

John Knowles Crosby and Mary (Johnson) Crosby



A Family History

by Shelley Dawson Davies

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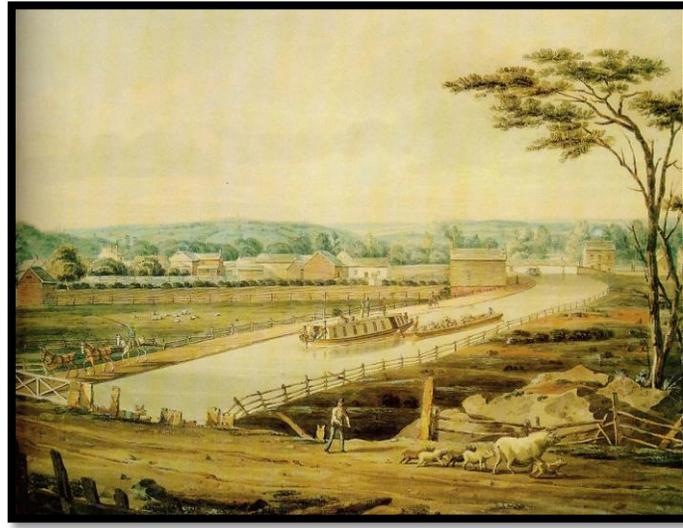
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Chapter 1

America's Frontier

Taming the Wilderness



The Erie Canal opened up western settlement by making transportation easy and inexpensive.

Western New York in the early 1800s was a raw frontier stretching out as far as the eye could see. There were many pioneering men eager to brave the hardships of such wild, undeveloped country, described by one explorer as a region of “roving barbarians and savage beasts,”¹ but until the problem of easy transportation into the interior could be solved, settlement was stunted. As it was, only small wagons and pack animals could make it past any point of civilization with supplies needed in the back country. Water was the easiest and most cost effective way to transport goods and people, but without natural access to navigable rivers, the yawning wilderness remained an insurmountable barrier.

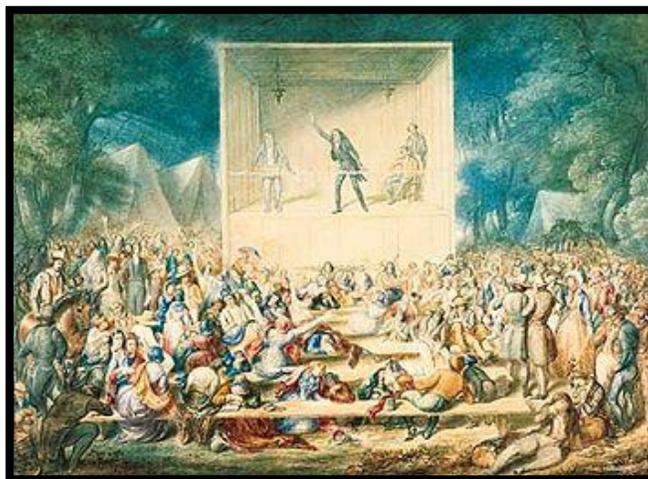
All of that changed in 1817, with the daring construction of the Erie Canal, a hand-dug waterway linking the Hudson River to Lake Erie. Almost immediately after the project began, the Erie Canal stimulated growth along its path from Buffalo to Albany, with the promise of

rapid, cheap transportation and new markets for products and crops. Among those attracted to the expanding settlements along the canal was Canadian Joshua Crosby,² whose skills as a farmer, sailor and fisherman³ would serve his family well in the new wilderness. After eyeing the many villages sprouting from the thick forests, he settled in the town of Portland, New York, at the very edge of Lake Erie, in 1822, with his wife Hannah⁴ and their five children.

Joshua's oldest son John⁵ was only ten years old when the family packed up and sailed out of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, but he was considered big enough to help his father plow and plant. His older sisters, fourteen-year old Hannah Cann⁶ and twelve-year old Elizabeth,⁷ were kept busy helping their mother cook and tend to Obed,⁸ seven, Frances,⁹ five, and little Jesse,¹⁰ only two years old. The children became "accustomed to the toils and hardships of a new country," according to Jesse, who remembered growing up with little formal schooling, learning to read at home from the family Bible. "I was taught especially by my mother, whose tender care was always over me, for good, from the earliest period of my recollection to practice virtue and lead an upright and honest life; to speak the truth and deal justly with all men."¹¹

Testimony of Truth

The Crosbys were not the only frontier family who had "a religious turn of mind."¹² The neighboring Benjamin Brown and Henry Mumford families were also spiritually inclined, and bound together by their faith and the rigors of living in a remote country, they became fast friends with the Crosbys. Members from each family occasionally attended one of the many tent revivals held by travelling ministers who preached fiery sermons designed to chasten and purify people in anticipation of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Yet, despite the itinerant ministers and the presence of a Congregational, Baptist, Methodist and a congregation of the Universalist Society in Portland,¹³ there were some who questioned the established ministries. One of these was Benjamin Brown, whose "deep anxiety" to find the truth caused him to listen to several missionaries from the newly formed Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints when they passed through Portland in 1838. The missionaries spoke of one Joseph Smith, who God had chosen to restore the gospel in its fullness. Benjamin received confirmation of the missionaries' message through a series of powerful spiritual experiences, and immediately set about converting his family and friends.¹⁴ Eventually all of the Browns and Mumfords were baptized into the church, and all of the Crosbys, except for Joshua, who stubbornly refused to believe in either latter-day revelation or *The Book of Mormon*.



