

John Brown¹

(Written by Nephi Brown)

My (Nephi Brown) grandfather on my mothers (Eliza Brown White Brown) side, John Brown, was born at West Lavington, Wiltshire, England on December 13, 1816. He was the son of Henry Brown and Ann Bash. His lot in life in England was cast as a farm laborer, working on the same farm for twenty-five years at a salary of eight shillings a week. (Just about ten dollars a month in U.S. currency). Apparently he did not get a raise in wages during the twenty-five years he worked for his ultra conservative, even stingy, land-lords. What a far cry from the attitude of employees and Unions in our country today. It is amazing how, even in that time, a man could even attempt to keep a family on \$10.00 a month.

Grandfather was strong physically, energetic, industrious and patient, putting real effort into his long hours of steady and unrelenting work even though he was so terribly underpaid.

When he was about twenty-one he married Sarah Mundy and they continued to live in West Lavington. Six children were born to them. The death rate among babies and infants was very high in those days and three of the six died. Three girls survived. Harriet born October 1838, Sarah, born June 19, 1844, and Elize, born January 30, 1847. The mother of these six died suddenly on February 1850, creating a real responsibility for the family.

About a year later Grandfather married Jane Wilkins and on January 7, 1852, their son, George, was born. Their other son, Isaac, died in infancy. In March 1861 his second wife, Jane Wilkins, died while still in her prime of life.

John Brown, the widower, struggled on. The Mormon missionaries had come to him about six years prior to the death of his second wife bearing the glorious Gospel message, and he and his family had been baptized.

He worked with greater enthusiasm and purposeful effort to add to his immigration fund from his small earnings. He was anxious to go to Zion, the land of hope and promise. Soon after the death of her stepmother, Eliza Brown (mother of Mary Eliza White Campbell and her half-brother Nephi Brown), then fourteen years old, left the drab and tiring routine of stern housework she had been doing for others for her board and a travesty on wages, and went home to keep house in a rented house for her father. The elders from Zion visited them quite often and gave them encouragement and raised their hopes for the future. The spirit of the Gospel gladdened their hearts, and built into their characters and undying determination to fight for the principles of righteousness and eternal life.

¹Nephi James Brown, His Kindred and His Friends, 1963, page 118

The happy day came at last. On June 4, 1863, John Brown and his daughter Eliza and his son George were in the harbor at London aboard the ship "Amazon" ready to sail for their Promised Land in the Rocky Mountains. His daughter Harriet had married that wonderful character, James Ward, and they had sailed from Liverpool for Utah a little more than two years previously. His daughter Sarah, although a member of the Church, had married a Mormon hater, George Still, which fact precluded any possibility of her going to Zion.

To questions by the great Charles Dickens on board the Amazon before it sailed, he answered in such a simple, straight forward, direct and convincingly truthful manner that this great author was deeply impressed. He also questioned my mother (Elize Brown) and her brother George. He interviewed many of the Saints that day and received very satisfactory answers to his inquiring "whys and wherefore" as to the great undertaking of 882 of his own English people leaving the shores of England in one group to go to a little-known region for their religion and to make their homes there. The preconceived prejudice of this renowned man was dissipated and he heartily endorsed the worthiness of such an unusual project. His mind was really and truthfully enlightened concerning the Mormons and he took occasion to write his views concerning them and this great Latter Day Work at considerable length in his book, "The Uncommercial Traveler," giving our people a very favorable, unbiased, and splendid write-up. Charles Dickens very likely received some valuable information from George Q. Cannon, then President of the British Mission (who was on board the Amazon to bid the Saints Good-bye) and also from Elder William Bramwell, Captain of their Company.

The ship slowly moved from the harbor and it was "All Faces West" for this happy company of Saints. The stern realities of the trip soon dawned upon them. The hardships of the six weeks voyage across the Atlantic, the ten days trip from New York to St. Joseph, Mo. (part of the time standing up in cattle cars) and the more than a month's journey across the plains are all described in Eliza Brown's biography.

Grandfather Brown and Mother (Eliza Brown) and her brother George came to Ogden after a three-day stay in Salt Lake City. About six weeks later, November 18, 1863 Eliza Brown was married to John White in North Ogden. Her father and brother also came to North Ogden and were assisted in getting settled there by James Ward, John White and others who had previously immigrated.

John Brown and his son George kept house together for sometime, then he was attracted to a very fine and industrious widow, Boletta Monson Johnson Levi, who with two daughters lived in a log house that had been built by her husband, Frederick Levi. Grandfather helped harvest her field of meadow hay. He cut it with a scythe and also helped with other crops. They were married, and they and the three children lived in the somewhat commodious log house. He acquired adjacent land as well as pasture land some distance away and later built a nice brick house, a wonderful improvement over the log house. The two girls got married. Then in 1877 (Nephi Brown's Uncle) Uncle George married Barbara Beckstead. They lived in the brick home, and Grandfather Brown and his wife, Boletta lived in a part of the house with them until they died. John Brown was a hard working farmer. He learned that in this youth.

He was absolutely honest, his word could always be depended upon. He kept his promises. He had a firm and steadfast testimony of the Gospel and the divinity of the Prophet Joseph Smith's mission. He knew the Book of Mormon was of divine origin.

He had a droll sense of humor. I (Nephi Brown) heard my father say of him that a neighbor strongly advised him not to plant a certain kind of raspberries, telling him they would spread out and run so fast so far away from the row he could not control them. He replied "don't you know I have a plow and know how to use it. I don't think they'll run very far". I remember him carrying a large armful of rhubarb into Aunt Harriet Brown Ward's kitchen and giving it to her to make pies for her large family.

I (Nephi Brown) always heard my mother speak very highly of her father, he was truly a good man and a real pioneer in North Ogden. He came there six years before the railroad came. He radiated a good, wholesome influence wherever he went.

He did not suffer long before he died; passing away March 15, 1891. Funeral services were held in the North Ogden meeting house and he was buried in the North Ogden cemetery. I distinctly remember the funeral. He was a noble man and loved his family, his country, and his Church, and his God. I feel very confident that he is a candidate for Celestial Glory among the blessed of our Father.