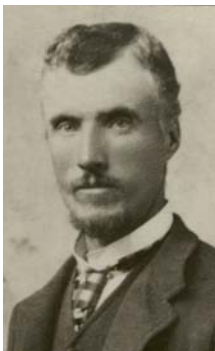


James (“Jimmy”) Wanlass and Edith Elizabeth Fowkes: Their Church Devotion and Temple Worship

Born in Scotland on August 9, 1846, James “Jimmy” Wanlass was about 4 years old when his parents, James Wanlass and Margaret Neilson, joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. When he was 8 years old, he was baptized and confirmed a member of the Church by his father. When he was about 12 years old, he was ordained a deacon by Abenezzer Hunter. While living in the Armadale, Scotland Branch of the Church, he was ordained a priest by Elder Henry Cummack on June 5, 1870, when he was about 24 years old.

The family wanted to gather with other Church members in America. James and his father worked in coal mines around Edinburgh, Scotland to support the family and to save money to immigrate to Utah. Going to Zion, where temple worship and the sealing ordinances were available, was an important family goal. First, his father and three siblings went to Salt Lake City in 1874. James stayed behind. He continued working in the coal mines. It took two more years to save enough money to send his mother and a brother to Utah. After another year of mine work, James and a sister were able to afford the trip to Utah, arriving in Salt Lake City on July 5, 1877.

James had been in Utah about a year, when his parents were sealed to each other as husband and wife in the Endowment House on October 10, 1878. It set an example that James would later follow.



By 1881, James had a coal mining job in Almy, Wyoming. Reuben Fowkes was mine superintendent. James lived in Mrs. Mary Fowkes's boarding house, where he first met their beautiful daughter, Edith Elizabeth Fowkes. Although Edith was only about 16 years old then, James began paying serious attention to her. At first Edith “couldn't stand” James (who was Scottish and about 19 years older than she was), but gradually she was attracted to his clean-living lifestyle. He was a handsome man with curly hair. James was active in the Almy Branch of the Church and sang in the choir with Edith. Both had strong ties to the Church. Edith's parents had received their endowments and were sealed to each other in the Endowment House, just a few months after they had emigrated from England in 1868.

On February 7, 1882, when he was 35 years old, James received a patriarchal blessing¹ from Thomas R. McCann, which pointed him toward temple worship. In that blessing, he was told that he would be ordained to the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood and receive his washings, anointings, and endowments in the temple. He was also promised that “...thou shalt converse with angels. They will make thee acquainted with the genealogy of thy Father's house...” and “...thou shalt enter into the temple of the Lord and ...represent thy Father's house and be baptized for the dead...” Two months later, on April 4, 1882, James had the Melchizedek Priesthood conferred upon him and was ordained an Elder in the Church by James Browns.

When James and Edith decided to marry, they made preparations to receive the blessings of temple ordinances. James was determined to have their ceremonial temple robes made out of real Irish linen. It was hard to get and expensive. They had family, friends, and neighbors help sew the robes, which they took with them to their marriage. James and his youthful bride, Edith (17), traveled to Salt Lake City where they received their endowments and were sealed together as husband and wife in the





Endowment House² on April 10, 1882. Edith received her temple clothing (garments) from Eliza R. Snow, who was the General Relief Society President, poet, and hymn writer. Their marriage and sealing was performed by Joseph F. Smith who was then second counselor in the First Presidency of the Church and later President of the Church. It was probably a family affair. His parents lived in Salt Lake City. Her parents probably traveled to Salt Lake City with them.

James worked in Wyoming coal mines. Edith ran a boarding house. They had children. James gave priesthood blessings to his children. Singing was an important expression of their spiritual talents. They attended church every Sunday as a family, filling up one complete bench. Their children were baptized into the Church. Their boys were ordained to the Priesthood. James was ordained a Seventy in the Church by Jacob Gates on May 11, 1891. He and Elizabeth frequently traveled to Salt Lake City by train to attend the General Conferences of the Church. They attended the dedication³ of the Salt Lake Temple in April of 1893.



Their temple covenants were important to them. They told the story of a day when their Indian friend and Mormon convert, Chief Washakie⁴, came to visit. He showed a part of the temple garments he was wearing to prove that he had been through the temple and had received his endowments. He said to Edith, “You good woman? You good woman?” He wanted her to show him her garments to find out if she was a good woman. Edith inched the ruffled neck of her garments up above her dress line so he could see that she also wore garments and that she was a “good woman.” He said, “You good woman.” James invited him to stay to dinner and he wanted to say the blessing. He spoke in the Indian tongue and it was rather long and impressive. It was a choice experience for the Wanlass family.