Itinerant preachers often held camp meetings along the frontier where settlers gathered for spiritual guidance.

Outside of his father, twenty-seven year old John was the last of the Crosby family to accept baptism, in February, 1839.¹⁵ A branch of the church was organized the same year and “the Holy Ghost was poured out insomuch that many were healed of their infirmities and prophesied, some saw visions, others spoke in different languages by the gift and power of God as on the day of Pentecost.”¹⁶ There was a great desire among the new members to gather with people who shared their faith, and when the Prophet Joseph Smith asked his followers to join him at church headquarters in Far West, Missouri, the Portland Saints made plans to do just that.

As their departure date approached in the spring of 1839, John, Jesse and their friend Edward Mumford were cutting timber in a nearby forest when Jesse was struck by a falling branch with such force it “crush[ed] him to the earth,” said Benjamin Brown. “The violence of the blow broke in a portion of his skull, forming a hollow about as large as the palm of a man’s hand. His neck and shoulders were much injured. Altogether, a more deplorable object I never saw in my life.”¹⁷

Joshua sent for a doctor, “who pronounced Jesse’s case desperate, unless, on removing the broken part of the skull, it should be found that the skin of the brain was still entire, when, by using a silver plate over the exposed portion, a chance might still exist of his life,” according to Benjamin. “The doctor proceeded to cut into Jesse’s head for that purpose, but was stopped by his mother, who strongly objected to this experiment, and sent for me to administer to him. I was eight miles off and at the time of my arrival he had not spoken,

nor scarcely indicated any signs of life. Going into the room where he lay, I found it filled with the neighbors, who were mostly enemies of the church. Sneers and jeers of ‘Here comes the Mormon, we’ll soon see whether he can heal now’ saluted my ears on all sides. From a sign which I had received while on my way, I knew Jesse would recover...I cleared the house of all but Jesse’s relatives and administered to him in the name of the Lord. Jesse then recovered sufficiently to speak, after which he fell into a peaceful sleep and before morning was altogether better.”¹⁸

Even his son’s miraculous healing failed to soften Joshua’s heart, and he joined with the neighbors in discouraging his family from moving over a thousand miles away to Missouri. “Before leaving, our neighbors called often and remonstrated with us for taking, as they thought, such a random journey,” recalled Jesse. “One said, ‘Have you read the news? Why the Missourians and the Mormons are at war, they are killing and destroying, and will you persist in going and running into danger and death?’”¹⁹ Persecutions against the church had pushed the Saints from their stronghold in Kirtland, Ohio, forcing them to abandon the temple they had worked so diligently to build, and now thousands were being driven from their new settlements in Missouri, but nothing could keep the new converts from joining with their fellow Saints.

“The gospel net of so called Mormonism caught our family in 1838, and from that time commenced the realities and varieties of life, serious and earnest,” said Frances. “The serious when friends and relatives deserted us wholesale, the earnest when in the spring of 1839 we left our home and journeyed west not knowing our destination.”²⁰ Among those who did not desert the Crosbys was twenty three year old Mary Jane Johnson,²¹ who became John’s wife in April, 1839. Mary, her sister Eliza²² and their mother²³ were also baptized and joined the Portland Saints when they left for the west soon after Mary’s marriage. Only Joshua Crosby remained behind, watching as his family disappeared over the western horizon.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Peter L. Bernstein, *Wedding of the Waters* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co.), page 149.
- ² Joshua Crosby (1783-1874), #KWJ14CS, www.familysearch.org where verification of all vital dates can be found. Also see family group sheets at www.DaviesDawsonHistory.weebly.com
- ³ Samuel Wallace Crosby, *Jesse Wentworth Crosby: Mormon Preacher, Pioneer, Man of God* (Boulder, Utah: self-published, 1977) page 26.
- ⁴ Hannah Corning (Cann) Crosby (1784-1839), #KWJ1-4C9, www.familysearch.org
- ⁵ John Knowles Crosby (1812-1898), #KWVS-MC8, www.familysearch.org
- ⁶ Hannah Cann (Crosby) Mumford (1808-1883), #LZLB-R16, www.familysearch.org
- ⁷ Elizabeth Ellenwood (Crosby) Terrill Williams (1810-1891), #KTZL-32H, www.familysearch.org
- ⁸ Obed Crosby (1815-1839), #@W9B-FKW, www.familysearch.org
- ⁹ Frances (Crosby) Brown (1817-1895), #KWJH-HS7, www.familysearch.org
- ¹⁰ Jesse Wentworth Crosby (1820-1893), #KWVM-H34, www.familysearch.org
- ¹¹ Jesse Wentworth Crosby, "Autobiography (1820-1869)," <http://www.boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/JWCrosby.html>
- ¹² *Ibid.*
- ¹³ John P. Downs, "History of Portland, New York," extracted from *History of Chautauqua County, New York, and Its People* (American Historical Society, 1921), <http://history.rays-place.com/ny/chau-portland.htm>
- ¹⁴ Benjamin Brown, *Testimonies for the Truth: Manifestations of the Power of God, Miraculous and Providential* (Liverpool: S.W. Richards, 1853), page 3-9. <https://archive.org/details/testimoniesfortr00brow>
- ¹⁵ "John Knowles Crosby-Mary Jane Johnson family group sheet," supplied 1979 by Cleo (Hales) Page. This sheet offers only a generic list of materials consulted.
- ¹⁶ Crosby, "Autobiography (1820-1869)."
- ¹⁷ Brown, *Testimonies for the Truth: Manifestations of the Power of God, Miraculous and Providential*, page 13-14.
- ¹⁸ Crosby, "Autobiography (1820-1869)."
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ²⁰ Frances Crosby Brown, "Frances Crosby Brown," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ²¹ Mary Jane (Johnson) Crosby (1816-1889), #KWVS-MCZ, www.familysearch.org
- ²² Eliza Loanda (Johnson) Sherman (1822-1894), #KNR3-HRC, www.familysearch.org
- ²³ Mary (Thompson) Johnson (1790-after 1843), #MCZD-S67, www.familysearch.org Mary's birthdate and parentage are documented in her patriarchal blessing. Mary Thompson Johnson, Patriarchal Blessing given 20 August, 1843, by Hyrum Smith at Nauvoo, Illinois. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.

