

History of  
John Griffiths  
(Pioneer of 1856)

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John Griffith was born July 7, 1810, at Carnavanshire, Bangor, North Wales England. His wife, Margaret Griffiths, who had the same surname, was born August 25, 1810, also at Carnavanshire, Bangor, North Wales, England. They were married at St. John's Church, Liverpool, England. The witnesses were Francis Griffiths and Thomas Holen.

John Griffiths and his wife Margaret, were baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, in the river Mercy, Liverpool England, January 30, 1840, by Elder John Taylor, during his first mission to England. This young couple were among the first Mormon converts in England.

Their children were as follows:

1. Thomas Griffiths, he was born September 22, 1834, in Liverpool, England. He came to Utah three years before the rest of the Griffiths family, to prepare a home for them when they reached Utah. He was twenty years old when he obtained work as a cattle herder for the Church. He went to Carson City, Nevada, and was heard of only once after that time. It is not known what became of him.
2. William Griffiths, he was born February 7, 1838 in Liverpool, England. He died in infancy.
3. John Griffiths, was born February 19, 1843, in Woolrich, England, and also died in infancy.
4. Margaret Griffiths was born April 15, 1840, in Liverpool, England, she married Henry Clegg, August 14, 1857 in the Endowment House, Salt Lake City, Utah, by President Brigham Young.
5. Julia Griffiths was born February 19, 1843, in Woolrich, England and died in infancy.
6. John Griffiths (There were two Johns in this family as the first one died in infancy ) was born February 5, 1845, in Woolrich England. He started for Utah, but died while the family were crossing the plains, October, 1856.
7. Jane Elenor Griffiths was born March 6, 1848, in Woolrich, England. She came to Utah and married Alfred Fullmer.
8. Herbert Lorenzo Griffiths was born January 19, 1850, in Woolrich, England.

The first part of their married life was spent in Liverpool, England, but about 1843, they seemed to have moved to Woolrich, England. Three of their children died in infancy, so they knew sorrow as a young couple. Then in later years the oldest son, Thomas, left and came to America before the rest of the family to build a home here for the family when they too could come to Zion. This was no doubt hard on his father as his wife died in August of 1853. Later he married a second wife, Elizabeth Webb. She was born at Watford, England, in 1825.

John Griffiths was a boiler maker by trade. He met the first four Mormon Elders to arrive in London, England. They set him apart as an Elder and sent him out to preach the new Gospel, and so he organized many branches of the Church, and performed a good labor.

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In 1856, John Griffiths and his second wife, Elizabeth Webb, and the four living children, Margaret Ann, John, Herbert Lorenzo and Jane Elenor, started preparations to come to Utah. They sailed on the ship, "Horizon", and reached Boston, Massachusetts, June 28, 1856. They soon went on to Florence, Iowa, where handcarts were being built to be used by the Saints in crossing the plains. They waited for a month for the handcarts to be finished and then started on September 1, 1856, for Utah. They were with the illfated Edwin Martin Handcart Company. There had been much discussion about starting for Utah so late in the season, but the Saints were anxious to be on their way, and finally decided to take a chance and hope that winter weather would be late in arriving. Perhaps no other group of Saints suffered as did this Company, and President Brigham Young wept as he heard of their plight before they reached the Valley of the Great Salt Lake.

This family of Griffiths pulled handcarts all the way. On October, 1856, John, who was twelve years old, died of cold and starvation. Two weeks later, Herbert Lorenzo, seven years old, died near Sweet Water River, Independence Rock. This left just the two daughters, Margaret Ann and Jane Elenor, and their father, John Griffiths, and the stepmother, Elizabeth. It took them the rest of October and through all of November to cross the plains. Snow came early, and they suffered with cold and hunger during the trip. Still they plodded on, as there was nothing else to do. They willingly sacrificed their homes, left relatives and friends in England to come to a strange land for the Gospel's sake.

Finally John was taken ill and had to ride in the provision wagon. One day, feeling somewhat stronger, he attempted to walk. He was so weak that he was not able to keep up, so he took hold of the rod of the endgate of the last wagon. When the teamster saw him, he hit John with his whip and the sick man fell to the ground. He was too weak to get up. The handcarts were ahead, so Margaret did not know what had happened to her Father until they reached camp. That night, exhausted as she was, she went back three miles, but could not find her Father. In the meantime John Griffiths had discovered the tracks leading to another camp and crawled on his hands and knees in the deep snow to seek refuge. That night at eleven o'clock the men took him to his own division, and how relieved his family were to see him.

John Griffiths' Patriarchal blessing said that he would reach Zion, which he did. He was in Zion only one day when he died. He did not die of cold and starvation, he died of a broken heart, to think that his fellowman would hit him with a cruel whip because in his weakness he took hold of the endgate of the last wagon. He was grieved because he had to bury his two young sons out on the prairie, for the howling wolves to devour, when they were so close to their destination.

They arrived in Zion the last day of November 1856, in wagons sent by Pres. Young to their aid. Although friends took them into their homes and did all they could for them, the father John Griffiths died. His Temple work was done by Thomas G. Clegg, his grandson, June 29, 1894, in the Salt Lake Temple. This left the two daughters and his wife to make their own way. Margaret's feet were so frozen that she could not walk, but a kindly lady by the name of Mrs. Montague, took her home and a Mrs Isable Horn took Jane to her home and cared for her.

" And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes , and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."