Morning and evening family prayers in the James and Edith Wanlass home included supplications for James's protection at work, because mining was dangerous and mine accidents had killed many miners in Almy. Those prayers were answered miraculously on March 9, 1900 when James was trapped in a mine cave-in. Slabs of a flat rock called “slate” fell on either side of James and another slab of it fell across the top of the other two slabs, forming a protective “table” over him. Tons of coal covered the “table” and crushed one of his legs. At first Dr. Cyrus Gamble thought they would have to amputate the leg, but through priesthood administrations by elders of the Church, the faith of the family, and James's grit to hold on, the leg was saved. It was over 8 months before James could get about on crutches.

When his daughter Margaret was 15 years old, she contracted typhoid fever. At 6 P.M. on Saturday night, her temperature was 106 degrees and the doctor said if her temperature didn't go down she would burn up and die. That night Edith gave her ice water to keep the temperature down and ask her if she would like to have the elders come in the morning. Margaret said, “Yes.” So on Sunday morning, six elders, including her father, pulled her bed out from the wall. They knelt down around the bed and had prayer. After the prayer, they administered to her. James gave his daughter the blessing. Margaret said she felt as though a cool breeze was blowing over her. She knew it was the faith of her father and his righteousness in the priesthood. The family claimed that the strong hold James had on the priesthood

was the reason that Margaret was able to get out of bed the next day. The doctor couldn't believe it!

One of their trips to the Salt Lake Temple occurred on August 9, 1906, when Edith Elizabeth Fowkes Wanlass and her sister Esther Ellen Fowkes Thomas were sealed to their deceased father, Reuben Fowkes, and their living mother, Mary Bacon Fowkes. Edith also did a proxy endowment in behalf of Jane Hubert that day.

Both James and Edith loved a little game or joke. James surprised Edith one day by throwing a bucket of water on her when she rounded a corner. She had been carrying a bucket of water and thus the game began. She tried to catch up with him to get even and have her chance in the water fight. She missed several good opportunities but thought she would hide behind the kitchen door. There were three steps up to a small porch and then to the kitchen and she heard someone walking up the steps, ready to step in the door. She stepped out from behind the door and swung her bucket of water and soused the ward teachers who had come to make a call. There they were at Sister Wanlass's back door, she with a now empty water bucket in her hands and they were standing before her in their best Sunday suits and starched collars, now unstarched and beginning to roll up. Her humiliation was without bounds.

In 1911 the family bought a home on Fox Creek, beneath the Teton mountain peaks in Idaho. Edith was made Relief Society President in the local Chapin Ward, which was near Victor, Idaho. James was set apart as second counselor to Bishop A. L. Burnside in the Chapin Ward by James Griggs on January 7, 1917. In his ecclesiastical stewardship James bore many testimonies of the truthfulness of the restored gospel. He saw the sick healed by the power of faith. He did proxy temple work for the dead.

In June 1917, they made a trip to the Salt Lake Temple, where on June 28th James was sealed to Ellen Stacey, a former neighbor in Almy, Wyoming, who died in 1895. During her life, Ellen had requested the privilege of being sealed to James so she would be able to enjoy the blessings of "eternal marriage." Both James and Edith agreed to her request, but it wasn't until 22 years after she died that the proxy ordinance was performed. Edith served as proxy for Ellen. That same day, James received a proxy endowment for Anders Jonson and Edith did so for Sarah Ravensdale.

The next day (June 29, 1917) James was sealed to his deceased parents, James Wanlass and Margaret Neilson, in the Temple. He also had his siblings, who had died in childhood, sealed to their parents. The day's temple work included him receiving a proxy endowment for Hans Schneider.



James was a deeply spiritual man and very prayerful. He told the story of going with Brother Neal to minister to a sick lady who lived some distance from the settlement. It was growing dark and they had difficulty finding their way to the lady's house. They stayed a while and administered to her with a priesthood blessing. It was darker than ever when they left and they had difficulty stumbling across the stony ground. James said that he wished they had the light spoken of in the hymn "Lead Kindly Light." A light appeared over their heads and showed them their way to the crossroads where the light divided and part went with Brother Neal and part went with James to their homes.

The whole community knew of James's integrity. His daughter, Edith Elizabeth Wanlass, was with him one day when a stranger asked a cashier

whether he could cash a check signed by James Wanlass. The cashier said: “Anytime Jimmy Wanless attaches his name to anything, it is as good as a gold bond!”