Chapter 2

Deepening Trials

Going Forward with Faith



The temple at Kirtland, Ohio, was the first built in this dispensation.

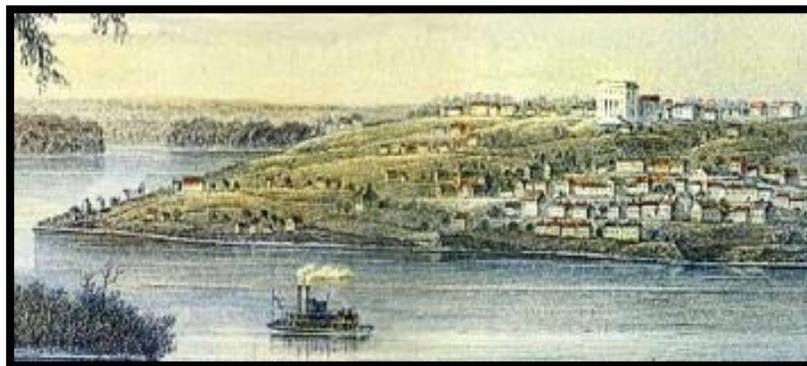
None of the Portland Saints knew what lay ahead of them when they left Chautauqua County in the spring of 1839, but they were certain their journey was directed by the Lord. They made their way south and west toward Missouri, “meeting reports constantly that the Mormons were driven, broken up, and destroyed, and that if we persisted in going to the seat of war, we should meet with the same fate,” said Jesse, “but nothing could daunt our courage. Our course was onward.”²⁴

Several weeks of travel brought the Brown Company to Kirtland, Ohio, which stood almost deserted now that the Saints were gathering in Missouri. John and his family were most impressed by the temple, “a fine stone building with these words neatly engraved in front: ‘HOUSE OF THE LORD,’” said Jesse. “It was now unoccupied, together with most of the private dwellings of the town. We entered the temple and beheld the fixtures, the curtains, the seats, etc., with astonishment, being so different from anything we had before seen and being, as we believed, built by revelation and commandment of God. Our hearts were filled with gratitude to God, that we were thus

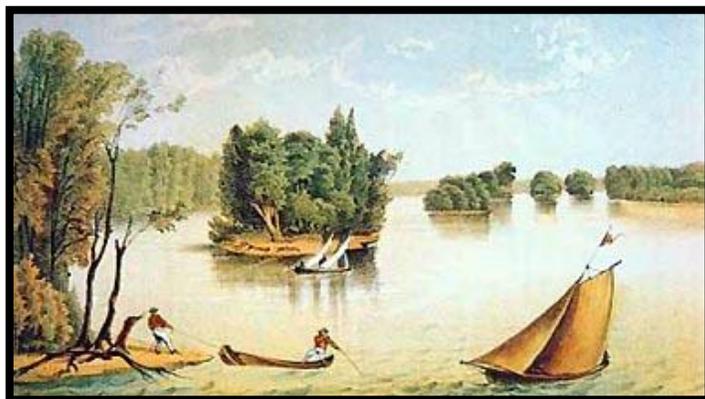
highly favored to live in the day when the voice of the Lord was again heard out of the heavens, and with bosoms burning with the intelligence of God, we still prosecuted our journey westward in order to join the presidency and main body of the Church with whom the oracles of God had been entrusted.”²⁵

Strengthened by their visit to the abandoned temple, the Brown Company pressed onward, determined to join the main body of the church, despite the unsettling news of persecutions they constantly received. As they neared the Mississippi River, the Crosbys, Browns and Mumfords met a party of missionaries on their way east, who informed them of their fellow Saints’ “scattered condition”²⁶ and their removal toward Commerce, Illinois, a small town Joseph Smith had designated the new church headquarters, giving it the new name of Nauvoo.

