

Biography of James Boyack Sr.

Written by Ida Boyack Whiting (granddaughter)



James Boyack, Sr., was born August 25, 1805 at Mains Parish, Forfarshire (now Angus), Scotland. He was the son of William Catherine Moody Boyack. I know of only one brother that he had, Alexander Boyack, but there probably more in his family. We know very little of his childhood, but one incident in his youth has been told to us, and it impressed me enough that I would like to repeat it. It happened when he was taking out a young girl, by the name of Elizabeth Mealmaker; at a carnival or fair which they gone to. A gypsy fortune—teller told him and his sweetheart that they would marry and have a large family, that they would cross the ocean and in their old age they would have a house, land and gold, and eat white bread. As they left the fortune teller's booth, the girl touched the young man's arm and said, "What a lee (lie) Jeemmy". The fortune teller's words seemed so impossible to them that they laughed about it as they walked away, yet all of it came to pass for them.

Of course, we never believed that the gypsy could possibly have seen into the future like that, but her words may have started the dream in their hearts to come to the new world and better their lives so that when they heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints their dream became a desire, and at

last a reality. In 1827, when he was twenty two years old, he married Elizabeth Mealmaker. They were married at the Mains Parish and went to live in a cottage nearby. They were the parents of fourteen children, namely: James Jr., Ann, Margaret, Hannah, Elizabeth, Alexander, Mary, William M., Joseph G., Peter F., Robert M., and David, twins and Thomas and Jessie. These last two children died of some fever and were buried in the churchyard near Dundee, Scotland.

Grandfather, James Boyack, Sr., was employed on roads around their district. He was a foreman and as such made a little more than the average worker, but it was still inadequate for a large family. All of the children went to work quite young and all helped each other. Some worked on the large farms, or estates, some in the oatmeal and other mills, and one daughter clerked in a candy shop in Dundee. They were a deeply religious family and attended church services regularly at the Parish Church.

When he heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Grandfather became converted to its teachings. He was baptized August 31, 1845, by Elder Hugh Findley and confirmed a member of the Church the same day. His wife did not join the Church until six years later. There was considerable prejudice against the "Mormon" church at that time in Scotland, so the Saints had a desire to gather to Zion as soon as they could.

The Boyack family shared this desire. The oldest son, James Boyack, Jr., decided to come to America and get work and send for the rest of the family and his sweetheart. He left Scotland March 17, 1853 and arrived in Salt Lake City October 5th 1853. He realized, after a time, that it was more than he could do to make enough money for ship passage for them all, so he arranged for them to come through the Perpetual Emigration fund. This was a fund advanced by the Church, to bring converts from

Europe. When the families were established here they paid the money back to the Church.

Grandfather, his wife and family and James Jr's promised bride began preparations for their long trip to Zion. The Emigration shipping records give the Boyack family's address as 44 Smithfield, Dundee, Scotland at the time of their departure. They went by boat from Scotland to Liverpool, England. There they stayed for several days while other Saints gathered and the ship was made ready for the trip across the ocean. On April 22, 1855 they left Liverpool, England, on the sailing vessel "Samuel Curling". They arrived in New York City May 27th, 1855, and were very glad to see land once more.

They went by rail from New York to Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, then by steam boats, on the rivers to St. Louis, Missouri. They stayed in St. Louis two weeks, so the older boys and girls got work, which helped them considerably. From St. Louis they went by steamboat to Atchison, Kansas. The outfitting station for LDS emigration crossing the plains in 1855 which was Mormon Grove, located near Atchison, Kansas.

From this place on August 4th, 1855, the Boyack family started west by ox team. The company was in the charge of Captain Milo Andrus, and they arrived in Salt Lake City, October 24th, 1855. They had been six months traveling and camping and were very tired. They rejoiced to be in Zion and to meet their oldest son and brother who had been here for two years. It was a happy day for him too, to meet his family and his sweetheart Margery Waterhouse, who had come with his folks from Scotland. The family stayed in Salt Lake City for two weeks. During this time a son, Alexander, went south to Palmyra where a friend of the family's, Robert McKell, had located. He found that they could do better there than in the city so he borrowed Robert McKell's ox team and wagon and went to Salt Lake City and moved the family

down to Palmyra Fort. This was about two miles northwest of where Spanish fork is now located.

They spent the winter there and the next year, 1856, the Palmyra Fort was abandoned, and the people moved to the present site of Spanish fork. The Boyack family built a two-storied adobe house on the corner of Second (Fourth) North and First West. Grandfather was quite skilled in carpentry and furniture making, and did a very fine job of woodwork in his home. He made it really smooth and then varnished it to bring out the natural grain of the wood, which made a very pleasing effect. He also made much of their furniture and some for his children. There are several pieces of furniture which he made, owned and treasured by members of his family. I have a mahogany-finished bedside table he made in 1871. Grandfather was a humble, happy man, who loved his wife and family dearly, and was devoted to the Church of his adoption. He was always willing to do what was asked of him by the Church, and he advanced in the Priesthood as he became ready. He was ordained a High Priest in 1857 at Spanish Fork by Zebedee Coltrin.

Life in the west was so different from their life in Scotland, but he soon learned to farm and irrigate and go to the canyons for their winter's supply of wood. He was quite a good musician and played the violin for his own and family's pleasure. My older sister says one of her recollections of our grandparents is seeing them sitting on their front porch, in the twilight, and grandfather softly playing the old Scottish ballads and folksongs. He loved his home and was the happiest when he could be there. All of his sons, except Alexander, and two of his daughters married and made their homes in Spanish Fork, so he and his wife were blessed with their children and grandchildren to visit them and care for them as they grew older.

Also there were other Scottish families who came to Spanish Fork to live, including the Money and Robertson families, whom they had known in Scotland, and lived near them now. This helped to make their lives more pleasant. When grandfather and grandmother became too old to live alone any longer, they rented their home and moved into one room of their daughter Mary Robertson's home. Here he died on February 1st, 1888 at the age of eighty three. His death left a gap in the hearts of his children and grandchildren as he was greatly loved and revered by his large family. He was buried in the Spanish Fork Cemetery, beside his wife (who died December 14th, 1886), the sweetheart of his youth and the sharer of all his joys

