



Judson Tolman⁽¹⁾



The heritage of Judson Tolman is deeply rooted in the history of this great land of ours. His forebearers were a part of the colonization of new England. They fought in the struggle for American independence. The Tolman family were enthusiastic participants in the building of American institutions of freedom and democracy. Judson Tolman lived during a period when the young nation was expanding its frontiers westward. His parents, Nathan and Sarah Hewitt Tolman moved from Kennebee County -Maine, in 1837 to Iowa. Judson was eleven years old when this move was made. He was born 14 Jul 1826; at Hope Lincoln County Maine. In Maine he grew up with a love of fishing, hunting and woodcraft for Maine at this time was still in a pioneer state.

Little is written about the family as it lived in Maine and Iowa. Two significant events occurred in Iowa that had an impact on Judson's life. In 1843 his father died. In 1844 he made contact with the Mormon Church. Details of this event are difficult to find. Judson was impressed enough so that on 12 Jan. 1845 he was baptized a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Also about this time his brothers Cyrus and

Benjamin also were baptized. From this date until his death he devoted himself to the cause of Mormonism, as it was his capacity to understand that cause. His faithfulness is reflected in his being ordained a Seventy in the Priesthood only three months after his baptism.



Within a year he had moved to Nauvoo, Illinois, where the Mormons, under the dynamic leadership of Joseph Smith, had built a beautiful city. As a young man not yet twenty he met, fell in love with, and married Sarah Lucretia Holbrook (12 Jan. 1846). She was the daughter of Joseph and Nancy Lampson Holbrook.

In knowing the history of the Mormon Church it would be understood that these were trying times. The Prophet had been martyred in June, 1844. The body of the church was adjusting to new leadership. Persecution of every kind was being imposed upon them. They were forced by armed mobs to leave their homes with no more than horse and wagon could carry. Their Holy Temple was desecrated and destroyed. It was in the mist of these upheavals that Judson joined the church and married a choice daughter of Zion. One cannot help but wonder that these decisions were made with firm conviction in the rightness of Mormonism. Among those who know the Tolman breed it can be said that they are stalwart in following their convictions; whatever they may be.

Within two weeks after his marriage Judson left Nauvoo without his bride to serve with the Hosea Stout Company in pioneering the route across Iowa to Council Bluffs. This was the vanguard group who

prepared the way for the exodus of the Mormons from Nauvoo to eventually settle in Utah. He was employed in building bridges, roads, and in guarding the movement from its enemies. In the late spring of that year he returned to Nauvoo for his wife and moved in company with her father, Joseph Holbrook, to a temporary settlement at Winter Quarters. For over two years they struggled, sacrificed, and subsisted in an area that was then primarily a wilderness. As they traveled and endured these hardships they were "joyful" nonetheless. As a brief illustration of their courage and hope here is a statement from the journal of Joseph Holbrook. "April 20th (1847) traveled six miles and met my family with their wagon stuck in the mud on a small branch (stream) all alone. Found my family all well almost out of bread stuff of every description and so had some corn meal for them. Judson Tolman, my son-in-law who had left me to return to his family had helped move my family with his own. He buried his only child, a daughter about two weeks old, two or three days before at the burying grounds on the bluffs near Puncas, where about twenty-three of our brethren and sisters had been buried during our short stay in that place. Yet in all our tribulations, we felt joyful.

It is hard to imagine the range of difficulties and emotions that this young couple had experienced by this point in their married life. Judson was twenty years of age when he buried his first child, who had lived barely two weeks. This infant daughter, given the name Sarah M., was born March 28, 1847. Her brief life ended on April 12, 1847. The young mother was fifteen years and three months old. Considering the rigors of having crossed Iowa in a rough-riding wagon and the lack of regular, nutritious food during her pregnancy, it should surprise no one that the infant perished. In a memorial address to his grandfather, delivered by Charles R. Mabey at the Bountiful Tabernacle the afternoon of Sunday, July 9, 1916, the following reaction is recorded: "I still see the father, aged twenty, with his girl wife, aged fourteen, ill and unable to accompany him, placing his dead baby two weeks old under his right arm, carrying a shovel over his left shoulder and with this tender burden trudging back over the desert trail four miles to give that little white corpse a decent burial near a spot of greenery and civilization. with a coffin made of his own hands and a grave dug by his own exertions.