The Portland company rolled into Nauvoo in early June, expecting to find the Saints “in comfortable circumstances,” but instead joined hundreds of families “living in tents and wagons for want of houses, some four hundred miles from the place whence they had been driven, many in straightened circumstances, some sick and overcome with hardships and fatigue,” according to Jesse.²⁷ Nauvoo was ringed with malarial swamps and without any way to fight disease, most of the population became “prostrated with sickness. There were not enough well ones to care for the sick and afflicted,” recalled Frances. The Crosby family was forced to watch as their mother was stricken at the end of June, and despite their best efforts to save her, Hannah passed away at sunset on 8 July, 1839, the first Latter-day Saint to die in Nauvoo. At sunrise the following morning, Hannah’s friend Zina Huntington also died. Both women were eulogized in a double funeral and buried side by side in the Durphy Street cemetery.²⁸



The city of Nauvoo as it appeared in 1846.



Along the Mississippi River near Nauvoo.

Farming in Hancock County

It may have been the desperate condition of Nauvoo's residents that led John and Mary Jane to settle twenty miles east of Nauvoo in Hancock County's fertile farmland, where Mary Jane gave birth to her first child, Mary Eliza,²⁹ at Pilot Grove in October, 1840. Soon afterwards, John relocated his family to the small village of Macedonia,³⁰ not far from the Brown's farm in La Harpe.³¹ Two more daughters were born in Macedonia, Hannah,³² in February, 1843, and Minerva³³ in January, 1846. The town soon became one of the most important of Nauvoo's surrounding communities and John and Mary Jane prospered on their Macedonia farm, thanks to Nauvoo's demand for foods and produce of all kinds.³⁴ The church was strong there as well. The Crosby's fellow Saints had built the first meetinghouse there several years before, where the Prophet himself preached when he was in town.³⁵

John and Mary Jane planned on living their lives here in peace, but rising tensions between the Mormons and Illinois' old settlers soon became a problem. The Saints' success and growth were a threat to local non-members, who began attacking the church through hostile newspaper editorials. Eventually hatred for the church in general and the Prophet in particular led to the assassination of Joseph Smith and his brother Hyrum on 27 June, 1844, while they and other church leaders were being held at the county jail in Carthage, eight miles south of Macedonia.

When the death of Joseph Smith failed to put an end to Mormonism, it wasn't long before attacks against the Saints escalated into acts of violence. Anti-Mormon raiders burned over one hundred homes and

farms at Morley's Settlement, twenty miles south of Nauvoo in September, 1845, triggering assaults on outlying towns all over Hancock County. It was clear the Saints would have to leave Illinois. Brigham Young set the official departure for spring, 1846. John and Mary Jane joined their friends and neighbors in preparing for evacuation, spending the winter gathering supplies and selling property. By early spring the entire branch in Macedonia was prepared to abandon their settlement, leaving the town so empty a local newspaper called it "The Deserted Village."³⁶

At the same time the Saints were preparing to leave Illinois, they worked anxiously to complete the Nauvoo temple, where sacred ceremonies would endow them with spiritual power necessary for the trials which lay ahead. John was among the last men to be endowed in Nauvoo on 7 February, 1846, one day before all temple work ceased.³⁷ John, Mary Jane and their three little girls crossed the Mississippi River with the rest of the Crosby family in May. Six miles from Nauvoo, the refugees "had the most splendid view of the temple and almost every house in Nauvoo," said Jesse. "This was a farewell view."³⁸

Plains People

John and Mary Jane were among the many Saints who settled outside of Kaneshville, Iowa, following their fellow branch members from Macedonia, reorganizing their former settlement twenty-eight miles eastward in Pottawattamie County.³⁹ John arrived in time to build a rough cabin and plant crops for the season, and when he wasn't working on his own land, lent a hand in building up the church. A huge log tabernacle was constructed in Kaneshville, where the Crosbys and their Macedonian neighbors attended regular conferences. They carefully followed the progress of those who accompanied Brigham Young to the Salt Lake Valley in 1847, keeping up with the news in Orson Hyde's *Frontier Guardian*. They watched and waited as Kaneshville became an important outfitting center, selling produce from their farm to westward immigrants and gold seekers alike.

Even though John and Mary Jane were determined to immigrate themselves, it would take several years of hard work before they were ready to leave, and they dedicated themselves to the business of keeping their family together. Two years after settling in Macedonia, Mary Jane's fourth daughter, Sarah,⁴⁰ was born in the heat of August, 1848. Sometime that same year, two-year old Minerva suffered a stroke which left her brain damaged and without the use of her left side for the rest of her life.⁴¹ No matter how difficult their trials, John

and Mary Jane kept the faith and were finally ready to leave for Utah in 1850. They signed on with the Warren Foote Company, which pulled out of Kaneshville on 17 June.⁴²

At thirty-eight years old, John was at the peak of his health and ready to walk the one thousand miles ahead of him. He and Mary Jane had managed to acquire twenty cattle, eight sheep, a horse and two wagons to make the journey with,⁴³ and while John drove the wagons and fed the cattle, Mary Jane prepared meals and cared for the girls. They spent each day dedicated to the tasks at hand, enduring scorching heat, terrifying storms, buffalo stampedes and cholera outbreaks. “The journey has been long and sometimes our patience tried,” noted Captain Foote as the train neared Salt Lake City after thirteen weeks of exhausting travel,⁴⁴ but patience paid off on 17 September, when the wagons finally rolled into the valley.



