

## LIFE OF JOEL H. JOHNSON

A sketch of the life of Joel Hills Johnson, son of Ezeiel Johnson, who was born at Uxbridge, Massachusetts, January 12, 1776. My mother's name was Julia Hills, born at Upton, Massachusetts, September 26, 1783. They were married at Grafton, Massachusetts, January 12, 1801, and I was born at Grafton, Massachusetts, March 23, 1802. When I was a small child my parents emigrated to the state of Vermont, where they lived about nine years, and in the year of 1813 my parents let me go with my Uncle Joel Hills, for whom I was named, to Newport in the state of Kentucky, on the opposite side of the Ohio River from Cincinnati, both of which were then very small towns.

In the spring of 1815 my father came and took me to Pompey, Chautauque County, state of New York, where I lived with him until I was twenty-one years of age, March 23, 1823. I had little or no opportunity for education, but was very religious from a small child, not daring to transgress the will of my parents, or do the least thing I thought to be wrong, and always attended religious meetings and studied my books by fire light, after I had done my work. I bought a sawmill, and a lot of land and built a house, and my sisters kept house for me until the second day of November, 1826, when I married Miss Anna P. Johnson, daughter of Timothy Johnson, Esq. She was born August 7, 1800.

In the year 1829 I invented and patented a shingle cutter or machine now used for making and cutting shingles throughout the United States and Canada. The patent is dated December 8, 1829, signed Andrew Jackson, President, and Martin Van Buren, Vice-President of the United States.

In the fall of 1830 I moved my family to the town of Amherst, Lorien County, Ohio. I there became acquainted with the Book of Mormon and the Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and was baptised into the church on the first day of June, 1831, and was ordained an Elder on the 20th of September following, and appointed to preside over the Amherst Branch of the church which numbered about one hundred members.

I attended the first October conference of the Church. It was held in Orange

Township, Ohio, in 1831. It was here I first beheld the face of the Prophet Joseph, and heard the words of life from his mouth which filled my heart with joy and thanks to God.

In January, 1832, I went on a mission to the State of New York, preaching the Gospel. I visited my father's family in Pomperoy, they willingly heard and believed, and my mother and some others were baptised. On my return home I baptised many in and about Amherst and ordained several Elders and Priests. In July 1833, President Smith counselled me to move to Kirtland, and buy out a certain obnoxious individual, which I did.

I was there when the foundation of the temple was laid, and built a sawmill for its benefit. On August 26, 1835 I went on a short mission through the southeast part of Ohio, preached in many cities and towns, baptised several and returned home. I labored preaching in all the towns about Kirtland, baptised many and ordained several Elders and Priests. Received a blessing under the hands of the Presidency for my labours in preaching and assisting to build the Lord's House.

I was present at the calling and ordination of the first twelve apostles, also at the calling and ordination of all the different quorums of the church. I attended the dedication of the Lord's House on the 27th of March, 1836, and all the meetings and councils that followed. I saw and heard the power of God manifested as mentioned in the life of Joseph Smith and was chosen a member of the Quorum of Seventies, went on several missions, &c.

I helped to organize the Kirtland camp in 1838, and traveled with it as far as Springfield, Illinois, was called to stop there and take care of the sick. I commenced preaching and soon gathered a branch of the church of forty members over which I presided until January 8, 1839, when the Lord showed me by revelation that I must immediately go to Carthage in Hancock County. I packed up and went with my family and commenced preaching in Carthage and vicinity, and baptised many, and organized a branch of the church of about fifty members, called the Crooked Creek Branch.

About this time Sidney Rigdon, Bishop Partridge and others called on me while on their way to Old Commerce to seek a location for the Saints, who were being driven from Missouri. The location was made and called Nauvoo.

In February 1840, I purchased a sawmill, and piece of land on Crooked Creek, onto which I moved my family. In July, we as a branch of the church were organized into a Stake of Zion, with all of its officers and quorums. I was ordained High Priest and President of the Stake, under the hands of Kyrum Smith. A town was laid out and built up by the Saints. On September 11, 1840, my wife Anna died and left me with five small children, and on October 20th following I married Susan Bryant. In the winter of 1842, President Smith and council thought best to disorganise the Stake on account of secretly organized band of false brethren, that had crept in amongst us, and I was honorably discharged from further duties as President.

I was eight miles from Carthage on the memorable 27th of June, 1844, when Kyrum and Joseph Smith were slain in Carthage Jail. On the 13th of November following I was appointed to preside over a small branch of the church called the Pleasant Vale Branch. October 25th, 1845, I took to wife Miss Janet Fife, a Scotch lady. On the 31st day of December, my wife Susan and I received our endowments in the Lord's House in Nauvoo.

On the 1st day of May, 1846, about two o'clock at night, I was called to the door by an armed mob of about one hundred men, who had surrounded my house and asked me if I were preparing to leave. I told them that I was. They told me that if I were not gone by the 1st of June, my life would be taken, and my property destroyed and after more threats they went away.

