

# History of William Francis James

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Typed by: his daughter, DeeAnn Jessop Fisher

William Francis James was born in most humble of circumstances. He was the 2<sup>nd</sup> child & the 2<sup>nd</sup> son of Joseph James and Sarah Holyoak. He was born on the 30<sup>th</sup> day of April, 1857 in Ogden, Weber, Utah Territory in a one room sod house with a dirt floor, located on 27<sup>th</sup> Street, between Grant and Lincoln Avenues. The house was built by his parents, Joseph & Sarah James. It had a willow and dirt roof. This was their first home and meager as it was they called it home until after six of their children were born. They had one trunk which served as a table and Joseph made benches out of slabs he carried from Ogden Canyon. Their beds were made from poles lashed together with rawhide and covered crosswise with willows. He worked for enough straw to fill ticks which served as mattresses. Joseph also built a stone fireplace which served as a stove to cook on and to provide heat for the home. There was no plumbing but they built an outhouse for sanitation. To meet their water needs they dug a well. His older brother, Joseph Henry James was born at this same location on 22 Oct. 1855. Several other brothers and a sister born there, were: George Richard James - 4 May 1859, Edward Benjamin James - 11 Dec 1860, Charles Willard James - 9 Sept. 1862, and Sarah Hannah James - born 20 Sept. 1864. Following Sarah's birth, Joseph built a frame house with a shingled roof at 2757 Wall Ave., where the rest of his children were born.

Shortly after William Francis was born, trouble broke out over Johnson's Army that was coming to put down the so called "Mormon Rebellion". His father, Joseph, was called upon to leave his little family; wife, Sarah and their two sons in almost destitute conditions, and go to Echo Canyon to assist in the defense of the Latter-Day Saint people. President Brigham Young had declared Martial Law and vowed to protect the saints from unlawful persecutions such as they had experienced in Missouri and Illinois. (There the saints had been driven from their homes in the dead of Winter by mobs who burnt their homes, etc.) Cold and hunger were extremely trying for the early saints, and they suffered unbelievable grief. The saints harassed the Army along their route to prevent their entry into Salt Lake. The following year, after negotiations with the army, they were allowed to pass through Salt Lake but had agreed not to camp within 40 miles of the city. They went south and west of Utah Lake to make their headquarters at "Camp Floyd". All of the saints living in Salt Lake had moved south to Provo and other cities during this period of trouble. They were prepared to burn their homes rather than allow the Army to move in and take over. They were relieved to return to their homes under peaceful conditions.

The saints had been fearful and worried about the U.S. Army being sent against them but in the end it proved to be a blessing. The soldiers bought produce and other things from the saints and also sold a lot of their gear very cheaply to the saints, like clothing, shoes, blankets, and equipment.

William experienced many hard times with his parents and brothers. The year 1861 was especially hard on them. They had no shoes, suffered from the cold and grew very hungry for lack of food to eat, all they had was a little bran bread. Most of the farm his father had purchased by the Weber River was washed away by high water. Then they rented another farm and as soon as the crops were growing good the grasshoppers & crickets came and destroyed everything. His father then acquired a six acre lot west of Wall Ave. between 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> Streets. William helped his parents plant an orchard on this lot which was to become the best orchard in the County. His father taught him how to graft and prune the trees and to care for the grapes and berries. Many of the varieties had been obtained in the mountains.

Joseph and Sarah were converts to the "Mormon Church" (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints). They were born in England. Joseph was baptized on 15 February 1832 in Cardiff, Wales. He immigrated that same year, on the sailing ship "Galconder", the voyage took about nine weeks. He landed in New Orleans, Louisiana and then traveled up the Mississippi River to St. Louis, Missouri. Sarah and her family came to America on the sailing ship "Windermere" which landed in New Orleans, Louisiana. They then booked passage up the Mississippi River to St. Louis, Missouri. They traveled west to Utah with the David Jones and the Darwin Richard Companies of the Mormon Pioneers. They arrived in Salt Lake on 30 Sept. 1854 by wagon and ox-team. Joseph had been assigned as a single man to travel with the George Holyoak Family. He drove the team and became very good friends with the Holyoak girls. In fact on 2 October 1854 he was married to Sarah Holyoak by Elder Sykes, in a covered wagon. Sarah wore a freshly washed calico dress as her wedding gown. The only possessions they owned were a spade, an axe, one camp kettle and a chest that Sarah had brought over from England. They worked in Farmington that winter for their board and room.

Williams parents then traveled north and settled in Ogden in the spring of 1855. At first the couple lived with a widower, Samuel Sinfield. They lived in a dugout at Mound Fort which was located between 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> streets, on Washington Blvd. Sarah was a great help tending his children until he remarried. After that Joseph and Sarah procured a lot on 27<sup>th</sup> Street between Lincoln and Grant Avenues, where they built their sod home. That fall was when Sarah birthed their first baby, Joseph Henry James.

