

Perry Fitzgerald

22 Dec 1815 - 4 Oct 1889



acknowledge God in all things, but never take His name in vain or use profane language.”¹

The sky shown a clear blue as the air was crisp and refreshing. It was beautiful Sunday in the pioneer camp. The date was May 23, 1847. At 12 noon the Saints were gathered together to listen to the words of the prophet, Brigham Young. “The President was pleased to see so much union and disposition to obey council among the brethren, and he hoped and prayed that it might continue and increase. He wanted the brethren to seek after knowledge and be willing to

After dismissal of the meeting two of the brethren walked out a short distance from the camp. Elder Clayton read his journal of the past four days to Elder Kimball who seemed pleased to listen. The two elders then knelt down together in prayer and poured their souls to the Lord. About the same time Luke S. Johnson and Thomas and Bullock had climbed to the top of “Observation Bluff” to engrave the altitude on a cedar tree. They were 235 feet above the Platte River. While

there a rattle snake continued to shake its seven rattles. Brother Johnson put his rifle to his shoulder and shot the snake's head off with a bang, cutting its body in two pieces.

In the afternoon the pleasant weather suddenly began to change with the coming of a severe windstorm. The clouds began to gather blackness before the brethren could climb of the bluff and return to camp.

The wind was threatening a hurricane as it blew violently and was succeeded by hail, rain, thunder, and lightning, which did not let up until sunset. The storm taught the pioneers the necessity of having good stout bows to their wagons with the covers tightly fastened, for the very strongest covers seem in danger of being torn to pieces and the wagons blown over. After the wind ceased the temperature turned extremely cold. In fact it became so bad that the brethren feared for the safety of their animals. They immediately covered their horses and oxen with blankets, getting up several times during the night to check on them. It continued to rain on and off during the night causing the animals to shiver with cold, but at dawn all was well in the camp. Such drastic weather changes were frequent in that part of the country. By morning the sky had cleared and the storm was completely over.²

Such might have been the events of an average day in the life of Perry Fitzgerald, a member of John S. Higbee's 11th company of ten.³ Born on December 20, 1815 in Fayette County, Pennsylvania he was the son of John Fitzgerald and Leah Phillips. The prefix, Fitz comes from Normal French and is another word for "son." Hence, Fitzgerald is a patronymical name which literally means "son of Gerald."⁴ The name Perry is the French form of Peter which means "rock." In the New Testament we read that Jesus gave Simeon the name Cepahs "rock" in

Aramaic. Perry could possibly also be a variant of the Welsh Parry which is translated means “son of Harry.”⁵

After having received the gospel in Illinois in 1842 Perry Fitzgerald was ordained an elder four years later in 1846. During the spring of that year he left his home in Illinois and moved to Winter Quarters with the Saints. There he stayed until the following spring when he continued westward across the plains as one of the original pioneers under President Brigham Young. Perry Fitzgerald arrived with the Saints on July 24th, 1847 in the Great Salt Lake Valley. He first resided in Salt Lake City where he helped in building a fort. He returned to Winters Quarters with Brigham Young in the fall of 1847 and set out across the plains a second time on May 26, 1848 in company with his family and 1,220 pioneers, once again under President Brigham Young. In 1849 he moved to Mill Creek. A few years later he settled in Draper where he lived the rest of his life. Perry's first wife, Mary Ann Cosat of Kentucky died in April 1851. She left her husband with five children, all of which died at an early age with the exception of John, the eldest.

After the death of the bride of his youth Perry was married to Ann Wilson. Being a native of Oldcoats, Nottinghamshire, England she was born November 10, 1812 and died November 21, 1870. Ann was the mother of three children. One of which, Mary Ann born September 16, 1852 in Draper, Utah, was married to James Valentine Allen. Perry again married a third time to a woman from Manchester, England, Agnes Wadsworth. She bore her husband thirteen children. Agnes was born in the summer of 1836, the twenty ninth of July. She passed away thirteen years after Perry died, on March 23, 1902. By his tree wives Perry Fitzgerald was the father of twenty children, twelve sons and eight daughters.

In 1856 he was ordained to the office of a High Priest. He was faithful in the charge of his duties as a Latter-day Saint, serving for thirty years in the Draper Ward as a ward teacher. He was also ordained and set apart as Bishop Stewart's Second Counselor in the absence of Henry Day on March 2, 1884.⁶

Perry Fitzgerald was scrupulously honest in all of his dealings with his fellow men and is said to have shown much valor in the Walker Indian War in executing the commands of his superior officer. On the 2nd day of March, 1880 he was given a Patriarchal Blessing under the hands of Joseph William Smith. He was a descendant of the House of Israel through the loins of Ephriam, a chosen birthright.⁷ He lived to the ripe old age of seventy four years, ten months, and thirteen days. The last eighteen months of his life were spent confined to bed with Bright's disease of the kidneys. He passed away on October 4th, 1889. At the time of his death he had fifty grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren, all of which were members of the church. At a reunion of the Fitzgerald family two hundred and ten descendants of Perry Fitzgerald were accounted for.⁸

Leaving us with a praiseworthy heritage, Brother Perry Fitzgerald left this world a true follower of Jesus Christ. His soul surely must have been filled with the peace that comes only from keeping the commandments and eagerly living the principles of the gospel. Not only was he a leader among the people of his day, he exemplified the kind of a Saint that we, as his posterity, are striving to be today.

