printer in England before coming to America. In about the year 1856 he migrated from England to America, landing in New York. City where he lived and worked in a printing office to earn money so they could come on to Utah. While working in the printing office he was leaded or poisoned at the age of 18, which later helped to cause his death.

William Morton Harris was ordained to the office of a Priest in New York Branch of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints under the hands of William Parr, the 15th of August 1858, with sanction of said Branch.

The two years spent in New York preparing for Utah, William and Jane Carter spent many happy hours together. One evening as the young couple sat in the front parlor chatting and making plans for the wedding, some mention was made about age, Jane, thinking William was older than herself was astonished to learn he was just eighteen years old, as she would be older than him. She stamping her feet said, "I won't marry a man younger than me." William jumped up, grabbed his hat and left, returning some time later bearing his birth certificate. His birthday was the 29th of October 1839, so he was three months older. They often chuckled at this incident in their courtship.

William married Jane Carter on the 4th of July 1858 at Williamsberg, New York by Elder Francis Curby, officiating Elder.

In the spring of 1859 they left New York for Florence, Nebraska, where they remained six weeks. They left for Utah with the George Rowley Company, which was the eighth handcart company crossing the plains. The list of names in the company includes William Harris and his family including Jane Carter Harris.

The wagon my father had for his family to ride in was called "The Great Western" and was drawn by two yoke of cattle. They were in Captain George Rowley Company, which consisted of part wagons and part handcarts. There were eight wagons over which William Morton Harris was Captain. He was also called to locate camping grounds and crossing over streams of water and etc. My father was a strong handsome man, true to every trust and responsibility that was ever given him.

He was a very spiritual man. When he was a small boy his mother hired a girl to come and take care of him for a few hours, while she was gone, they had a large fireplace in the living room. After grandmother left instead of the girl watching the baby she sat down in a chair by the fireplace to read a book and went to sleep. While she was asleep the baby played in the fire, his clothes caught fire and was all ablaze. His screams brought the neighbors, but before they could free him of his burning clothing, he was so severely burned that the doctors who were called into care for him, said they could do nothing much for him. That it was impossible for him to live. There was an old lady who said she would do all she could for him to save his life if they wanted her to. So each day she would come to dress his wounds. His bed was so arranged so he could look out of the window and

each day when he would see the old lady coming through the gate, he would scream and beg his parents to take the ax and chop off his head, it hurt so bad to have his wounds cared for.

The old lady used to heal the wounds with pure baking soda. She sterilized a feather and used it to cleanse the burns with, but the flesh had been burnt so bad around his waist where his belt had been that each day she had to take out three or four inches of burnt flesh, so the wounds could heal. It was a long time, but through the tender mercy and blessings of the Lord and the good care that was given him by his faithful parents and the kind old lady; he was restored completely to health and strength again. But he carried the scars of those terrible burns all his life.

Although he was only 19 years old when they crossed the plains, he attended to his duties in a very commendable way. Their company arrived in Salt Lake Valley on the 4th of September 1859, where they lived for about one year, and then they moved to Kaysville, Utah.

My father William Morton Harris was ordained between the later part of 1860 and the first part of 1861 to the office of Seventy of the 77th Quorum of Seventies.

They later moved to Mill Creek where they lived for about five years. Then we moved back to Salt Lake where we lived for a while. In 1869 William and his brother-in-law Thomas Showell each took up a homestead in the Curlew Valley.

Three months before my father died, he moved his family more than 100 miles out west of Salt Lake City into the Curlew Valley. Up to this time he had been a printer most of his time, but it was his great desire to raise his children on a farm/that they might have plenty of milk, butter, eggs and other necessities of life so essential to the happiness and growth of a child. But he did not live long enough to realize this desire for he died leaving his wife and children in the wild desert which it was at that time, among strangers and wild Indians who painted up as warriors and threatened to go on the war path from time to time.

About 3 months after we moved to Curlew Valley, my father took very sick with severe cold, which turned to pneumonia. He took sick on Friday afternoon and died Monday morning about 4 o'clock.

He was a very kind man. He loved his wife and children better than life itself. I never heard my father speak a cross word, when he corrected his children, it was in the kindest way possible and we all loved him dearly. After he left us it seemed like we could never live without him.

Before he died, he told his wife and children, he didn't fear death, but he dreaded to leave his family to the buffetings of Satan in this wicked world.

He died the 11th of April 1870, a faithful true Latter-day-Saint. He was buried in Salt Lake City; he was 31 years of age at the time of his death.