The plains near Council Bluffs, Iowa, where the journey to Utah began.

ENDNOTES

- ²⁴ Jesse Wentworth Crosby, "Autobiography (1820-1869)," <http://www.boap.org/LDS/Early-Saints/JWCrosby.html>
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶ Frances Crosby Brown, "Frances Crosby Brown," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ²⁷ Crosby, "Autobiography (1820-1869)."
- ²⁸ Brown, "Frances Crosby Brown," undated typescript.
- ²⁹ Mary Eliza (Crosby) Waddington (1840-1889), #KWVR-58S, www.familysearch.org
- ³⁰ The town was originally founded by Latter-day Saints who named it Ramus, a Latin word meaning branch. The town was renamed Macedonia when it was formally incorporated in 1843, and was given the name of Webster after the Mormons left for Utah in 1846.
- ³¹ Jesse remained in Nauvoo. Some of the group, including the Brown family, settled at La Harpe, Illinois, about 25 miles east of Nauvoo. It was there where Obed died in September, 1839. Mary Jane's sister Eliza was married in Nauvoo in July, 1846. She and her husband Uriel Herman (1825-1874) remained in Fountain Green when the Saints left in 1846 (see Eliza Loanda Johnson Sherman, K631-35D, www.familysearch.org). Mary Jane's mother, Mary (Thompson) Johnson received a patriarchal blessing from Hyrum Smith in Nauvoo in August, 1843. What became of her after this date is not known (see: Mary Thompson Johnson, Patriarchal Blessing given 20 August, 1843, by Hyrum Smith at Nauvoo, Illinois. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies).
- ³² Hannah Cann Crosby (1843-1859), #K2MH-5XT, www.familysearch.org
- ³³ Minerva Janet Crosby (1846-1908), #KWVR-58K, www.familysearch.org
- ³⁴ R. Phillip Reynolds, "Ecclesiastical Economics: Some Financial Considerations of Mormon Settlement in Illinois," <http://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=libfacpub>
- ³⁵ Remarks made by Joseph Smith in Macedonia eventually became Sections 130-131 in *The Doctrine and Covenants*. It was also in Macedonia where Joseph Smith made his famous prophecy predicting the American Civil War. Donald Q. Cannon, "Spokes on the Wheel: Early Latter-day Saints Settlements in Hancock County, Illinois," *The Ensign*, February, 1986, page 62-68.
- ³⁶ Susan Sessions Rugh, "Conflict in the Countryside: Rural Communities in the 1840s Mormon War," <http://www.lib.niu.edu/2007/ih070506.html>
- ³⁷ Early Latter-day Saints: A Mormon Pioneer Database, <http://earlylds.com/getperson.php?personID=I8188&tree=Earlylds>
- ³⁸ Crosby, "Autobiography (1820-1869)."
- ³⁹ Early Latter-day Saints: A Mormon Pioneer Database, <http://earlylds.com/getperson.php?personID=I8188&tree=Earlylds>
- ⁴⁰ Sarah Frances (Crosby) Thomas (1848-1871), #KWJ4-M5G, www.familysearch.org
- ⁴¹ George H. Crosby, Jr., "The Mormon Crosby Family," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ⁴² Passenger list, Warren Foote Company, Kanessville, Iowa, to Salt Lake City, Utah, 17 June-17 September, 1850, <https://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/companyPioneers?lang=eng&companyId=117>
- ⁴³ Warren Foote, "Autobiography and Journals, 1837-1903," <https://history.lds.org/overlandtravels/trailExcerptMulti?lang=eng&companyId=117&sourceId=5128>
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Chapter 3

Firm as the Mountains

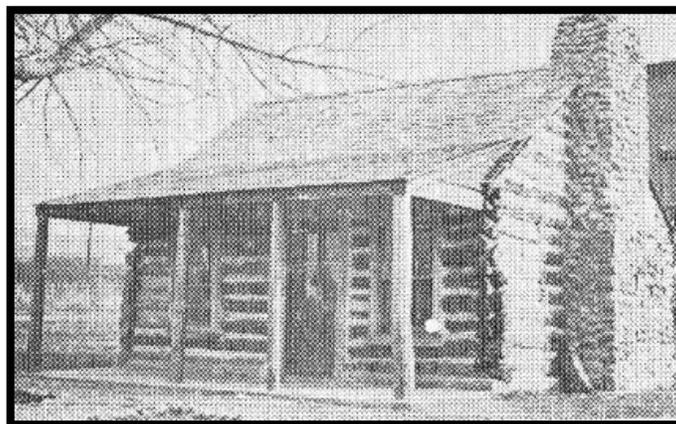
Life in Bountiful



The Salt Lake valley as it appeared in 1851.

There was plenty of good farm land to choose from along the Wasatch front in 1850; it was simply a matter of finding the right place to settle. John first broke ground ten miles south of Salt Lake City in the Cottonwood area, where Mary Jane turned a simple log cabin into a welcoming home for her family. Here she gave birth to her fifth daughter, Thankful,⁴⁵ in early September, 1851. Unfortunately, Thankful died one month short of her first birthday in August, 1852.⁴⁶ John and Mary Jane moved their family twenty miles north to the farming community of Bountiful shortly afterwards.