She also remembered the last time James went to the temple: “I remember the trip very well. I stayed home. I was the baby sitter. It had been promised to him in his patriarchal blessing that the genealogy of his father's house would be revealed to him in the Temple of the Lord. He was so in hopes.... Getting ready to go to the temple he felt sure that when he was there this time that that genealogy would be revealed to him. [When he returned] the minute I saw him step off the train, I knew it hadn't been. He felt pretty bad about it. Later somebody told him, 'Jimmy, they didn't tell you that it would be revealed to you in the Temple in this world.' Daddy's eyes just brightened. It gave him another line of thought. He thought that everything that was done in the temple was done in this temple. Well it wasn't done.”

James's health began to fail and he was released from the Chapin Ward bishopric on September 7, 1919. He was ordained to the office of High Priest on December 26th 1920. James Wanlass died on April 10, 1921, at age 74. It was the 39th anniversary of his wedding day. He was buried in the Victor, Idaho cemetery.

James's widow, Edith, continued to live on their farm in Chapin for 28 more years. When Dwight Stone was bishop of her ward, he was visiting with her about 11 o'clock in the evening. She related to him her memories of her marriage in the old endowment house in Salt Lake City. She told about their ceremonial temple clothing, which James had insisted be made from a special Irish linen. She retrieved her ceremonial apron and showed it to him. For some unknown reason, he held it up so he could look through the fabric toward the light, since it was nighttime. To his amazement he stated, “As I picked up her apron and held it up I was surprised to see her name, 'Edith Fowkes' in beautiful handwriting from one top corner across the apron to the bottom corner. It was like woven into the fabric, a part of it, and the only way it could be seen was by holding it up against the light. I exclaimed over it and she said, 'What's the matter?' I showed her. She did not know it was there! Very strange.” She was pleased to be able to see it as her bishop had done toward the light. This discovery made her temple apron more valuable and treasured.



Edith served as Relief Society President for many years. She loved the scriptures. She could speak with God and be answered when she asked for wisdom or direction. She died March 26, 1949, when she was 84 years old. She was buried in the Victor Cemetery, next to James.



- 1 James Wanlass's **Patriarchal Blessing** – February 7, 1882, Almy Wyoming Territory, A patriarchal Blessing by Thomas R. McCann – Upon the head of James Wanlass, son of James and Margaret Wanlass. Born Aug. 9th, 1846 in Betties Row, Haddingtonshire, Scotland.

“James, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, I place my hands upon your head to bless you with a patriarchal or Father's blessing. Inasmuch as thou hast been baptized for the remission of thy sins thou hast had hands laid on thee for the gift of the Holy Ghost thou art entitled to the blessings of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Lord hath brought thee here to do a great work and to educate thee and prepare thee by the ordeals through which thou wilt have to pass. And His spirit shall be with thee to enlighten thy mind and quicken thy understanding for thou shalt converse with angels. They will make thee acquainted with the genealogy of thy Father's house and thou shalt be ordained to the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood and thou shalt enter in to the temple of the Lord and receive thy washings and anointings and endowments. And thou shalt represent thy Father's house and be baptized for the dead and thou shalt approach the Alter of God and seal the dead to the dead and the blessings of Almighty God shall rest upon thee and upon thy posterity for thou art of the seed of Abraham and shall receive thy blessings through that lineage and thou shalt honor the revelation of Jesus Christ as revealed in this last dispensation and thou shalt have wives and a numerous posterity and thou shalt erect thy monument in their minds and the time worn ages of eternity will not obliterate it and thou shalt have knowledge given unto thee, which is power to govern and control in righteousness – and thy children shall rise up and bless thee. Thou shalt see the signs of the coming of the Son of Man in the heavens and thou shalt assist in gathering up scattered Israel. And thou shalt preach the gospel of repentance and of baptism for the remission of sins and thou shalt heal the sick and defend the priesthood of the Son of God. And the spirit of the Lord shalt rest upon thee and upon thy posterity throughout all succeeding generations and thy seed shall never beg their bread. I seal these blessings upon thee through thy faithfulness in the name of the Messiah, Amen.” *Signed John L. Russell, Clerk.*

- 2 Photo of Endowment House from: <http://www.ldschurchtemples.com/endowment/>
- 3 Ticket of invitation to the dedication of the Salt Lake Temple from: http://www.ldsces.org/inst_manuals/pres-sm/pres-ch-04-06.htm (not James or Elizabeth's invitation ticket)
- 4 Photo of Chief Washakie from: <http://www.tensleepworlandwyoming.com/washakiecounty.htm>