

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HENRY BROWN WILDE OF COALVILLE UTAH

By O. Gerald Wilde

Henry Brown Wilde, the youngest child of John Wilde and Jane Brown, was born 11 Jun 1811 at Crowd Hill, Hampshire, England. Hampshire is frequently called by the abbreviated appellation of Hants. Henry, his two older brothers John and William, his sisters Hannah, Sarah, Mary, and Martha and their parents lived in the Owslebury area of Hampshire. Henry spent most of his early life in the Owslebury, Crowd Hill, Fair Oak area of the County. These three towns are only four or five miles apart. Crowd Hill is about seven miles straight south of Winchester. Fair Oak was another mile further south. Owslebury was about five miles southeast of Winchester.

In 1840 he married Sarah Hewlett., the only daughter of Andrew and Sarah Alder of Otterbourne, Hampshire. Henry was about 29 and Sarah about 23 years of age at the time of their marriage. Sarah had served as a maid in the homes of wealthy people for seven years, four years at one place and three at another. Their first child, Thomas was born on January 20, 1841. The family soon moved to Southampton where the second child Sarah was born. They moved again and Henry was born in Otterbourne, then to Portswood where the fourth child Emma was born January 19 1849.

It was during the year 1849 that the Henry Wild family heard and accepted the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Henry was the first to be baptized. He was baptized July 12, 1849. Sarah and Thomas were baptized July 30, 1849.

In 1851, with four children under the age of 11, the Wildes sailed for America. For about nine weeks, the family lived on the ship, the Ellen Maria. Near the end of their journey, while the ship was passing through the Caribbean, a daughter was born to them on March 28, 1851 . They appropriately named the child Ellen Maria Martha after the ship and the nurse who was in attendance. After landing at New Orleans, Henry spent the year working to gather supplies for the journey to Salt Lake City.

In the summer of 1852, they started for Utah. They traveled north to Council Bluffs and from there crossed the plains. They had their own wagon with a team of oxen and one cow. On August 20, while camped near the Platte River , tragedy struck the family. Henry, their 6½-year-old son, fell from the tree in which he was playing. He soon died of injuries and was buried the next morning. Margaret Rhead, granddaughter of Henry B. and Sarah Wilde, relates the following account: "The buried him the next morning, and then had to drive on and leave him alone on the plains. Grandmother has told me about it many times and said that of all the trials she ever passed through, that was the hardest of all. To leave that precious body there buried in the grave, she knew would be dug open by wild beast was almost more than she could bear."

The family arrived in Salt Lake City in September and attended October Conference. They stayed in Salt Lake a short time and moved to Provo where they spent the winter of 1852-1853. They lived in a tent and a covered wagon all winter. Henry went back to Salt Lake City in early spring, leaving his family in Provo. He worked for a short time with the crew cutting the granite for the Salt Lake Temple.

They returned to Salt Lake City in the spring of 1853 and settled in Sugarhouse, named for the Sugar mill that was built there. Henry worked as a member of the construction crew that built the mill, the first of its kind in Utah. A picture of the mill can be found in the book *Utah, the Storied Domain*, by J. Cecil Alter, on Page 141. The following commentary is given by Margaret Rhead about the family's experiences while living in Sugarhouse: "Grandfather had ten acres of land, and his son Thomas and daughter Emma, my mother, herded cows where the town of Sugarhouse now stands. They walked from there to the tabernacle block to meetings, over 2 ½ miles. There were no sidewalks and not very good roads, and my grandmother made herself cloth shoes to walk in and carried her others to put on when she got there." While at Sugarhouse, they experienced all the hardships and privations of that time. They dug roots and gathered greens for food and were hungry many times. It was during this time at Sugarhouse that Henry's youngest son Joseph Henry was born 21 August 1853. The family moved to Spanish Fork for a short time, but soon returned to Sugarhouse where they remained until 1859. While living in Sugarhouse, Henry B. was ordained a Seventy on April 10 1853. Henry Brown Wilde was ordained a High Priest on April 21, 1856, by A.O. Smoot. He received his patriarchal blessing on November 29 of that year from John Young. On October 11, 1855, Henry and Sarah both received their endowments and were sealed in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City.