Out of four or five thousand dollars' worth of property that I owned in Hancock County, all that I could raise to help me away was one horse team worth only seventy-five dollars, one yoke of oxen, and a borrowed wagon. On the last day of May, I loaded my family into the wagon, leaving everything else behind, and started for Knox County, Illinois, where I had claim on an 80-acre right of land, and arrived there on the 4th day of June 1846.

While in Knox County the Lord blessed me with means in a wonderful manner, so that by the 6th day of May, 1848, I was able to start to Salt Lake with three wagons and sufficient teams well loaded with family necessities, provisions, tools, and so on. With a few calves and sheep, we arrived at Winter Quarters on the Missouri River the first week in June. We tarried four weeks waiting for company and

started on the 19th day of October, 1848.

I stopped at the mouth of Mill Creek Canyon and was ordained Bishop of Mill Creek Ward, and elected Justice of the Peace, and Member of the Legislature of Deseret for 1849 and 1850. In the fall of 1850 I was selected to assist George A. Smith in forming a settlement at Little Salt Lake, now Parowan, Iron County.

I sent with him my two oldest sons with two teams, laden with provisions, seed, farming tools, iron mill saws etc., and in the spring I went down with stock, and several more teams, laden with necessaries for a new settlement. At the organization of the City of Parowan, County Court and High Council, I was elected one of the City Council, Selectman, and one of the High Council. On the 19th day of November, 1851, I was sent by George A. Smith to the Spring twelve miles south of Parowan to make a fort and myself a farm, and herd the stock for Parowan and Cedar City. The same is still called Fort Johnson, New Enoch.

In the fall of 1855, I attended the Second Judicial District Court held at Fillmore, Utah as Petit Juror. December 10th, the Legislature assembly convened, or met in the State House at Fillmore and I was elected Chaplain of the House, which office I filled during the session.

In the spring of 1857 I was called on a mission to the States, and started on the 6th day of April, and arrived at Florence on the Missouri River on the 15th day of June, and returned to Salt Lake City again on the 5th day of October, 1860, and on the 11th went to President Young's office and had Miss Margaret Threkeld, an English Lady, sealed to me by the President, and arrived at my home in Iron County on the 29th of October, being absent from home over three years. My labors were mostly in preaching to the people in Iowa, and presiding at the Genoa Branch in Nebraska.

In the fall of 1861, I moved my family down to Virgin City, I was then sent by President Erastus Snow up North Creek about six miles, to build a sawmill which I accomplished. I also planted out large orchards, and vineyards, and made many other improvements. In July, 1866, I sold out on North Creek and moved back to Virgin City and on the first day of March, 1868, I moved to Bellevue, my present place of res

dance.

After I was baptized in 1831, I never lived but a short time in any one place while in the States, on account of mob violence, and since in Utah have made eleven new places, and was never called on a mission without responding to the call, and never asked to speak in public, in regard to my faith, or the glorious hope that is in me, or the mission of Joseph Smith, or the true principles of life and salvation through the fullness of the Gospel in these last days, when I excused myself.

I was at Joseph Smith's when the Word of Wisdom was given and have strictly harkened to its precepts from that day to the present, by not using tobacco, strong drinks of any kind, tea or coffee, and but a very little flesh.

I have written nearly or quite 1000 spiritual hymns, and sacred songs, now in manuscript entitled, "Zions Songster", or the "Songs of Joel", a few of which have been published in the church works. In this short sketch of my life I have mentioned but a very few of my labours and travels in the kingdom.

My testimony for the last forty-eight years has been and still is that I know that God lives, for I have felt His hand and heard His voice and I also know that the dispensation of the fullness of the Gospel brought forth through Joseph Smith is the work of God, for His voice has declared it unto me. This is my living and dying testimony to every being upon the face of the whole earth. Truth, Eternal, Truth, even-so, -- Amen.

Joel H. Johnson.

High Priest and Patriarch in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the only true Church of God on the face of the whole earth.

P. S. He moved from Bellevue to Johnson, Kane, Co. in October 1880. While he lived at Johnson he gave all his children and grandchildren who came to see him a Patriarchal blessing in which he promised every one they should realize all the blessings inasmuch as they obeyed the Word of Wisdom. He died at Johnson in the 82nd year, 1864. He was the father of twenty-four children and his three oldest sons were ordained patriarchs.

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF MY FATHER,  
JOEL HILLS JOHNSON, AND REMINISCENCES  
BY JANET MAURETTA JOHNSON SMITH

My father, Joel H. Johnson, was born at Grafton, Massachusetts, March 23rd, 1802. His parents were originally from England and of the old Puritan stock. They were very religious and strict in their observance of the Sabbath and so forth. My father's people were all New Englanders and their sympathies were with the Union cause. They were likely Republicans. His grandfather fought under Washington, and was killed at the Battle of Bunker Hill. His mother, Julia Hills Johnson, was doubtless the first of the family to join the church. She was an intimate friend of the Prophet. Her daughter Almira became one of his plural wives. His father Ezekiel Johnson joined the church later.