As one of the village's early settlers, John was not only kept busy working his fields, but contributing to community projects such as the eight-foot high earthen wall constructed in 1855 as protection against potential Indian hostilities.⁴⁷ Mary Jane once again settled her girls into a log cabin,⁴⁸ spending her days cooking and caring for her growing family. One more daughter, Jane Alice,⁴⁹ was born here in July, 1853, followed by the Crosby's only son, John Junior,⁵⁰ in the autumn of 1856. Three years later the family suffered the loss of sixteen-year old Hannah, in October, 1859.⁵¹



John Crosby's cabin in Bountiful, Utah.

John was a quiet, industrious man⁵² whose hard work provided his family with “fat pigs, good teams, chickens and cows.”⁵³ He was prosperous enough by 1860 to afford one of Bountiful’s first two-story adobe houses.⁵⁴ John built the home with two rooms on the main floor and two upstairs, separated by a central hallway. Several years later he added a kitchen and pantry porch with red bricks.⁵⁵

In this comfortable home Mary Jane raised her children, teaching them hard work by her example. The week began with wash day on Monday, ironing on Tuesday. Saturday was spent cleaning the house and making pies for Sunday dinner, which usually included invited guests. Mary Jane was small, ambitious woman, a good cook known for her pies and donuts. She was also a clever seamstress who not only stitched many quilts for her family, but sponsored quilting bees at her home for those in need.⁵⁶ Hers was a “busy and useful life, but she still had time for a flower garden of peonies, moss roses and the sweet brier, yellow roses, and lilac bushes,” said granddaughter Loa Burningham, who later inherited the old home with its beautiful garden.⁵⁷

Mary Jane’s capacity for work and her caring nature served her well when she accepted the calling as counselor in Bountiful’s first Relief Society. She was quick to propose the ladies’ organization earn the funds to purchase their own building, donating a quilt towards the fund and “calling others to do the same.”⁵⁸ When President Brigham Young asked Utah’s women to become independent by producing their own silk, Mary Jane encouraged her fellow sisters by planting mulberry trees and setting aside a room in her home to raise the worms herself. She and her daughters Mary, Sarah and Jane knitted small items from their silk, including a gloves and a tie.⁵⁹



The Bountiful Tabernacle looks much as it did upon completion in 1860.

Shoulder to the Wheel

John proved his dedication to his fellow Saints with his unfailing volunteer labor, even if he never had much to say about it.⁶⁰ When the Bountiful congregation began construction on the first tabernacle outside of Salt Lake City in 1857, John donated one thousand dollars⁶¹ to the project, in addition to his own labor and teams of horses,⁶² which were loaned to the church “on a more or less permanent basis” until the building was completed.⁶³ The building was finished after six years of hard work and was dedicated on 14 March, 1863, by President Brigham Young.

John’s integrity and work ethic led to his appointment as one of several road supervisors and water masters in Bountiful, important positions in a growing farming community with limited resources.⁶⁴ With so many new people settling in the area, access to irrigation water became an issue which many people fought over. Arguments became so bitter county officers and the local bishop appointed John a member of a four-man committee to fairly divide Mill Creek’s water in 1856. This committee eventually rationed water by issuing turns to individuals, a system which met with reasonable success.⁶⁵

John was also called upon to help rid the county of pestilent grasshoppers which were destroying crops at an alarming rate in the spring of 1868. “We commenced by digging a trench in the ground, then scattering straw in the trench, and driving as many grasshoppers

as we could into it, and setting fire to the straw,” said fellow committee member Thomas Briggs. “We also made a trap out of wire, which we stretched across the mountain stream so as to catch the ones floating down. The trap would hold from 10 to 12 bushels.”⁶⁶

The East Wind

In addition to the challenges of taming raw farm lands and fighting grasshoppers, Bountiful’s farmers were forced to endure “a rather unique local wind” which blew across Davis County every spring and fall, leaving destruction in its wake. Entries in an early settler’s journal document the recurring nightmare:

December 25, 1855: Six degrees below zero, snow and wind.

December 2, 1858: The east wind blew over a stack of hay; a window and door blew off the house

September 9, 1863: There was a singular whirlwind just after noon. it formed in the clouds like a large serpent.

October 31, 1864: A hard east wind blew my horse shed down and also the fence.

November 16-17, 1864: A hard east wind blew. It snowed. It blew like a hurricane in the night. It blew over my haystack and shed and buried our horse. The roof was blown off from the south side of the tabernacle, and a great many roofs were blown off in the settlement.

February 12, 1865: The east wind blew and I shoveled snow all day

April 24, 1883: Strong east wind blew down barns, unroofed houses and destroyed many other things.

Charles Rendell Mabey, Our Father’s House: Joseph Thomas Mabey Family History (Salt Lake City: Beverly Craftsmen, 1947), page 52-53.



Joshua with family members in front of the adobe home he built in 1860.

