

Thomas Levi Whittle and Mary Amelia Fullmer

Thomas Levi Whittle, son of Thomas Whittle and Elizabeth Levi, was born 21 May 1812 at Mersea, Essex, Ontario, Canada. Very little is known of his early youth, except for his cheerful disposition, high character, and scholastic ability - even though his education was very limited.

He was 21 years old when he married Mary Amelia Fullmer (also known as "Polly"). At that time she was only sixteen years of age and was living in the same general area as the Whittle family. Mary was deprived of all scholastic advantages and grew to adulthood without learning to read or write anything other than her name. Possibly it was hardship and overwork in her youth that influenced her to marry at such an early age. Both of these people were of the same temperament and disposition and therefore found it easy to live their lives together. Three children were born to them in their native land, Olive, John Casper, and Mary. They then migrated to the United States, settling in Detroit, Michigan

Thomas and Mary were both religiously inclined, and therefore readily listened to the message presented by the missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Thomas and Mary found the teachings quite to their liking, and accepted the new religious faith known as "Mormonism," much to the dislike and disappointment of their parents. They were baptized on 22 November 1837 by Zera Pulsipher (and later re-baptized 3 June 1849 by William Clayton in Salt Lake City, Utah.)

They witnessed many events which strengthened the testimony they had obtained. One incident occurred shortly after their conversion--returning from Church one day, they saw a light resting on a bridge that lay directly in their path. Upon arrival at the place where the light shone forth, it moved forward and continued as though lighting their way until it reached their home, and then disappeared. "Mary," said her husband, "this will ever be a light to our feet and a guide to us through life."

They undoubtedly felt the spirit of gathering which was so much in evidence at that time, for at an early date they moved to Quincy, Illinois where their son, George was born. They later moved to Nauvoo, the birthplace of Zera and Emaline. Here they heard the gospel from the lips of the Prophet himself. They treasured a photo of Joseph and his wife Emma, a gift to them from the Smith family. This photo was one of the belongings the family later carried to Utah.

The family witnessed and experienced many of the hardships the Saints endured at this time. They knew the pain and anguish arising from the loss of their Prophet, and probably saw the bodies of their beloved leaders as they lay in state prior to their secret burial.

Mary Whittle was present on the occasion when the Saints had met to hear the speech of Sidney Rigdon, then purporting to be their rightful leader. She saw Brigham Young when he arose to speak and witnessed the mantle of Joseph resting upon his form and features. This occurrence left no doubt in her mind as to the rightful leadership of Brigham Young. As the Saints prepared to leave Nauvoo, Thomas and Mary were able to receive their endowments on 1 Jan 1846. This was a great blessing to them. Before leaving Nauvoo, they parched a quantity of corn, which they had expected to take along as food, but which, for some reason was left behind. This later served as a bed for Thomas when he was forced to return for a cow that had broken loose and gone back home. At that particular time he hid in the attic of his abandoned home until time when he could escape without being seen.

Their next abode was at Winter Quarters, a temporary city built on the west bank of the Missouri River. (This was later known as Florence and was annexed to the present city of Omaha, Nebraska.) One has only to read the history of those days to know the bitter experiences of want, sickness, and often death, that occurred there. Fortunately the Whittles came through without losing any member of their family.

A few faith-promoting incidents in the life of Thomas Whittle have been handed down to members of his posterity, as a testimony of God's protection and mercy which He extends to his faithful children. While in Winter Quarters, a young man, Thomas Ricks, was shot and wounded by Indians while he was herding cattle. Search parties were sent out to bring him back to camp. His father and Thomas Whittle were some distance away from the

main group. Suddenly they found themselves surrounded by Indians and a gun pointed in their faces. "Well," said Brother Ricks, "I suppose our time has come." "Not yet," said Brother Whittle, "We are in the hands of the Lord." He repeated this twice, looking straight into the eyes of the Indian. Finally the Indian dropped his gun. This seemed to frighten the others and they turned and rode away, leaving the men frightened but unharmed.

Another time, they were without water while traveling. The horses' tongues were hanging from their mouths, and the people were suffering from thirst. The day was very warm and the sky clear with no signs of any relief. After supplicating the Lord, a cloud appeared and soon rain fell in such quantities as to fill their buckets and barrels with the much-needed water.

The Whittle family made the trek across the plains as members of the 2nd Company, 2nd Division with Zera Pulsipher as "Captain of 100" under Heber C. Kimball as Commander. They left the Elkhorn River crossing on 1 June 1848, and arrived in the Great Salt Lake Valley 20 Sept 1848. The Whittles took up residence in the northwest central portion of the valley. They must have had ample housing, as Mary later told of renting a part of the dwelling to a widow and her family while Thomas was on his mission.

In the fall of 1849, Thomas went to California, having been called on a financial mission for the Church. He presumably settled in the area near Sutter's Fort (now Sacramento, Calif.) There were other brethren in the group, and the decision was made to take the "Old Spanish Trail" which went southwesterly by way of Cajon Pass in the San Gabriel Mountains. They were persuaded along the way to take a short cut that put them in most precarious circumstances. They finally made their way back to the trail and continued on. After they descended Cajon Pass, Mr. Williams of the Williams Ranch sent out a wagon-load of provisions and supplies to sell to incoming travelers, a welcome sight to travelers who by this time were near starvation.