My mother, Janet Fife Johnson, was born in the city of Leith, near Edinburgh, Scotland, February 17, 1820. She was fifteen years of age when she came to the United States with her parents. They were eight weeks crossing the ocean in the old style sailing boat. Having joined the church in Scotland, they came to the Saints in Nauvoo. She was personally acquainted with the Prophet Joseph Smith and talked with him on many occasions. She married my father in 1847 and they came to Utah in 1848.

He was an inventor and constructed a cotton gin many years before Whitney, and might have been wealthy had he got the patent. He was a member of the First Legislature held in Utah.

There were sixteen children in his family all of whom grew to maturity and belonged to the church. Four died and were buried at Kirtland. He helped to build up many of the settlements of Southern Utah. Wherever he went he was prosperous, which marked his ability as Pioneer and Leader. He died September 24, 1882 at Johnson, Kane County, Utah.

In 1848 my parents came to Utah and settled at Mill Creek which was my birth place. My father put out trees making a vineyard and orchard. After only two years he was called by George A. Smith to move to Parowan, Iron County, Utah. Again in a short time he moved to a place called Fort Johnson. It was at the time of the Indian war there. There was a herd grant established to care for the stock and he

was put in to oversee the herd so they might be protected from the Indians. For several years he occupied this position. When the trouble got so bad, he with his family moved to Cedar City, Iron County, six miles from there.

We remained there till peace was established to some extent, when he moved back five other families went with him. The six families built a fort so they might be protected. We lived this way about two years. It seemed peace was established. My father moved on his old farm, as he was a farmer and fruit grower. We lived this way for several years until he was called on a mission. Was gone four (?) years.

When he came home there was a call to build up the County. He then moved to Virgin City near St. George. He put up another large orchard and vineyard. Stayed there about three years, and was then called by Erastus Snow to build a sawmill up a small canyon five miles farther. He was also a millwright. He stayed there several years and the Navajo Indians broke out. He moved to Belview, a small place, made another orchard and vineyard and all kinds of garden. He was very ambitious. When the call came to build up Arizona he started to go there but found he was too feeble and stopped at Johnson, Kane County, where he died at the age of eighty-two in 1884.

While we were living in Virgin City President George A. Smith and company came to visit the people. Jesse H. Smith was one of the number. My parents and his had been acquainted for many years. We renewed our acquaintance into courtship and in October 1866, we were married in the Endowment House, by Heber C. Kimball. My husband's home was in Parowan, Iron County. Two years later he was called on his second mission. Had only twelve days to settle his business and get to Salt Lake, a distance of three hundred miles by stage.

Five weeks later our first baby was born. We named her Susan Janet. I was tenderly cared for by Aunt Emma, my husband's first wife, and my own dear mother. I lived with the family. We worked together to support ourselves. There were eight children and my own babe besides Mother Smith. We had but little to go on, a small farm that made our bread, and a few sheep. The wool was carded into rolls and we all spun, and the old hand loom with my help made the yarn into cloth which helped us out with our clothes.

My father was baptized June 1, 1851. He was a great student of scripture and an enthusiastic preacher. He did a great deal of missionary work in the States before emigrating, organizing a branch of the church at Kansas, Illinois, over which he presided as bishop. He was associated with the Prophet in many ways, being present in his home the night the Word of Wisdom was given, February 27, 1833. The following morning the Prophet related the revelation to him. Father was a practicing physician at the time. He went home and destroyed his medicine and bottles and never again used medicines or drugs, or broke the Word of Wisdom.

After reaching Utah, he was made first bishop of Mill Creek. In 1857 he went on a mission to Iowa and Nebraska, and was gone three years. He was deeply religious, honest and upright in his dealings, and was a fine man in his family. He had the gift of prophecy and gave many wonderful patriarchal blessings. He was a poet and wrote many hymns, all of which are in the L. D. S. Hymn book. "High On the Mountain Tops", his composition is sung a great deal in the mission field.

He was a great financier and engaged in horticulture, having the best and largest vineyards in Southern Utah. He also had sawmills. He made and operated his own shingle mills.

In the fall, I would go to Father's and dry fruit which helped us out very much. The two years soon passed and when our Papa came home my little daughter knew her Papa as well as the rest of the children. Then my second baby came I was moved into another home. We lived in Parowan, Iron County, until seven daughters came to our home, two of whom died. Then came the call on December 3rd, 1878 from President Taylor, to go and help build up Arizona. Brother Smith and Erastus Snow came. He started for Arizona to find a home. While he was gone, my little Agnes Marie died of whooping cough.

It was decided when he returned for me to go with him and start the home. We settled in Snowflake, Arizona. Lived on dry lots for several years until finally a canal was completed and we began to feel more at home, when we could make the roses grow and some good gardens.