They took a trip south and on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June 1856, they took out their Endowments and were sealed for "Time and All Eternity" in the Endowment House in Salt Lake.

That same year they rented a farm near the Weber River and all seemed to be going well until a flash flood came and washed away their farm. They rented and planted another farm and just as the crops were nearing maturity

the grasshoppers and crickets came and devoured everything in their path. Thus their situation worsened and they were destitute. Their first child at this time was only about 8 months old.

Joseph worked on the Union Pacific Railroad with George Whitehead, out at Promitory, Utah until the completion and "wedding of the rails" between the Central and the Union Pacific Railroads on May 10, 1869. This became known as the transcontinental railroad. Then he moved to Ogden and worked in a Shoe shop which George Whitehead built in the place where the Orpheum Theater stood. ( Washington Blvd. & a little south of 25<sup>th</sup> Street on the east side.)

William was baptized a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints on July 6, 1868. His early life was filled with the experiences and hardships of the pioneers. He drove and ox team to make the grade for the first railroad to enter Utah and rode on the first locomotive that came into Ogden, He also rode on the first passenger train that ran between Ogden and Salt Lake City.

At the age of 11, William was apprenticed to W. H. Stevens to learn the carpenter trade. He served there for five years. Later he worked for Barnard White in a sash door factory for five years and it was during this time that he became acquainted with Julia Ellen Whitehead. While in his teenage years he experienced the death of his younger brothers: George and Edward. This brought much sorrow to William and his family. He was married to Julia Ellen Whitehead, who was 17 years old, on August 9, 1877 in Ogden, Utah. She was the daughter of George Whitehead and Julia Sophia Morris. They and another couple traveled by covered wagon, for 30 days from Ogden to St. George, Utah where they were married for time and all eternity. William & Julia being the first couple living north of Salt Lake City to be married there in the newly completed St. George L.D.S. Temple, because the Salt Lake Temple was incomplete at this time.

William built a two roomed, shingle roofed house on a lot at 27<sup>th</sup> Street and Wall Ave. in Ogden, Utah. Their first baby, a son, William Henry James was born while living there on June 14, 1878. Their 2<sup>nd</sup> child, a daughter, Julia Rosabell was born there on October 6, 1879. This little house still stands there at this time. William & Julia were faithful, and active Latter Day Saints.

When their 2<sup>nd</sup> baby was only about one month old, William received a mission call, from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, to go to Arizona & New Mexico in 1879. He was set apart for this mission by Joseph F. Smith and left Salt Lake City on November 20 for his field of labor. Joseph Watkins was also called and traveled with them. William and Julia accepted the call, loaded up a covered wagon with provisions and their two small children and started on the thousand mile journey! The baby was only 1 and a half months old! They endured many hardships and privations on the way. They stopped many times at scattered places where families lived and asked if Julia could give her baby a bath because of the cold winter weather

conditions. Also their horses would stray far away while they were finding grass to eat. When that occurred they would have to travel all night, especially when water was scarce and the next water hole was quite some distance. They arrived in St. Johns, Arizona, in the bitter cold of Winter, on December 20, 1879. This was a small settlement populated mostly with Indians and Mexicans. They moved into a little log house there and William began to preach the gospel to the Indians. He spoke their language fluently.

Three more children were born in St. Johns, Arizona, two sons and one daughter: Joseph Benjamin James was born July 27, 1881. He died less than two years later on May 13, 1883, just 2 months after the birth of George Morris James, on March 4, 1883. William was a carpenter by trade and made the coffin in which they buried little Joseph Benjamin. Two years later on January 1, 1885, Mary Elizabeth James was born. The following summer the family moved to Ramah, Valencia, New Mexico.

Julia was left alone most of the time with the children for the following four years while William preached the gospel in New Mexico. During that time, Nephi Moroni James was born on January 11, 1887 and his sister, Clara Ellen James was born on November 8, 1888. One interesting thing happened when Nephi Moroni was blessed. The man who performed the ordinance knew the name which was to be given to the baby before Julia and William told him the name. Julia always felt that his name had been chosen by the Lord. Julia and the children had very little money and William often ate parched corn and pine nuts while traveling around preaching the gospel. William served and labored among the Indians and Mexicans for ten years.

In 1890, William moved his family to Diaz, Old Mexico, where he helped his brother, Joseph Henry James operate a saw mill and preach the gospel. Daughter, Sarah Lillian James was born on June 30, 1890 in San Pedro, Chihuahua, Old Mexico. Father contracted Malaria in Mexico and so the church issued a mission release, after serving on a mission for 12 years. Julia, William Francis and their seven children returned to Ogden and arrived there on December 28, 1891. It seems that Julia was an incredibly strong, faithful woman to make this journey with her sick husband, children ranging between the ages of 13 and one. Plus she was expecting their 9<sup>th</sup> child!

