

THOMAS EDWARDS  
Biography  
by  
Helen Edwards Bennett

My father was born in Pencarreg, Glamorganshire, South Wales, 15 March 1849, to Thomas Edwards and Elizabeth Lewis.

His parents joined the church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints in Wales and came to America on the ship "Clara Wheeler". Those of the family on ship were Thomas Edwards 56, Elizabeth 47, Rees 19, Mary 13, Janet 10, Elizabeth 8, Thomas 5, and Sarah 2. They booked passage 13 November 1854 and sailed 27 November 1854. The company consisted of 420 souls (Henry E. Phillips, President. Reg. Emigration 28 February 1851 to February 2, 1855 #1044 pp. 181-189)

They remained in St. Louis, Missouri until 1861. I suppose to make enough money to make the trip to Utah. They left Florence, Nebraska, June 7, 1861 and arrived in Salt Lake City, Utah, August 24, 1861. (Church Historians Office S.L.C. General History 1848 p.6.) Father was 12 years old.

Somewhere on the route, father made friends with the Indians and learned to speak their language and to understand their signs. This came in very handy in later years. His family settled in Ogden, Utah.

Father was a great lover of horses and learned to ride while very young. He would ride bucking horses for the amusement of his friends so it was only natural for his to get away from city life.

He got a job with a 'cow firm' and lived on a ranch, named Houtz, near Snowville, Utah. Father met Mother while she was living in Curlew (later known as Snowville) with her parents, Joseph Nicholas and Nancy Allen. She was 13 years old and he 23. Father said he made up his mind then to wait for her. In the mean time the Nicholas family moved back to their old home in Willard, Utah. (Box Elder County)

Father's family lived in Ogden so when he would go home to visit, he would always stop in Willard to see Mother. Through the years they became very good friends and very much in love.

While working, one of his jobs was to trail cattle through to Oregon. On one of these trips he found the little valley of Almo and was determined to make a home there. On January 1, 1877 Thomas Edwards and Nancy Helen Nicholas were married in Willard by Bishop Ward.

At first they lived in Malad with mother's sister, Eunice Ward, but on October 29, 1877, they moved to the 'Stafford Ranch' below Almo, Idaho. They lived there 1 1/2 years and then moved to the Sweetser place. In 1878, father homesteaded 160 acres on what is now known as Edwards Creek. He built their first home, consisting of two rooms and a lean-to. He also located some land East and when mother's sister, Mary Ann and William Jones were married, they came out to Almo and Father gave them the lower half of the place so they would be near to them.

It had been very lonely for Mother these first few years, as they had been only two other women in the valley. One at the EY ranch and another in 'City of Rocks'. These were long distances in those days and transportation was so difficult as well as added hazard of Indians on the warpath.

Father continued to trail cattle through to Oregon for two years after their marriage and on these trips had many harrowing experiences. One I will relate as near as I can remember. How many times have I wished that I had written these experiences down.

He came across two wagons still burning. The Indians had killed all the people, stolen their horses and taken all of the belongings. He knew they must not be very far away. He was really frightened but had to go on with his steers. As he looked up, he saw a man coming toward him on horseback "Well, this is it", he thought, but as he drew nearer and waved his hat, Father heaved a sigh of relief. He never related this experience without being overcome with emotion.

When they began to farm the place, the children began to arrive. Mary Eunice was born July 31, 1878. As there was no doctor or midwife, Mother went home to Willard. Then came Thomas Andrew, April 14, 1880 and Myself, Helen Nancy, October 15, 1883. Each time was another trip to Willard. In the mean time a midwife had arrived, Mary Lowe. Joseph Nicholas was born in Almo, April 27, 1885. Gordon Ira, January 3, 1889; Clarissa Pauline, July 4, 1892 and last but not least Dorcas Louise was delivered by Louise Wynder, a neighbor. Joseph, Gordon and Clarissa were all born in the old house in the middle of the farm, but father had built a house on the upper half of the place because the highway ran close by. Dorcas was born in the new house just completed. A large three room home.

We were all very healthy children except for children's diseases, measles, mumps, scarlet fever, whooping cough, etc, we had no doctor. the nearest one being Albion, about 45 miles to the north. A mighty great distance on horse back. Father has ridden at night or day time many times to bring a Dr. if he were needed for anyone in the community. Mother and Father were the first ones summoned to a sick bed and they were really loved by everyone because of their unselfish work. Father has set many a broken leg and cured a rattle-snake bit by sucking the blood from the wound. Mother washed and laid out nearly everyone who died in Almo until an undertaker was close enough to call and that was years later. Father was always on hand to sit up with the sick and dying and never missed a funeral and helped dig the grave.