Despite the struggles with nature, John remained a successful farmer. He was one of the first growers to keep honey bees and was known for producing “more honey than anyone else in Utah.”⁶⁷ He was eventually appointed bee inspector for Bountiful in June of 1880 and was a member of the Bountiful Coop for “a great many years.”⁶⁸ His land extended to the west end of the block between Second and Third South on First West where he planted “trees of all kinds on his place and grapes. In fact, it was always a place where one could go and find something good to eat,” remembered Loa, “either apples on the trees or in the cellar, in winter doughnuts in the pantry, a baked potato in the oven. Baked potatoes and bacon were his standbys. He used to take one out to the field to eat between times.”⁶⁹

Although John took an interest in all of his animals, he was particularly fond of horses. Noted as “a horse fancier,” he was often seen at the local races held at the track on the north side of town during Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s day, “providing the snow wasn’t too deep and the roads slick,” reported Charles Maybe. “To this spot hundreds of men and boys repaired. . . many of them congregated at the lower end where the races ended. There they stood, shivered and talked and betted and bantered each other until the breathless moments when the contests were on.”⁷⁰



John Knowles and Mary Jane Crosby

Labor of Love

Both John and Mary Jane were generous with their resources, lending a hand to help others whenever they were able. John often made the trip into Salt Lake City in his wagon to meet emigrant trains coming in from the trail. If there were any who had no place to go, he took them back to his home in Bountiful, where Mary Jane fed and cared for them, often for years. Many children and young men found a home with the Crosby family, including renowned LDS historian B.H. Roberts, who was only nine years old when he crossed the plains to meet his mother in Utah. Roberts' mother happened to be a neighbor of the Crosby's, and she gratefully accepted their offer to house young Brigham when she was too poor to care for him herself.⁷¹ "I hear a lot of men say they used to live at Crosby's when they were boys," said Loa. "They say he was always just that way, willing to help everybody."⁷²

Joshua's Conversion

John's brother Jesse visited their father Joshua while travelling through New York on one of his missions in 1852. While Jesse was still unsuccessful in converting his father, he did persuade Joshua to visit his children and grandchildren in Utah. Seventy-year old Joshua agreed to accompany Jesse west on his return home the next spring, walking over a thousand miles across the plains.

It had been almost fifteen years since Joshua had seen Hannah, Elizabeth, John and Frances, all now married and with families of their own. He spent the winter of 1853-54 renewing his family ties and becoming acquainted with his seventeen grandchildren. Joshua learned much about the Mormons during his sojourn in Utah, but remained stubbornly unconverted. After bidding farewell to his family in the spring of 1854, he retraced his journey eastward.

Joshua remained alone on his Portland farm for five years before deciding to sell out and join his children in Utah. By then he had defened the Mormons against their Chautauqua County detractors for so long he began to sympathize with the Saints and eventually converted himself to their doctrines. He once again prepared to travel almost two thousand miles from Portland to Salt Lake City, this time at the age of eighty.

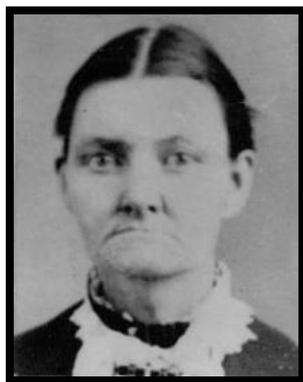
Joshua spent the winter alternating visits with Hannah and Edward Mumford in the city, and John and Mary Jane Crosby in Bountiful. The following summer Joshua travelled to Pine Valley, thirty miles north of St. George, where he spent some time with Frances and Lorenzo Brown. He eventually accepted Jesse and Hannah's invitation to live with them in St. George, where he remained until his death in June, 1874, at the age of ninety-one.

Laid to Rest

Mary Jane continued to hold “open house,” welcoming visitors for Sunday dinner or putting up long-term guests in the spare room upstairs⁷³ until her health began to deteriorate. At the end of January, 1889, Mary Jane came down with a severe cold which rapidly progressed into a fatal case of pneumonia. She died at the age of seventy-three on the morning of January 31,⁷⁴ remembered as “a great lover of home life, quiet, reserved, a good neighbor, faithful wife and wonderful mother.”⁷⁵

John carried on as usual after his wife’s death, “working hard and sharing with everyone up until the last,” said Loa, who remembered her grandfather milked his cows by himself “until the last months of his life.”⁷⁶ He remained healthy and active enough to take the train to Arizona at the age of eighty to visit his sister Frances, and enjoyed the birthday party his children and grandchildren held for him the same year.⁷⁷

John suffered a paralytic stroke sometime in April, 1898, which left him in a “nearly helpless condition” without the use of his right arm and leg.⁷⁸ He died at home three months later on July 15, 1898, shortly after his noon meal.⁷⁹ The funeral was held at the Crosby home the following Sunday morning, after which his body was interred in the Salt Lake City cemetery next to Mary Jane.⁸⁰



Minerva

Mary Jane's death left John as the sole caretaker of their handicapped daughter Minerva, whose "childish mind" and withered left arm had kept her apart from society for many years. Although she was subject to epileptic fits, Minerva was able to do most of the housework and tend to the garden, responsibilities which gave her a sense of belonging and purpose. She took it hard when the neighborhood boys harassed her by calling her names and stealing fruit from behind the home. "Many times she has been heard crying and screaming at the boys, until she was hoarse and she could only screech, and the young thoughtless fellows enjoying it as much as they would a theater," reported the Davis County Clipper in September, 1892, in an effort to control the situation. "Parents, this is cutting to censure you right to your faces, but take it as it is intended; put yourselves in Minvera's place, or imagine you have a child afflicted as she is how would you feel, if the neighbors allowed their children to bother your child?"

