



BIOGRAPHY OF DIANA DAVIS FIFE

Written by her daughter Sarah Jane Fife White

The paternal grandparents of Diana Davis Fife were John Lewis, born 1747 and Margaret Lewis, born 1754 at Carmarthenshire, South Wales. Her maternal grandparents were Stephen Thomas, born 1755 and Lettie Thomas (Lettice David), born 1760 at Llanegwad, Carmarthenshire, South Wales.

Daniel Davis (Davies), her father was born Sept. 16th, 1793, and her mother Sarah Thomas was born May 1797 both at Carmarthenshire, South Wales.

This happy and prosperous couple became the proud parents of nine children, six daughters and three sons. Diana, the youngest was born in the beautiful home of her ancestors April 11th, 1836. When she was about nine years of age, her father Daniel Davis joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Diana, who slept in her parents' room, over-heard her father explaining the Gospel to her mother night after night. This so impressed her that she was converted and desired baptism at the hands of her father. He was overjoyed to think that his baby girl was the first in the family to receive the Gospel. Soon after all the immediate family joined the Church.

Diana being a very attractive and vivacious child, with black hair, brown eyes and cheeks like roses was a great favorite with her childhood companions. Little did she realize what a great change would come into her life when she joined the unpopular sect called "Mormons." Her dearest playmates and relatives became her worst enemies. Their taunts and sneers became so unbearable that she was obliged to discontinue school at the age of eleven years. Shortly after this, preparations were made to emigrate to Utah. As the family was very prosperous it was quite a sacrifice to leave their home and go to the unknown West.

Daniel Davis, though small of stature, was a man of indomitable will and unswerving faith, and a determination to gather to Zion. He disposed of his worldly possessions at a great sacrifice, in order to defray the expenses of emigrating not only his family of eleven but seven others.

Early in the spring of 1849 they left Wales in the first company of Latter-day Saints to emigrate from that country, with Dan Jones as Captain. After a tiresome voyage of seven weeks on a sailing vessel, they arrived at New Orleans and sailed up the

Mississippi and Missouri Rivers to a point where Omaha now stands. Here a trial awaited them for their beloved husband and father contracted the dreaded disease cholera and died, and was buried on the river's bank.

With the assistance of her son Daniel, the bereft widow and her family began their journey across the plains with ox teams and a goodly supply of provisions. They arrived in Salt Lake City September of the same year. (1849). The only shelter procurable that winter was a small dugout. What a contrast it was to the beautiful well furnished home in Wales.

All the family but Diana moved to Brigham City the following spring. She remained with Peter Nebeker's family where she met William N. Fife, a bright, handsome, energetic young convert from Scotland. Their love was mutual and they were married by Heber C. Kinball at his home, July 9th, 1854.

As the young husband was an expert architect and builder, he erected for them a cosy adobe house in the 16th Ward, Salt Lake City. Here they lived happily for two years and here their oldest child, Sarah Jane, was born July 10, 1855.

In 1856 Diana's husband was called by President Brigham Young to move to Ogden and superintend the construction of a tabernacle. Another home was soon built on Grant Avenue between 21st and 22nd street, where their oldest son William Wilson (later a prominent architect of Ogden) and their second daughter Diana were born.

In 1858, when Johnston's Army invaded Utah, the Fife family moved south with the rest of the Saints; while there, their temporary home was burned by a spark, the baby almost losing his life. After a few months' absence they returned to their home and resumed their labors.

Ogden City was their home until 1881, during which time eight other children were born to them, all dying in infancy except John D. Walter T., and Agnes A.

Father Fife who was one of a fearless disposition decided to take his families and go into the wilds of Arizona to help colonize that country. It was a great trial to his wife, whose health was impaired . to leave home and friends and married children, and accompany her husband.

In the fall of 1881 they settled in Sulpher Springs Valley, Tombstone, Arizona, on a large ranch thirty-five miles from the nearest town or railroad, Here a comfortable six room house was built of large adobes. The thick walls had port-holes to be used in self defense against the fierce Apache Indians who were very troublesome at that time. Although she was very nervous and lonely, her health improved in this climate and as usual her home was very neat, pleasant, and cheerful, a place of peace and rest.

After one year of comparative peace in this wild country, the first tragic event happened in their family. John D. Fife, her seventeen year old son, with two companions

while hauling lumber for mines nearby with their double mule teams were attacked by a band of forty blood-thirsty Apache Indians. Forming a corral with their wagons, the boys protected themselves as best they could. Two of the boys became so frightened, that they ran out of the corral and were immediately killed and scalped. John D. was now left alone, his ammunition gone he ran into the brush nearby, and he received two wounds, one being in his leg and the other one in the arm. The Indians decided to burn him out and set fire to the grass, surrounding him with dense smoke. A voice seemed to say, "Now is your time John, run," This he did, knowing that soldiers were at Fort Bowie about five miles away. After running a mile and crossing a river he was again discovered by the Indians; being about exhausted from loss of blood he could go no farther and dropped.

A crowd of miners nearby, hearing the shooting came to see what the trouble was and saw him fall. Their appearance frightened the Indians away and John was carried to the nearest ranch where he was revived. Through the blessings of God the kind and good nursing of his mother he was restored to his health.

After several other scares nothing of importance happened until the morning of September 12th, 1884, when a Mexican called at her home and asked to buy a meal. All of the men and boys had gone to the meadows about five miles away to cut hay, leaving Mother and her youngest daughter Agnes, aged fourteen years, at home with the young Indian boy.

Mother was quite disturbed by the appearance and actions of the Mexican who did not leave, but stayed around all day. In the afternoon while Mother was ironing he sat by the door and watched her; finally he said looking out of the window, "Who is that coming?" She, being anxious to see someone, turned and as she did so he shot her through the heart. Agnes hearing the shot ran in and seeing what had happened ran after the Indian boy who also came, upon hearing the shots. The Mexican aimed at Agnes but the shots would not explode. When the Indian finally overpowered the Mexican and secured the pistol, the murderer fled to the mountains. In the meantime, Agnes carried her Mother into another room and locked the door. Her mother not being instantly killed called for water. The Indian boy went for help, but before they returned Mother had passed away. Next morning the murderer was located and hanged to a large oak tree.

Two days later, her body was laid to rest under a large oak tree in a casket made by her husband and sons. Here it remained until April of 1922, when her children had her remains interred in Ogden City cemetery by the side of husband and five children. Now we can at least lay a few flowers on our dear Mother's grave.

I am reminded of her charity in 1854-55 in Salt Lake City when there was a scarcity of flour in the land. She had just enough to carry them through until the next harvest by being careful, but she gave pan after pan to the needy who came to her door, and many loaves of bread were also given to sick people, for she could not turn them away as long as she had some. Despite all this, her flour lasted until the next harvest, which proves that God helps those who help others less fortunate.

She had a noble character, was self-sacrificing and was loved by all who knew her. She was a devoted Latter-day Saint, wife and mother and we are sure she had earned a great reward in heaven.

Camp D.
Sarah Jane Fife White



Diana Davis Fife