

Life History of Joseph Hyrum Armstrong

Joseph Hyrum Armstrong, son of John Christopher Armstrong and Mary Kirkbride, was born in St. Louis, Missouri, October 14, 1846. He was baptized at Salt Lake City, October 5, 1854 by Andrew Cunningham and confirmed the same day.

His father was born in Carlisle, Cumberland County, England, in 1813. His mother, Mary Kirkbride, was born in Low Crosby, four miles out of Carlisle, England in the year 1815 (June 20). They were baptized into the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Manchester, England, in the year 1844. Immigrated to U.S.A. in 1845, settling in St. Louis, Missouri. His parents came west for the gospel's sake. He was then just a babe in arms.

They sailed up the Mississippi River to join the exodus coming to the Salt Lake Valley in the spring of 1847. His mother carried him through the then Deseret Temple. Came across the plains in the A.D. Smoot Company. George B. Wallace's fifty and Samuel B. Thurnbos' ten. In crossing the state of Iowa in the rainy season they never laid down in a dry bed for days and what with wallowing in muck and water, getting stuck, doubling teams, breaking chains, they made such a short distance in a day and matches being so scarce, a man would ride back to the morning camp and bring coals to start their fires. All the water they had to use or drink was dipped from the wagon tracks. His mother not seeing an ox team until she came to America was so frightened that she would not ride in the wagon so waded day by day carrying him in her arms. His father was a tailor by trade and it took him some time to get used to the ox team and to know how to handle them. But when he did, his mother was willing to ride. So with all the incidents in the ups and downs of crossing the plains they arrived in the Salt Lake Valley on September 23, 1847. His mother knelt down and kissing the dirt floor of Grandpa Apex Woodruff's cabin and thanking God that they could worship him as they pleased and in peace.

They (John Christopher and Mary Armstrong) moved onto a block just north of Pioneer Square. John Christopher Armstrong was a member of the Ballaus Brass Band and he was trumpeter of P.D. Pratt's Company in the exploration of Southern Utah in the winters of 1849 and 1850. His diary reads, "On the 13 of January we camped at the mouth of Hieroglyphics Canyon at the west end of Little Salt Lake." This lake is northwest of Parowan, Utah, thus his father was in Parowan Valley just one year before Parowan was settled. In 1852 he returned to England on a mission and died in the mission field, leaving his wife a widow with three children to provide for, severally passing through the hardships of the early settlement of Utah.

His mother, Mary Kirkbride, was very apt with her needle, and in this way earned a living for herself and her children, and with all her hard earnings would share her last pound of flour with those in need.

He (Joseph Hyrum Armstrong) was too young to remember the first doings of Salt Lake, other than going hungry and being poorly clad. He often dug sego lillies on Capitol Hill for his breakfast and roots and fig weed for lunch and dinner.

They were one thousand miles from any shoe store and one winter he went barefoot except for the moccasins his mother made cut out of a cloak of his father's. The first shoes he had were made by his mother out of some old shoe tops tacked to wooden soles called clogs. Later when in his teens he wanted to go to a dance and had no shoes except some with holes in the toes. So he went to the chimney and got soot and blacked his toes and shoes so they wouldn't show so plainly and went to the dance and enjoyed himself, forgetting all about his shoes.

In 1858 he saw the laying of the cornerstone of the Salt Lake Temple and was there at the laying of the capstone and the dedication of the temple and he officiated for the dead in that Holy House.

His first school teacher was Miss Margret Judd, mother of President Rudger Clawson. He went to school in the little adobe school house on 2^d South between 3^d and 4th West in the old 15th Ward. They had just one book between seven of them and that was the old blue backed spelling book. Later he went to Sister Sarah M. Kimball's school on 1st South and 2^d West. Some of his schoolmates were Toney and Caddie Ivins, Anna Rose, Caddie Grant, Tressa Burton, Mary Moody and Worthen boys and others.

He gleaned many a peck of wheat in the Old Fort, after it was turned into a wheat field and circled the Old Cedar Tree many times as a boy. He danced in the same set with President Young in the old social all. He remembered well the building of the Old Theatre of Salt Lake and some of the plays given there, such as, "The Bride of the Market," "Under the Gaslights" and "Coming of Julia Hanes."

In the winter of 1856 he and his life-long chum, James W. Urie, joined the Sunday School when it first started in the 15th Ward, by Joseph T. Johnson and Richard Balyntine and from that time on until his death he was a pupil, teacher or an officer in the Sunday School. His first Sunday School teachers were Robert T. Burton, Nelson A. Empey and John Clark.

He remained in Salt Lake City until the spring of 1863 when he came to Cedar City with Brother John Middleton and wife to live with James Simkins whose first wife was his mother's sister. He came to Cedar City by ox team and Brother Middleton's 'nigh' ox, Darby by name, was weak in the faith or legs. Every day sometime during the day Old Darby would stop and every kind of persuasion, severe or otherwise, would not make him move so they would have to make camp for the day. It took three full weeks to make the trip. He lived in southern Utah all the rest of his life. He moved to Adamsville, Beaver County, Utah, in 1865 with Brother Simkins taking up a small farm.

In early days was ever active in guarding the lives and property of the settlers against the Indian raids.

He married Mary Ann Smith, daughter of Joseph H. and Maria Stanford Smith in the Old Endowment house in Salt Lake City, Utah, October 9, 1866 by Willford Woodruff. They lived at Adamsville, Beaver County, Utah, until 1866 when they returned to Cedar City, Utah, during which time he served (at Cedar) two terms of City Councilman with Robert Heyborn as mayor.

He was every active in Church affairs having been ordained a seventy in the 63^d Quorum December 2, 1868 by J.C. Arthur and was called on a mission to Great Britain October 1883 but had to return through ill health in 1884. He was called to be superintendent of the Parowan Stake Sunday School September 1885 and was set apart by Brother Thomas Jefferson Jones. He held this position twenty years. He was released January 21, 1911. He was appointed 2^d assistant to Stake President Charles Heyborn of Y.M.I.A. in 1894. He was called to the Eastern States mission January 1890 and was released after 16 months of labor through ill health. In June 1891, he was set apart as one of the seven presidents of the 63^d Quorum of Seventies by B.H. Roberts.

In 1896 he was called by Bishop William H. Corry to labor as an ordinance worker in the St. George Temple, and was released in November 1898. January 21, 1911 he was ordained a High Priest by Charley Adams, was an active ward teacher for sixty years.

He farmed for a living at Enoch, Utah, from 1876 to 1898. He also ran the pony express mail from Johnson's Fort to Paragonah, Utah with his oldest son Joseph doing most of the riding. After being released as ordinance worker in the St. George Temple, he moved to Cedar City living there until his death about 35 South 300 East.

He was the father of seven children, four boys and three girls, has now 40 grandchildren and 64 great grandchildren.

He died November 11, 1927, at the age of 81 and was buried at the Cedar City Cemetery November 13, 1927.