The poignancy of this moment and the impact of the pending departure for the Salt Lake Valley seem to have overshadowed (in our minds) the fact that Judson and Sarah Lucretia conceived a second child almost immediately. Nancy J. Tolman was born February 4, 1848 and was barely four months of age when the young family commenced their crossing of the plains. This mother was now sixteen and carried this infant daughter across the plains.

Wherever they were, for even a short stay, they applied themselves to their tasks as if it were a permanent location. Always planting crops, always making homes, always industrious in providing for the needs of their families; never losing faith, never giving up hope.

Although Judson Tolman and Joseph Holbrook were ready to begin the trek to Utah in late 1847, they were encouraged to wait until the spring of 1848 to make the trip. It was no doubt wisdom on the part of Brigham Young that an advanced party establish a colony first before families were brought to Utah. A year later on 20 Sep 1848 Judson Tolman arrived in Salt Lake Valley as a member of the Brigham Young Company and the Daniel Garn Fifty. He was in company with his two brothers, Cyrus and Benjamin, and the Joseph Holbrook family.

The first winter in the valley was described by Alice Leone Paterson Wilkinson in her history of Judson Tolman as follows. "Judson Tolman's first home here was a little dugout in the Ninth Ward. A great many hardships had to be borne that winter on account of the scarcity of crops. They were obliged to live for six weeks on nothing but wild onions and milk. The next year the crops were very successful.

From one peck of seed received from the pioneers, he raised twenty-five bushels of potatoes. About the July the first barley was ripe and they ground it and made bread, the first they had eaten for a long

time. In July 1849 Judson left Salt Lake City and located in Bountiful, Davis County, having asked for the privilege of taking up a farm, he built a house there." In his own words here is a description of his activities in these early days of Utah. This account also comes from Leone Wilkinson's history of Judson Tolman. "I helped to fight the crickets in 1849 and that year, together with two other families, settled in Tooele, Utah. We were the first settlers there. In 1850 I was one of a company of thirty-one called by Brigham Young to serve as guard on the Southwestern frontiers of Utah, under Captain Phineus White. I served three and one-half years in that capacity and was in battles with the Indians where 16 Indians and one white man were killed. In 1852 the Indians took the last yoke of oxen and cow I had. In the fall of 1854 I moved to Bountiful, Utah."

Judson went to Tooele with Josiah Call and Samuel Meacham. He is credited with having built a sawmill in the Tooele area. His move to Bountiful was apparently encouraged by the loss of much of his goods to the Indians. His home for the rest of his life was in Bountiful. His occupational pursuits were in farming and lumbering. He built and operated four or five sawmills in the vicinity of Bountiful. The chronicles of Utah are filled with exciting events of a people struggling with the elements of the barren desert to make it a productive and habitable place in which to live.

Heber C. Kimball prophesied that goods would be had cheaply and in abundance in the Salt Lake Valley. This prophecy was fulfilled when the Gold Rush to California in 1849 brought people through Utah in great numbers. Judson Tolman records that he witnessed this condition by selling an Indian pony for a one-hundred dollar wagon and harness. He saw his crops threatened by grasshoppers and describes a simple technique as a remedy. Two men stretching a long rope across a field would move it along frightening the insects off the field into the Great Salt Lake where the grasshopper would die. Part of the crop could be preserved in this way. He speaks of "Uncle Sam's Army", a reference to the coming of Johnston's army to Utah. On this occasion he moved his family to Provo and stood with the Saints, ready to put to the torch all his earthy possessions to prevent their falling into the hands of an invading Army.