Through the influence of Charles C. Rich and Captain Jefferson Hunt, arrangements were made for the purchase of ox teams, supplies, and new outfits on credit. They rested at the Williams Ranch for about a month, during which time most of the travelers secured employment, and then proceeded up the coast to their destination. Gold had been discovered in the Sutter's Fort area and it is very likely this was a contributing factor in calling these young men on a financial mission as currency was badly needed by the

Church at this time. About the same time, several men were employed by Capt. John Sutter to lay out a plan for the City of Sacramento, as well as to build a grist mill.

On 25 September 1850, a number of the men met with President Rich. He appointed Thomas Levi Whittle and seven other men to go on a mission to the Sandwich (Hawaiian) Islands. Elder Hiram Clark was appointed to preside over the mission. The Elders took passage on the SS West Point and the SS Senator and arrived in San Francisco during October of 1850. Then on 8 November passage was booked on the "Imaum of Muscat" for \$40 in gold, less 5% if the brethren would furnish their own bedding. The eating and living accommodations were considered very poor, and the trip to the islands took 20 days. Their arrival at Honolulu was heralded by natives attempting to sell fruits and other foodstuffs.

Elders Whittle and Clark were assigned to the island of Oahu. An unsuccessful effort was made to open the mission at Honolulu, with difficulty learning the Hawaiian language contributing to their failure. They had been led to believe that there were more English speaking people on the island, but these proved to be sailors and others in transit.

On 7 January 1851, Thomas Whittle, with permission from the Mission President, sought employment. Being very discouraged, he intended to return to America. In March, 1851 five of the original missionaries left Honolulu. After 43 days upon the water, with much seasickness, they finally arrived in America, and soon returned to their respective homes, presumed by the same route used in traveling to California.

Shortly after returning home, Thomas moved his family to Fort Herriman, about 15 miles southwest of Salt Lake City. During this time, while getting logs from a nearby canyon, his wagon tipped over and he was thrown under a load of logs. Before fading into unconsciousness, he saw two men coming toward him, and when he regained consciousness he was standing by his wagon which had been lifted into place. He was badly injured, and with extreme difficulty he succeeded in mounting one of his horses. He gave the horse free reign, and it took him to the farm of Thomas Butterfield, the owner of the horses. Thomas Butterfield's daughter, Mary Jane, nursed him back to health.

At this time plural marriages were permitted certain eligible persons under the polygamy laws of the Church, making it possible for a righteous generation of people to be raised up to carry on the work of the Lord. Certain qualifications had to be met to participate in plural marriage, and Thomas was selected to have a second wife. He took Mary Jane Butterfield as his second wife on 7 August 1853 at the Council House, which temporarily substituted for ordinance work until the Endowment House or Temple could be completed. Shortly after this marriage, the families moved to Grantsville, Tooele County, Utah, where other children were born. Here they lived in a cabin erected as a temporary shelter until permanent quarters could be established.

Due to the advance of Johnston's army in the spring of 1858, most of the Saints left Grantsville, going south to Spring Creek, then returning to Grantsville by 4 July 1858. The Whittle families were among those to leave.

In the spring of 1860 Thomas, with his families, moved to Cache Valley in northern Utah, settling at Richmond, where he remained the rest of his life. He left for brief amounts of time to seek employment, which most of the Saints were forced to do. President Young had issued a call for the settlement of this valley and many Saints responded. While in Richmond they lived for a time in "The Old Fort" erected for protection against Indians. They later acquired a three-room adobe house opposite the Park Schoolhouse.

Thomas was a very energetic church and civic worker. Because of his agreeable and pleasing personality, he easily made friends with both young and old. He was also known as a peacemaker and was often called to assist in settling disputes. He was a member of the 24th Quorum of Seventy, having been ordained 8 October 1844 by Levi W. Hancock. His Patriarchal Blessing was given on 19 April 1845 by Patriarch John Smith at Nauvoo, Illinois. He served as First Counselor to Bishop Merriner W. Merrill of the Richmond Ward between 30 June 1861 (when the ward was organized) until his death a few years later.

In addition to numerous faith-promoting incidents, Thomas and his wife Mary cherished the memory of having heard the gospel of Jesus Christ preached direct from the lips of the Prophet Joseph Smith, leader and first president of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In the fall of

1867, Thomas was told by Heber C. Kimball that he had better get his temple ordinances completed, as that would be his last chance.

While assisting his son, Zera, in building a one-room log house, he was struck by a falling log which he had been lifting and injured to the extent that he lived only about a week. He never regained complete consciousness. He died 3 July 1868 at the age of 56 years, in Richmond, Cache County, Utah. At the time of death he was the father of thirteen children, of whom nine were by his first wife (Mary Fullmer) and four by his second wife (Mary Jane Butterfield).

On 4 July 1868 the Territorial Flag of Utah was flown at half-staff as a tribute to the honor and esteem felt by his fellow associates and neighbors. Funeral services and burial were held at Richmond on 5 July 1868 and he was laid to rest in the family plot in the Richmond Cemetery.

His first wife Mary, was a very energetic and helpful companion. She lived to the age of 76 years. After her children were married, she moved to Lewiston and lived in the home of her daughter, Aroetta Pond, the remaining years of her life. She died there of pneumonia 6 January 1893, and was buried by the side of her husband. His second wife, Mary Jane, is buried in the family plot of her second husband, Benjamin Landon Doty. The posterity of Thomas Whittle is numbered among the founding families of many communities in Utah and Idaho.