Minerva continued to live at home until John's death in 1898. When her care became too burdensome for her family members, she was pronounced "mentally unsound" due to "troubles resulting from epilepsy" by local doctors. She was admitted to the state insane asylum in Provo where she died ten years later at the age of sixty-two. The Davis County Clipper, 14 September, 1892; 15 December, 1899.

ENDNOTES

- ⁴⁵ Thankful Amelia Crosby (1851-1852), #KWVR-586, www.familysearch.org
- ⁴⁶ Sexton records, Salt Lake City Cemetery, Utah Cemetery Inventory database, www.ancestry.com
- ⁴⁷ The wall encompassed what is now roughly 4th North, 2nd West, 5th South and 4th East in the center of Bountiful.
- ⁴⁸ The original cabin survived for many years as a meeting house for the Kimball Camp, Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, who moved the cabin to the Bountiful Second Ward grounds in 1937. Annie Call Carr, *East of Antelope Island* (reprint, Salt Lake City, Utah; Publisher's Press, 1969), page 300, 473.
- ⁴⁹ Jane Alice (Crosby) Hales (1853-1901), #KWNK-18D, www.familysearch.org
- ⁵⁰ John Knowles Crosby (1856-1930), #KWNY-FHB, www.familysearch.org
- ⁵¹ Sexton records, Salt Lake City Cemetery, Utah Cemetery Inventory database, www.ancestry.com
- ⁵² *The Davis County Clipper*, 22 July 1898.
- ⁵³ Loa Hales Burningham, "The Crosby Family History," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ⁵⁴ This home is still standing at 195 South 100 West in Bountiful. The home was later inherited by John's granddaughter, Loa Hales Burningham, who raised her family there. She recalled it was a sturdy home. "When the east wind blows and takes the roofs from houses and uproots trees, we know the house to be safe. Everything John K. Crosby built was built just that way. The old Crosby barn, which was the largest of its day, had to be torn down. It didn't fall down." Loa Hales Burningham, "The Crosby Family History," typescript, ca. 1935. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ⁵⁵ Carr, *East of Antelope Island*, page 473. John built another home at 108 South Main Street, in 1872, selling it for one dollar to Caroline Farnham. John Crosby Jr. bought the home in 1879, and lived there with his family for twenty years.
- ⁵⁶ Loanda J. Hales Burningham, "Life Sketch of Mary Jane Johnson Crosby," typescript, 1935. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁸ The Relief Society sisters met in the hall they paid for on 22 July, 1879. Member Records, Bishop's Report Great Salt Lake City, 28 December, 1852, FHL US/Can 979.2 K2r. Also see: Helen Brough Haacke, *History of the Bountiful First Ward Relief Society, 1857-1961* (Bountiful, Utah: Bountiful First Ward Relief Society).
- ⁵⁹ Annie Call Carr, *East of Antelope Island* (reprint, Salt Lake City, Utah; Publisher's Press, 1969), page 474.
- ⁶⁰ John's quite, retiring personality was well-known. "Grandfather sat up in the stand for years, but no one ever remembers hearing him get up to speak." Burningham, "The Crosby Family History," typescript, ca. 1935.
- ⁶¹ One thousand dollars in 1857 is the equivalent of \$27,000 in 2014.
- ⁶² John was known for driving "the best team the best team and was the only man who could go to Coalville and back for a load of coal in two days." George H. Crosby, Jr., "The Mormon Crosby Family," undated typescript. Copy held by Shelley Dawson Davies.
- ⁶³ Burningham, "The Crosby Family History," typescript, ca. 1935.
- ⁶⁴ Charles Rendell Mabey, *Our Father's House: Joseph Thomas Mabey Family History* (Salt Lake City: Beverly Craftsmen, 1947), page 68.
- ⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, page 69-70.
- ⁶⁶ Kate B. Carter, *Our Pioneer Heritage, Volume 3* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Daughters of the Utah Pioneers, 1958-1977), page 261-332.
- ⁶⁷ *The Davis County Clipper*, 22 July 1898.

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- ⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 18 February, 1898.
- ⁶⁹ Burningham, "The Crosby Family History," typescript, ca. 1935.
- ⁷⁰ Mabey, *Our Father's House: Joseph Thomas Mabey Family History*, page 205-206.
- ⁷¹ Truman G. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith: The B.H. Roberts Story* (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1980), page 53.
- ⁷² Burningham, "The Crosby Family History," typescript, ca. 1935.
- ⁷³ Burningham, "Life Sketch of Mary Jane Johnson Crosby," typescript, 1935.
- ⁷⁴ *The Deseret News*, 14 February, 1889.
- ⁷⁵ Burningham, "Life Sketch of Mary Jane Johnson Crosby," typescript, 1935
- ⁷⁶ Burningham, "The Crosby Family History," typescript, ca. 1935.
- ⁷⁷ *The Davis County Clipper*, 24 August, 1892.
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 21 January, 1898.
- ⁷⁹ *The Deseret News*, 18 July, 1898; 23 July, 1898.
- ⁸⁰ John is buried in the Salt Lake City Cemetery, plot D-11-15-4W. Sexton Records, Salt Lake City Cemetery Records, 1848-1992, www.ancestry.com

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