

JOHN WHITE¹

(Written by Nephi James Brown)

John White was the son of Isaac and Mary White. He was born June 24, 1835 at Seend, Wiltshire, England. His mother died in 1840 when John was only four years old. He did not have any schooling, but was obliged to go to work when he was very young, probably about seven years old. He went with his sister Jane, who was five years older than he, to Steeple Ashton to work. There they literally earned their meager living by the sweat of their brows.

His father, Isaac White, married Elize Bull who bore him one son named Henry. Both the mother and the boy died and were buried at Steeple Ashton.

John had learned early in life to work long hours at hard work without complaining. From his father and others in Steeple Ashton he learned how to till the soil to get the most out of it. Anything of a scholastic nature he learned only by hearing and by observation; he had no regular teachers.

His father married the third time, this time to Polly Bull, a sister of his second wife. They had one son named James.

It was in 1854 that Elder Levi Jeffries and others came to their community and preached the Gospel. John and his sister Jane as well as his father, his step-mother and several of his friends accepted the Gospel. John was baptized by Elder Jeffries March 16, 1854. They were all very happy. Their lives, hopes, and their outlook for the future were completely changed. Many of them emigrated to Zion; some of the family located in North Ogden, Weber, Utah.

On November 27, 1854, on the "Clara Wheeler," the White family, with a large group of Latter Day Saints set sail for the promised land. Their voyage across the Atlantic in an old time sailing vessel was tedious and patience testing. After six weeks of intermingled short rations and sea sickness they arrived at New Orleans. They then traveled on a boat up the Mississippi River and Missouri River to Florence, Nebraska. Tragedy again struck Isaac White's family. His wife Polly and also their son, James died along the way and were both buried on the banks of the Missouri river, leaving him and his son John and his daughter Jane to continue on the great journey. He had buried three wives and two sons within sixteen years, but with undaunted courage and hope for the future he traveled on.

They started early to cross the plains facing an arduous journey punctuated with indian threats, (they had reason to be afraid of indians because the Cheyennes were on the war path). In September that year Almon W. Babbitt, Secretary of Utah, together with a number of his camp were massacred by indians while on their way to Utah from Washington with a train of government documents. A short time later Thomas Margetts and wife; James Cody, wife and child; who were on their way to England, were killed by the marauding indians. They reached the Salt Lake valley early in the fall

¹Nephi James Brown, His Kindred and His Friends, 1963, page 110-116

before an early winter set in.

John White had contracted cholera at Mormon Grove in Nebraska and was very sick, but through the blessings of the Lord he was healed. During the Fall of 1856 and the Spring of 1857 John White and his father worked for Winslow Farr in Cottonwood Canyon getting out logs to be used for lumber and other building material. They experienced exciting times during 1857 brought about by the threat of invasion by Johnston's Army. In 1858 with Alfred and Robert Barrett he worked at Camp Floyd.

It was in the Spring of 1859 that he and his father, Isaac White, moved to North Ogden and acquired a fine piece of land fronting on what is now Washington Blvd. on the south side of Cold Water creek. They built a two room log house thereon. They, of necessity, framed that land with pioneer implements; plowing the land. The first time it had ever been plowed, with a simple hand plow drawn by oxen. It was a slow process of clearing and plowing. Later on, they replaced the oxen with some good horses. They knew some of the people in North Ogden who had also immigrated from England.

It required much patience and physical stamina to work the new land. John White was a very sturdy man of fine physique and great strength, weighing a little more than 200 pounds, tall and straight. His muscles and sinews were made strong by simple substantial food and by hard work in the smokeless open air.

He appreciated the freedom and the possibilities of ownership of property in this new land compared with the conditions he had left in England. He had the strength and ability to do a lot of work and had the urge and desire to obtain more land.

He willingly gave his time as a teamster in making a trip or two back to the Missouri river to help bring immigrants to Zion. It was on the trip he made in the Summer of 1863 that he met Elize Brown about August 1, at Florence, Nebraska. He fell in love with her and she with him. He treated her wonderfully fine while crossing the great plains, letting her ride quite a lot of the time in his wagon. It was an ox-team train of covered wagons. Saints in the company numbered 882 and everyone of them arrived safely in Salt Lake City on October 4, 1863, showing the fine leadership of Captain Thomas Ricks.

John White arrived back at his home in North Ogden, October 6th and the next day October 7th Elize Brown reached the home of her sister Harriet Ward in Five Points and stayed with her. The courtship that began on the plains two months previously continued. John White had to travel a little over three miles to see Elize Brown, which was quite a trip in those days. After about six weeks, he and Elize Brown were married November 18, 1863. The ceremony was performed by Elder Charles H. Rhees of Pleasant View. Elize Brown was sixteen and John White was twenty seven years old. They lived in North Ogden in a two room log house on the farm that he and his father had acquired about four years previously.