Judson Tolman was a leader in his church duties. He was ordained a Seventy in June 1846. A singular honor for one so soon a member of the church. In 1877, when fifty years of age, he accepted a call to serve as a missionary in his native Maine. This interesting account of a missionary experience reflects the nature of his personality. Here again we quote from the Leone Wilkinson History. "Like most missionaries his enemies tried to overcome him, but he was always gifted with a ready answer. Once a sectarian minister after having railed the Mormons uselessly, finally said, "Well what about the Mountain Meadow Massacre? You can't uphold your people there." Brother Tolman answered, "I will take a Yankee's privilege and answer you by asking another question. Do you remember the Haun's Mill Massacre? It was mostly Methodists who did that work. Are you going to blame the Methodists for that, or the men who did it?" The minister answered, "Why the men who did it, of course..... Then, said Brother Tolman, "be as lenient to the poor 'buded Mormon's."



5 Judson was ordained a High Priest, and ten

years later a Patriarch. He is said to have given over two thousand Patriarchal Blessings. His spiritual stature is projected in this record. "He has witnessed a great many spiritual manifestations in his life, he has had many visions and lived to see some of them fulfilled. At one time he was permitted to visit the spirit-world and he says that, with his spiritual eyes, his sight was not confined to objects near at hand as with the natural eye, and that he moved much more rapidly than by natural walking. He saw there a sea of glass upon which walked spirits (he supposed they were spirits) two and two clasped in each other's arms, and tongue cannot express how beautiful they were. It impressed him how careful mortal man should be to merit the purity that he possessed before coming here." Again from the Leone Wilkinson History.

Sarah Lucretia Holbrook was Judson's first wife. These two suffered, sacrificed, and rejoiced in their life together. They had fourteen children in twenty-three years. The difficulties of child bearing in this pioneer setting no doubt shortened Sarah Lucretia's life. She died in 1869 of jaundice and childbirth. The baby lived three hours and died by her side.

Judson's second wife was Mary Reeves Coleman. They were married in 1852. Mary the widow of George Coleman who had lost his life in the Mormon Battalion. (Most likely of an illness since the Mormon Battalion never engaged in battle). Of Judson's and Mary's lives together we know nothing. No record of children has been found. There is a church record that the marriage was canceled on the 26th of January, 1857. But beyond this no information has been uncovered. This relationship is one of interest, but hardly speculation.

In 1856 Judson married Sophia Merrell. There is some question as to the compatibility of this union. They had four children. In 1869 Sophia left the home in Bountiful and moved to Plymouth, Cache County, Utah. Records indicate that this marriage was canceled by the church in 1869 and again in 1874. No reason is known. Sophia remarried Garret Hopkins Wolverton. She died in childbirth in 1875. The cancellation of the marriage of Judson and Sophia may be coincident with a visit that Sophia Merrell paid Brigham Young in 1869. We may conclude that a divorce was granted as a consequence of what took place at this visit.

Judson's fourth wife was Jane Z. Stoker, a young lady who came to fill the void left by the loss of Sarah Lucretia. Not only did she mother the older family, some of whom were older than she was, but she bore Judson ten children of her own. Her home was remembered by the grandchildren as one in which you were always welcome. She was a generous and loving wife and mother. In our day it is difficult for us to conceive of a girl assuming so much responsibility at the tender year of fourteen. She lived to see both families raised. She outlived her husband ten years.

1. Thomas Tolman Family Magazine, June 1997, "A Brief History of the life of Judson Tolman", p. 12, Bountiful, UT.

2. Birth place documented in "Judson Tolman - Pioneer, Lumberman, Patriarch", E. Dennis Tolman; p.1; Family History Publishers, Bountiful, UT; 1955

3. Yancey Tolman Family Book of Remembrance - Genealogy with Allied Lines, Compiled by Leonidas DeVon Mecham, December 25, 1952, "Judson Tolman and the Tolman Family" p.162.

4. Mabey, Charles R., Our Fathers House, p. 128 Quoted by Tolman, E. Dennis in Judson Tolman - Pioneer, Lumberman, Patriarch, p. 8.