Evelyn Louise James, the 9<sup>th</sup> child was born on February 4, 1892 in Ogden, Weber County, Utah. Father, Joseph James built a house for his son, William, Julia and their family at Wilson Lane. That is a small town about 6 miles west of Ogden. (Around 21<sup>st</sup> Street) William and the children engaged in farming. The family lived in Wilson for about 20 years. William slowly regained his health and strength. The boys raised hay and grain while William planted and took care of the garden.

He and his sons established the W.F. James Coal and Ice Business. The building was located on Wall Ave. just a few blocks north of 25<sup>th</sup> Street. (We think it was between 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Street on the east side of Wall Ave.) In the winter, they would put up ice. That means they took their team and wagon

out to the frozen ponds. They would have to saw the ice into big chunks and haul it back to the ice house. There it would be stored and covered with sawdust to keep it through the summer. This was a very profitable business because at that time people used ice boxes to keep their perishable foods. (This was before refrigerators were invented.) While they were living in Wilson, Julia gave birth to the following children: Florence May James on November 8, 1894, Pearl Amelia James on November 8, 1896 (interesting that Clara, Florence and Pearl share the same Birthday!), Myrtle Ada James on November 11, 1898, Nellie Alberta James on the 11<sup>th</sup> day of August 1900, Alfred Robert James on January 23, 1902, and the baby, Mattie Laura James on October 22, 1903. This filled out the family to fifteen children, 10 daughters and 5 sons. The children attended the Wilson Lane School. Mary Elizabeth died on January 4, 1899 at the age of 14. Nellie Alberta died on March 7, 1901 at the tender age of 7 months. All of these things happened while living in the home in Wilson Lane.

In 1910 William Francis and Julia moved with their family back into Ogden. They were located in the Ogden Third Ward, at 170 21<sup>st</sup> Street. This was a large 2 story, red brick house with a stone wall in the front of it. The stone wall had 5ft. Pillars on both ends and in the middle on both sides of the walk way. This was a favorite climbing and jumping place for all the children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. He continued to operate the ice and coal business. Four years later, Myrtle Ada died on July 24, 1914. She was only sixteen years old.

William and Julia remained faithful all of the days of their lives and were exemplary in every respect. They were the parents of 15 children, five sons and ten daughters. They always shared with others, for example they never killed a pig without sharing it with their neighbors. William served as a Missionary, Bishop, Superintendent of the Sunday School and was a High Councilman when he answered his last call on November 23, 1916, which brought to an end a colorful and useful life of service to God, his church and his large family. He died in the Dee Hospital in Ogden, Utah from complications of troubles with which he had been suffering from for the past year. His body was prepared for burial by Larkins and Sons. His funeral was held Sunday, November 26, 1916 at 2:00pm at the third ward meeting house. Bishop N. B Richardson conducted. According to an article about him in the Ogden Standard Examiner on Monday, Nov. 27<sup>th</sup>, Friends, and relatives of the former prominent business man and church worker filled the chapel to its capacity and covered his bier with a wealth of floral tributes. The speakers highly eulogized the life of William Francis James, as a man of sterling integrity in business, a faithful husband and father, and an active church worker. Patriarch George W. Larkin, Judge N. J. Harris, Bishop Richardson and Joseph Watkins were speakers at his funeral. The special musical numbers that were furnished were:

- \*How Firm A Foundation .....A Solo by D. Pickett
- \*Unanswered Yet.....A Duet by Ethel and Clara Bowns
- \*O, Love Divine.....A Solo by Mrs. Bernice Tyree
- \*Resignation.....A Solo by Mary Farley
- \*O My Father.....A Solo by William Pickett

The dedication of his grave was by Counselor, Elias S. King. He was buried in the Ogden Cemetery on November 26, 1916. He was survived by his wife, Julia Ellen W. James, and the following children:

- Mrs. Rose Belnap of Brigham, Utah
- George M. James of Eden, Utah
- Mrs. Clara Brown of Ogden, Utah
- Mrs. Lillian Frost of Ogden, Utah
- Mrs. Florence Newey of Ogden, Utah
- Mrs. Pearl Jessop of Ogden, Utah
- Alfred James of Ogden, Utah
- Laura James of Ogden, Utah
- Mrs. Evelyn Sorensen of Pocatello, Idaho

Nineteen Grandchildren, one brother - Willard James, two sisters: Mrs. Sarah Rushton, and Mrs. E. E. Jones all of Ogden, Utah.