The events after their marriage are told in the history of Mary Elize Brown White Brown. John White was a kindly man and he treated his wife and their daughters with great consideration and did

all he could for them under the rigid pioneer circumstances by which he and other settlers in North Ogden were confronted. He raised grain, corn, potatoes, and other vegetables. He had a few cows, some hogs and chickens. He had a good pasture of native grasses and at first he cut wild meadow hay with a scythe for winter feed. He had some good horses which were of great help to him in his farm operations. This man was a good cheese- maker and to keep the cheeses from spoiling he would put them in the hay stack when the stack was up to the square just before starting to top it out. Of course this would mark the place where they were. This procedure would keep the cheese fresh for many months.

He had an enormous capacity for work and he used it to good advantage. He made the best of the primitive tools he had to work with, but was ever looking for better ones. He had a natural aptitude and ability for acquiring property and handling business transactions. He used his strength and wisdom in clearing land, hauling timber, building roads, constructing ditches and bridges. He helped with the construction and maintenance of the North Ogden canal. This was brought north west from the mouth of Ogden Canyon through a part of Ogden, all of North Ogden and Pleasant View to the Hot Springs. This canal has been in use now (1957) for about a hundred years; watering many hundreds of acres of land. He was one of the first directors of the Canal Company.

In the spring of 1866 he with Alfred Berrett went to Omaha, Nebraska, with teams of horses and brought into North Ogden its first threshing machine, first mowing machine, molasses mill, and several other farming implements. Including a grain cradling machine which could be attached to the cutter bar of the mowing machine. The machine would leave the grain in neat piles ready to be tied in bundles. This was before they had the grain reaper. He brought Elize White Brown a striking clock. I (Nephi Brown) remember it on the kitchen shelf as long as I was at home. She always kept the clock from five to seven minutes fast. She thought that would help us to be on time. He also brought her some cloth for dresses, some dishes and utensils.

Some of the settlers and neighbors in North Ogden with whom John White was well acquainted were as follows: Henry Barker, James Barker, Alfred Randall, Elihu Warren, James Ward, John Woodfield, William Woodfield, William Hill, Alfred Berrett, Marlin Berrett, Richard Berrett, Robert Berrett, Johnathan Campbell, Solomon Campbell, Hyrum Roylance, James Roylance, William Bailey, and Robert, John, James, Nathaniel, William, Joseph, and Alma Montgomery, Abraham Chadwick, Franklin Clifford, George Linford, David E. Garner, Gideon Alvord, Sidney Stevens, Isaac Marler, John W. Gibson, James Lewis Rice, and Thomas Dunn, Benjamin Cazier, Henry Chard, James Deamer, Thomas Norris, Francis Dudman, Fred W. Ellis, David Francis, Henry Holmes, Josiah Godfrey, Daniel Hathway, Richard Jones, James Shupe, Joseph Orton, Hyrum Orton, Elijah Shaw, Daniel Staley, John Spackman and Lafayette Williams.

These fifty two men, their families and others were pioneers in North Ogden; living there during the time that John White as living and before the coming of the railroad in 1869.

John White as exceedingly busy during week days but he took his family to Church on Sundays and observed the Sabbath day. He had a firm testimony of the Gospel and did his best to do his duty. John did not swear, drink liquor or use tobacco. He very strongly believed in the hereafter, the resurrection and the perpetuation of the family unit beyond the grave.

On December 1, 1868, he took Elize Brown and his three daughters to the Endowment House in Salt Lake City and on that day was married to Elize Brown for time and all eternity by Brother Daniel H. Wells and they then had their daughters, Mary, Annie, and Sarah Jane sealed to them for eternity.

He upheld the authorities of the Church and was sincerely thankful for the good prospects as well as the splendid situation that were his in Zion. He was an enterprising, helpful good neighbor. He was a man of excellent vision of future needs of the people. He had rare judgement and his advice concerning community problems was sought after.

During the first part of February 1869 he was on a logging expedition in the Canyon when he was suddenly taken very ill with appendicitis. He was rushed home and everything they knew how to do was done to save his life but apparently his appendix had broken and without any known or available surgical help he died February 11, 1869.

This was a tragic blow for his wife, a bereavement from which she never fully recovered while she lived.

John White as a noble, strong, dynamic character, respected and loved by all who knew him. He was buried in the North Ogden Cemetery where his earthly remains have been now (1957) for almost ninety years. He had every assurance for a good reward and for happiness and progress in the hereafter. He no doubt took a very definite and prominent part in preparing a welcome for his wife when she died sixty years later, knowing he would never again be separated worlds without end.

I (Nephi Brown) also firmly believe that my father (Elize's second husband) gave mother (Eliza Brown) a very gracious and most kindly welcome into the family circle in the Great Beyond.

It is my firm and steadfast belief that my father will be the same kind and loving father to me and all of his children in the next world that he was here in this life. I feel that in the grand scheme of things and in accordance with the eternal justice of our Heavenly Father it must and will be so.

John White died when he was not quite thirty three years old, but he left an indelible imprint on the pioneer life of North Ogden. Henry Barker and others said that if he had lived he would have been a very well-to-do man financially. But apparently the Lord had other plans and other work for him. Undoubtedly he has been during a great work in the service of the Father among kindred spirits in Paradise while awaiting his glorious resurrection.