Father was a great mixer in the community. He always called for all the square dances and was great to see that everyone had a good time. If he saw a "wall flower", he would ask her to dance with him and then find her a partner for the next dance. In those days one usually danced the first and last dance with her beau and with every one else in between.

Father was a real jockey. He rode in all of the races on the fourth and twenty-fourth of July and any other holiday. He only weighed 120 pounds and was 5 feet eleven inches tall. The people who bet always picked father instead of the horse. I well remember the last time he rode a race. We were in Burley and mother and I begged him not to ride but every one kept cheering him to ride so when he came through the race two lengths ahead, he came over the 'white top' where we were. He was white as a sheet. His remark was, 'Well, that is my last race". I think that it was the first time that he felt like he was getting old.

Father was a great hunter. In the fall of the year, when the crops were all in there were lots of sage hens in the fields. I was always on hand to go, too. I would walk in head of him and scare the sage hens up, then fall flat on my face and he would shoot over me. He seldom missed getting his game. We had a little book to keep track of all of the chickens. We never shot more than we could use at a time. I was the dog as we didn't have a hunting dog.

We had cattle and they ran on the range up Almo and Edwards Creeks. Father did lots of riding in the summer to look after the little calves that were born away from the ranch. He always carried fish hooks in his hat band. When he came to the creek he would get himself a fishing pole out of the willows and fish for an hour or so. When he came home he usually had fish in every picket. Those good old mountain trout!

Father was very good at playing jokes. We had an old man, Davie Jones, living with us. Father sent him over to the Nicholas Ranch to get something. He was no sooner out of sight when father ran ahead and with a sheet draped around him stood in the road and pounded on an old stove pipe. Davie dropped everything and ran with father right behind him. Davie fell down and as he did so, pulled a knife from his picket saying, "I can't run but I can fight". This joke was really on father. Another time, a group of friends were at our place and father and Uncle Gordon (mother's brother) slipped away and went toward the hills, and built a big bonfire. They then wrapped blankets about themselves and kept going around the fire to make believe Indians were camped there, as some had been around that day. There had been so many massacres in and around Almo that the residents were always on the alert. However, when it was discovered that father and Uncle Gordon were not around, we knew right away there was a 'joker in the wood pile'.

One time Mother was dying some cloths a beautiful blue. We had some pretty white chickens so Father caught two pair and stuck them in the dye. An old friend, Dick Lessey, came by and saw them and was real thrilled with such beautiful chickens. Father told him he could have a pair for \$25. He bought them and took them to Elba. In a few days the dye wore off and here came Mrs. Lessey with the chickens. Father got a big kick out of it but refunded the money.

In the middle of the night, one fall evening, a man by the name of Bill Owsley came riding pel mel up to the house and called Father out telling him there had been a terrible Massacre up above the City of Rocks. There were a lot of men on the range hunting for cattle as was the custom in the fall of the year. Father had been on many of these roundups, so he came back to bed as if nothing had happened. In a few minutes, they heard wagons coming. Mother said, "Tom, you would lay here and let us all be killed. I heard what Mr. Owsley said."

Six families from Grape Creek with their bedding and food had arrived so that we could band together and protect ourselves from the attack.

Father said, "I don't believe a word of it. It is probably just a 'tender-foot' and the boys were having some fun."

The next day, to satisfy the women, the men got horses and sent to the scene. It was just as Father had said. A few of the cowboys had left camp and come back later shooting and whooping it up, the rest of those in camp had all fallen over as if shot. The poor tender-foot had simply left for parts far and away. No one could hope to catch him. He spread the news to Oakley, Albion, Elba and back to Almo. All of these communities were upset about the "Indian attack".

Father always made friends with the Indians. He fed them rather than fight them. They called him, "the Great Man".

Father wasn't much of a church goer, but if anyone was in need, he was the first to take a grist of flour, a quarter of beef, or a sack of potatoes and no one ever knew about it. Not

even Mother. When Father moved away. A lady came to mother and said, "I don't know how we'll ever get along. You know Mr. Edwards has brought us our flour for years."

Father, Mother, Dorcas and Max moved to Burley in about 1917. Father took the flu in 1918. He never fully recovered. It left him with a weak heart. My family moved to California in 1921 and year later, on the recommendation of the doctor. Father was moved to this lower climate. Mother, Father, Dorcas, Max and my brother, Gordon and family came to California to live, October 1922. They lived with us in Los Angeles until January 1923 when they bought a home in Whittier, California. Father passed away February 23, 1923 in Whittier and mother took him to Burley, Idaho for burial.

It was said of Father at his funeral by John L. Smith, a member of the Stake Presidency, "Thomas Edwards was a thoroughly honest and honorable man. His word was as good as his bond. He always went the extra mile to help a friend in need. He did not knowingly or intentionally harm or inconvenience anyone. He had no enemies. He could always see some good in every one."

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