

JOHN GRIFFITHS HISTORY

(Father of Margaret Ann Griffiths Clegg)

By Edith Afton Gines Hartman (descendant of Henry Clegg and Margaret Ann Griffiths Clegg) edited from sources generally available through Henry Clegg descendants and from personal stories told to her by her mother, Priscilla Clegg Gines (daughter of Herbert Lorenzo Clegg, 2nd son of Henry and Margaret Ann Clegg). Written July 2006.

John Griffiths was born 7 July 1810, at Camavanshire, Banjor, North Wales, England. On 17 November 1833, he married Margaret Ann Griffiths at the St. Ann Church, Liverpool, England. She was born 25 August 1810, at Carvanshire, Banjor, North Wales, England. She had the same maiden name as his, "Griffiths". Wm. D. Bludell performed the marriage ceremony. The witnesses to the marriage were Francis Griffiths and Thomas Holden.

Their son Thomas, who came to Utah three years before his parents to prepare a home for them, was 20 years old. He obtained work as a cattle herder for the church, going to Carson City, Nevada. They only heard from him once. It is not known what became of him.

Their son, William, was born 25 May 1836, at Liverpool, England, and died in infancy in August 1836. .

Their son, John, (named after his father) was born 17 February 1838, at Liverpool, England and died 8 December 1839.

John (father) met the first four missionaries to arrive in England. He and Margaret were baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in the river Mercy in Liverpool, England on January 20, 1840. They were baptized by John Taylor while serving his first mission to England.

John went to London to what was called the Latter Day Saints Depot. There were only four Mormon Elders there at that time. They laid their hands on him and ordained him an Elder and sent him preaching. He would work all day from six in the morning until six at night. Then he would eat his supper and go preaching. Some times it would be eleven and twelve o'clock before he would get home. There were no conveniences and no railroad in Woolwick at that time, so he had to walk. He raised up many branches of the church in England, including Woolwick, Welling, Elton, Greenwich, Aeptcord and many others.

The first men to join the church in Woolwick were Arron Paintor, Mr. Bates, Thomas Fisher and William Blacksnore. John was a boiler maker by trade and so was Mr. Bates. One day while Mr. Bates was at work a large piece fell on him and they took him to the hospital. While they were taking him there his last words were calling John's name. He died a short time later. The people all thought it was John who was dead. John and his wife were with the mourners and they could hear the people say, "Now Griffiths is dead, down with Mormonism". They were surprised when they heard John preaching the next Sunday. They thought it was him that was dead. He got along nicely after that and raised quite a nice branch. He would go and preach on Sundays as well as Sunday night. He was a faithful Elder in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

A daughter, Margaret Ann (named after her mother) was born 15 April 1840. When Margaret was just six weeks old the family moved to London. Her Majesty, the Queen, wanted more men to work in the Woolwick Dock Yard, and John Griffiths was one that was called. The foreman he worked for was also called and John worked for that same foreman for 27 years. Margaret was baptized 25 November 1848, by John Monaian in England. She married Henry Clegg, being his third wife. She came to Utah with her father in 1856 and died in Heber City, Utah on 29 July 1929.

A daughter, Julia, was born 19 February 1843, at Woolwick, England and died 26 October 1843.

Another child, John, (the second John in the family because the first one died in infancy) was born 5 February 1845, at Woolwick, England. He started to Utah but died crossing the plains 30 October 1856.

A daughter, Jane Eleanor, was born 6 March 1848, at Woolwick, England and came to Utah and married Almon Fullmer. Jane was married at 16 years of age. Later she moved to Cache County, Utah in 1870 and lived there 50 years. She had 12 children. She died September 1928. Her funeral was held at Tetenia, Idaho on Thursday 19 September 1928. She was buried at Providence, Utah.

A son, Herbert Lorenzo, was born 10 January 1850, at Woolwick, England. He died while crossing the plains in October 1856 near Sweet Water River, Independence Rock, two weeks after his brother died of cold and hunger.

In 1853 the war broke out in Sebastipool and all the young men were being pressed into the service. They sent their son Thomas to Utah. That broke Margaret's heart and she died six months later in August 1853. She was 43 years old when she died.

John later married Elizabeth Webb. She was born in Watford, England in 1825. She died in Salt Lake City, Utah 8 December 1904.

Heber C. Kimball sent word for the family to move to Salt Lake City. That was in March 1856. John records, "We got ready and left Liverpool on 28 May 1856, on the ship called Horizon. We were five weeks on the sea. The name of the Captain was Mr. Read. When we docked in Boston Harbor they held a meeting and the Captain got up and spoke to us. He said, 'the song says marry no Mormons, but his ship carried none but Mormons, for they were the best people he ever crossed the sea with.' There were about nine hundred and fifty on that ship.

A happier people never crossed the plains They would sit around the campfire at night and sing. In the Edward Martin Handcart Company there were babies one and two months old. Sister Jackson was the oldest at 75. There were fathers without wives and mothers without husbands, children without fathers. There were little boys 10 and 11 without any parents. There were single people 18 and older.

Hardly a family made the trek without loss... all with great suffering. Death stalked us at every camp, nearly every day. It haunted us as we slept. And after we crossed the North Platte River everything became increasingly difficult. It was extremely cold. In England we had never seen so much snow, but the morning of October 28th there were 18 inches on the ground and it was very cold.

The North Platte was mushy with ice and snow. It was difficult crossing. My arthritis, said John, had bothered me since the cold began. After going through the frigid water I could hardly bend my legs or walk. Surely this would be the last barrier. Margaret helped our family all the way, and at this point I was no help at all. A man carried me across the river, but I still got wet and my clothes froze on me. It was bitter cold.

At the North Platte we met the Hodgett and Hunt trains who had started out behind us. Their condition was no better than ours. Although they had wagons, much of their livestock had died, wandered off or been stolen by Indians. Their food was also gone and sickness was the common companion in camp. They hurried to our aid and a few riders on horses carried the weakest across. We said our prayers that God would send help, but it did not come.

My family pulled the handcart until my son John died about 50 miles this side of Devils Gate. He was 12 years old. We had only 4 ounces of flour a day so we were starving and John froze to death. We buried Herbert, six years old, at Independence Rock. He also froze to death. Both my daughters had frozen feet.

We finally received help. Two young men, David Kimball and Joseph Young told us there would be ten wagons come in the morning loaded with flour. That was good news. I was unable to walk so I rode in the wagon to Salt Lake.

The Martin Handcart Company arrived in Salt Lake November 30, 1856. Margaret Ann and Jane Eleanor have both recorded the following concerning their father's death: "My father died the next morning after we got in Salt Lake He was froze to death. He was 47 years old. He died the first of December." He died at the home of his brother Mulliner, and is buried in the Salt Lake City Cemetery.