Henry Brown Wilde played an important role in the establishment of Coalville, Utah. William H. Smith and Andrew Williams desired to settle in the Coalville Area. They had observed that wheat that had been dropped by accident by travelers from Fort Bridger had grown. They determined to settle on the Weber River. The two men made a temporary settlement at the mouth of Echo Canyon. They returned to their homes in Sugarhouse to encourage others to join the settlement. In a few days they returned with the addition to their numbers, the three more efficient men, Henry B. Wilde, Thomas G. Franklin, and Joseph Stallings. The new colony cultivated a field of four or five acres, the same ground being now occupied by part of the town of Coalville, including the Stake House. Although the sowing and planting were not completed until the 8th of June, a fair crop of wheat and vegetables was raised. "Grandfather and William Smith came out during the summer and each built a log cabin before bringing their families," relates Margaret Rhead. The Wilde cabin was on the site where the Coalville Co-op now stands, and the Smith cabin where the Summit Furniture and Mercantile Company store is located.

It was not long before the discovery of coal in the vicinity was made and mines were opened in two of three places near the mouth of Chalk Creek. The little settlement was named Chalk Creek on account of its location on that stream, but after coal had been discovered on the town site, the name was changed to Coalville. Tulledge gives credit to Henry B. Wilde for discovering coal on the Weber River. "Joe Lewis and Henry B. Wilde were the first to discover coal on the Weber. Andrew Johnson, a miner, was associated with them and did the first labor in mining the mine on ground now near the south end of the town of Coalville." This was in 1861 or 1862. Tulledge makes this observation about the quality of coal in the area: "The coal from this mine is the best in the county for domestic purposes, but has been abandoned on account of financial difficulties. The development of the coal beds under and around Coalville had been destructed by the Union Pacific Railroad refusing to convey the coal to market on reasonable terms."

Not only was Henry B. Wilde active in the economic development of Coalville, but he also served as spiritual leader. Like most early colonies in Utah, the spiritual and temporal affairs of

the settlement for several of the years were under the fatherly direction of an elder of the Mormon Church. In this important capacity Henry B. Wilde acted, first as President of the Branch and afterwards when the Coalville Ward was organized in 1861, as Bishop by appointment.

In 1870 a branch of the Union Pacific Railroad was built to Coalville, a distance of about five miles from Echo. Henry B. Wilde had a contract for a piece of the work and Sarah cooked for the men who were working for him.

Henry B. Wilde was also a political leader of the city and county. On March 9, 1863, he was installed as Selectman for Summit County, with A.B. Williams and Joseph Stalling. The first election in Coalville was held early in 1867 and every two years thereafter. Henry B. Wilde was elected as a Councilor that year. The members elect of the first city council met in the vestry room of the schoolhouse, and proceeded to organize, in accordance with the act of incorporation, with the mayor elect, William W. Clough (Cluff) chairman pro-tem and John Boyden, clerk. It consisted of William W. Cluff, mayor, H. B. Wilde, William H. Smith, Hyrum B. Clements, Ira Hinckley, and John Staley, councilors. H.B. Wilde was re-elected as councilor and started his second term on March 5, 1869. The third city council was organized on the 4th of March 1871 with H.B. Wilde mayor.

On November 12, 1872 Mayor Wilde resigned. He and his wife returned to England to live at his place of birth and early life. They returned to Coalville in 1873. Henry B. was again elected as Councilor. He was elected a member of the fifth city council of Coalville on the 15th of February 1875, and died on the 23rd of the same month. The fifth city council organized March 1, 1875, with Alma Eldredge, mayor, William Hodson, Henry Evans, H. L. Hawkins, William W. Cluff, and John Robinson as councilors. John Robinson was appointed to fill H. B. Wilde's place.

At the age of 64, Henry Brown Wilde was laid to rest in the Coalville Cemetery. The following excerpt from a notice of his death in the Deseret News is a testimony of the character of the man worthy of being placed on record, "He was a man of unblemished character and unsullied reputation, and possessed to an eminent degree, the qualities of God's noblest work, an honest man. As a member of the church, he was earnest and sincere, full of integrity and a firm believer in the religion he had espoused. He was the first Bishop appointed over the Coalville Ward, and during the fourteen years of his incumbency of the office, he won the goodwill and respect of all with whom the duties of his office brought him in connection."