

## DANIEL DAVIS AND HIS FAMILY \*

Daniel Davis or Davies and his wife Sarah Thomas were in the first company of Welsh Saints to leave for Zion in 1849. Though small in stature, Daniel Davis was a man of indomitable will and unswerving faith. He had been the first member of his family to listen to the missionaries and the first one to be baptized. Then when a company of Welsh Saints was being organized to "gather" to Zion, he sold his good farm at a great sacrifice and prepared to emigrate with Dan Jones as captain of his company. He defrayed the expenses of emigrating not only his family of eleven but seven others as well.

Daniel Davis, or Davies as he was known in Wales, was born at Llystyn, Llanfihangel Rhos-y-Corn, Carmarthenshire, and baptized 16 September 1793. His parents were John Lewis (1747-1829) and Margaret (1754-1828). He married Sarah Thomas of Cwrt Farm, Llanegwad, Carmarthenshire, 7 May 1819. Her parents were Stephen Thomas and Lettice David, and she was born in May 1797.

In 1849 Daniel Davis and Sarah Thomas had seven living children. A son Stephen (baptized 6 Nov. 1833) had died in infancy, and their daughter Margaret (born about 1820), the wife of Daniel William Thomas, had died in 1844, leaving two children, David Davis Thomas (born 7 June 1840) and Hannah Thomas (born 20 May 1843). They came to Utah in 1852.

As they made their plans to go to Zion, their son John Ira Davis, even though he was a member of the Church, decided to remain in Wales with his wife Jane, Later his son Daniel Davis (born 10 Oct. 1854) came to Utah and lived first in Perry then in Ogden.

Lettice, the second daughter of Daniel Davis, with her husband Benjamin Thomas and two small children, Daniel age two and Anne four months, planned to go to Utah with the rest of the family. The four younger girls 'n the family, Ann (born about 1827), Sarah (born 1 January 1829), Mary (born 22 December 1834), and Diana (born 11 April 1836) were all eager to go, since their friends and relatives had made life unendurable for them since their conversion to Mormonism.

Diana, the youngest, had been the first of Daniel Davis' family to ask for baptism. While he had been explaining the principles of the gospel to his wife Sarah, Diana had listened and been converted. He had been overjoyed to think that his baby girl was the first of the family to receive the gospel.

Daniel Davis had only one son to go to Zion with him, his son Daniel, a boy of eighteen, The boy was handicapped because his leg had been amputated in order to save his life when he had blood poisoning at the age of sixteen. (In later years a relative showed his son William Thomas Davis, a missionary, where the leg had been buried in the Breckfa Churchyard).

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\* The youngest daughter, Diana Davis, married William Nicol Fife.

In the area around Breckfa, Llanegwad, and Llanfihangel Rhos-y-Corn many farms were being sold as the first Welsh company prepared to go to Zion. Within a few years half the population of the area went to Utah, In this first company there were 122 converts. They left Wales in February 1849. After a tiresome journey of seven weeks, they arrived at New Orleans and transferred to steamboats to go up the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers to Winter Quarters.

The dreaded disease cholera struck the company as they steamed up the rivers. A severe trial awaited the Davis family, for when they reached the Missouri river their indomitable leader and father was stricken by the disease and died in a few hours. The steamboat pulled up to the bank of the river and Daniel Davis was buried in an unmarked grave 29 April 1849.

Sarah Thomas, her crippled son, and her daughters went on with the company and began their journey across the plains with ox teams, This Welsh group was part of the George A. Smith company. Losing her husband was a great trial to Sarah Thomas., She was in a strange land with a large family to manage, and she could not speak a word of English. David Lewis, a relative and an old bachelor who had come with the Davis family, stayed loyally by her on the journey and remained with the family all his life. At last after having traveled continuously for nearly 7,000 miles, Salt Lake City was finally reached in October 1849.

There were no vacant houses, so they lived in a dugout the first winter. This was quite a change from a well-furnished ten room house and a large farm, but they were willing to forsake all for the Gospel.

In 1854 Sarah Thomas and her family moved to the Welsh fields south of Brigham City. They were greatly blessed and secured good land and a home there. The beautiful, brown-eyed, black-haired daughters grew to maturity and married in Utah. Sarah Davis married Benjamin Phillips and later moved to Montana and then to Oakland, California. On 20 May 1852 Mary Davis married Thomas Daniels, the son of Daniel Daniels, one of the leaders of the Welsh company. They first lived in Brigham City, but in 1865 they moved to Malad, Idaho, where they were among the first settlers of that community. Diana Davis, the youngest daughter, married William Nicol Fife 9 July 1854 and made her home first in Salt Lake City and then in Ogden. Daniel Davis, the son, did not marry until 21 June 1875 when he married a Welsh girl, Mary Ann Davis.

Sarah Thomas lived with her son Daniel Davis in the Welsh settlement south of Brigham City. She was a good, kind, charitable Latter-day Saint and highly esteemed in the community. On 17 January 1864, she was walking home from Brigham City with some school boys, the Thomas brothers, when she had a heart attack and fell to the roadway dead. She never moved or unfolded her arms. She was buried in the Brigham City cemetery.

Through the years the family of Daniel Davis and Sarah Thomas has multiplied and scattered throughout the United States. The conversion of one Welshman to Mormonism may have seemed unimportant at the time, but it has had a profound influence upon his descendants.