1. Andrew Jensen, Assistant LDS Church Historian, Day by Day with the Utah Pioneers(Sunday, May 23, 1847 – paragraph 4)

2. Jensen, various information taken from that day.
3. Crossing the Plains Index, Perry Fitzgerald - member of the 11th Company of 10(April 17, 1847, page 1)
4. Susa Young Gates, Surname Book of Racial History (Salt Lake City: General Board of the Relief Society Publication, 1918)
5. Alfred J. Kolatch, The Name Dictionary (New York: Jonathan David Publishers, 1967)
6. Draper Ward records, Perry Fitzgerald set apart as 2nd Counselor to Bishop Stewart(1st and 2nd
7. Patriarchal Blessing Index, Perry Fitzgerald patriarchal blessing verified (Churh Historian's Office: Volume 32 page 46)
8. LDS Biographical Encyclopedia, Perry Fitzgerald's Life (Volume III page 628)

By Bonnie Jean Kerbs, 1977

Perry Fitzgerald

(<http://drapercommunity.org/fitzgeraldhistory.html>)

Perry Fitzgerald was born in Fayette County, Pennsylvania on December 22, 1815. When he was about 20 years old, he moved to Vermillion, Illinois where he met and Married Mary Ann Casot in 1839.

Mary Ann was born in Kentucky on September 30, 1821. In 1842 the couple joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormon Church). They moved to Nauvoo, where the church had its headquarters.

When the church began its exodus from Nauvoo to the west, Perry Fitzgerald was chosen by church leader Brigham Young to serve as a guide in the first pioneer company. Perry left Mary Ann and his oldest son, John, to travel with the first company. Two other sons had died from cholera.

Perry Fitzgerald helped to plant the first crops and build the first fort in Salt Lake City. He was chosen by Brigham Young to travel with the return company to escort remaining church members to the Salt Lake Valley. Perry and his family first were given property in Salt Lake City - now on the site of the City County building. They moved to the Millcreek area where they spent two winters. Two more sons, Manesseh, and Perry Jr., were born there.

The family is listed on the 1850 census in Draper, a settlement then known as Willow Creek. There they homesteaded a parcel of farmland in the area between what is now 12400 S. and 13100 S. Mary Ann Fitzgerald died on April 19, 1851- probably in Millcreek. Elizabeth Shipley took the boys to care for at her home in Draper. Family

tradition states that, after Mary Ann's death, Perry moved permanently to Draper. He built a three-room log cabin on the north banks of the Willow Creek. In late 1851 Perry married Ann Wilson. Ann was born in England on November 10, 1812. Ann had two daughters, Mary Ann (born in 1852 and probably named for Mary Ann Casot) and Alfreda (born in 1854).

Around 1852, Agnes Wadsworth, a young convert to the LDS Church, moved to Draper and worked as a nanny in the Fitzgerald home.

Agnes was born in Manchester, England on July 30, 1836. Perry married Agnes on March 21, 1853 within the church-sanctioned system of polygamy. Agnes bore thirteen children between 1854 and 1879 - and remarkable for the time period, all children lived to maturity, married and had children of their own. (They all died of the same ailment - old age.) Indeed, Agnes was considered to have some healing powers in the community, not only due to the fact that her children survived several epidemics.

During the late 1850's Perry and his son John assumed military duties during the Utah War and the Walker Indian War. It is said that Perry 'Fulfilled faithfully every command'.

After a large storm in the early 1860's runoff caused flooding of the creek and the Fitzgerald cabin was moved to higher ground - closer to where the brick house would be located. According to various sources, Perry built the brick house either during or just after the Civil War. The family claims it was the first fired brick home built south of 6400 South.

While this claim is uncertain, the Fitzgerald house is likely the oldest surviving brick home in Draper.

Perry Fitzgerald supported his large family by farming and raising
Perry Fitzgerald

cattle and sheep. He was also a horse breeder. He had a large holding that required hired hands (two are listed on the 1860 and 1870 census) as well as the help of his grown sons. Ann Wilson Fitzgerald died on November 21, 1870 in Draper. Agnes Fitzgerald's third son, born in 1864, was given Wilson as his middle name, so it is presumed the two wives had a good relationship.

The Fitzgerald home was known as a haven in the community. One evening, Orrin Porter Rockwell, bodyguard to Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, rode to Draper pursued by a posse. Porter asked his friend Perry Fitzgerald to hide him, so Perry turned his back to porter and pointed with his hand to a thicket where Porter could safely hide.

Minutes later the posse arrived and Perry was truthfully able to state that Porter had been there but he did not see which way he went.

Though Perry was a faithful church attendee, many of his children were more relaxed and numerous young people in Draper would congregate at the Fitzgerald home on Sundays. One writer records "there were more wagons and horses at the Fitzgerald's than at church. If Agnes would insist on taking all those who would come to her home and lead them down to church, it would fill the meeting house."

After suffering from back pain and Bright's disease of the kidneys for several years Perry Fitzgerald died in his home on October 4, 1889.

Agnes remained in the home with several of her children until her death on March 23, 1902.

The home remained in possession of the Fitzgerald descendants until it and the adjacent land was sold to Draper City with the understanding the home would be preserved.

Perry was a kind and considerate father and was admired for his goodness and gentle ways. One of the annual Christmas customs of the family was father Perry bringing home a barrel or keg of candy which all enjoyed. He was a good provider and never turned anyone from his door. He also loved to dance. He was an honest, unassuming man, yet had the moral courage to oppose wrong and defend the right under all circumstances.

Perry had a team of fine horses which Brigham Young jokingly asked him for and Perry said he would rather be cut off from the church than give his beautiful horses to brother Brigham.