

# JANE LEWIS ROBERTS THOMAS

## Welsh LDS convert, Malad Pioneer

August 23, 1854 - Jan 24, 1947

**Background information on Wales.** The modern Gwynedd county was originally created on April 1, 1974 under the Local Government Act 1972. It covered the entirety of the former administrative counties of Anglesey, and Caernarvonshire along with all of Merionethshire apart from a few parishes. The village of Dinas Mawddwy is situated in the southern part of the Snowdonia National Park, just 7 miles from the popular town of Dolgellau. The surrounding countryside is a shade greener and smoother than its rocky northern counterpart, but the mountains are just as inspiring and the walking is great.. Dinas Mawddwy is close to the market towns Machynlleth <sup>1</sup> (where David Giles Roberts was born) and Dolgellau (market day every Friday). Nearby is the Meirion Mill where you can buy gifts, jewelry, pottery and crafts, woollens and much more. With stunning views of the mountains and River Dyfi, the Meirion Mill <sup>2</sup> was the terminus of the Old Mawddwy Railway. Next to the entrance gate, the double arched Packhorse Bridge, built over 300 years ago, spans the river.

### Jane's story begins: <sup>3</sup>

Jane Lewis Roberts Thomas was born on August 23, 1854, in Dinas Mawddwy Merionethshire North Wales to Edward Giles and Elizabeth Lewis Roberts.<sup>4</sup> Jane Lewis Roberts was born at 2 p.m. in the parlour of the Robert's home in Whilcot St. Dinas Mawddwy Merionethshire North Wales. She was christened by the Deacons Edward Roberts and John Davies, who took her in their arms. John Davies, leader of the Cymanfa [Meeting] prayed, 3 November 1854. <sup>5</sup> Jane used to go to church with a young Presbyterian friend as a young girl in Wales. After the Mormon missionaries had contacted the Roberts family, Jane remembers her father told her that she and her family would be going to a different church. It seems that the Mormon missionaries were in the Roberts home quite often. Her younger sister, "Maggie", was always pleased when the missionaries gave her piggy-back' rides.

When Jane was nine years old, she was baptized, but she and the other family members were baptized again after they arrived in Malad Valley.

On April 30, 1866, the Roberts family left Liverpool, England in company with other saints, and embarked on a voyage to Zion. <sup>6</sup>Some days the wind was so strong against them, that they were blown back and at evening they would find themselves farther from their destination than they had been that morning.

There were about seven hundred people on board. After about six weeks, a very tired group of people sailed into New York Harbor. It was about seven p.m. when they disembarked and you can well imagine that these emigrants craved a change of diet, and a place to call home, until preparations could be made to journey west.

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<sup>1</sup> Machynlleth is where Jane's father, David Giles Roberts was born.

<sup>2</sup> Steve & Janet Wilcox visited the mill and Machynlleth in June 2001.

<sup>3</sup> *This material is compiled from Jane L. Thomas's memories and from the history of the Utah Pioneers. It was organized by Lavon Henderson Jamison. She gave this tribute in the Malad Third Ward, Malad City, Idaho, the Sunday after Grandmother Thomas's birthday.*

<sup>4</sup> Edward Giles Robert Journal p. 2

<sup>5</sup> Roberts journal p. 1

<sup>6</sup> Welsh Mormon History site:

<http://www.welshmormonhistory.org/viewimmigrant.php?immigrantid=3485>

After a few weeks, and several modes of travel, these saints joined other saints in Missouri. The Roberts family became part of the James Chipman Co. for the trek west. Jane was now almost twelve, and her sister Margaret was nine. The family now owned a wagon, horses, and three or four cows. The cows were often used to pull the wagon. During the journey across the plains they were on the outlook for unfriendly Indians. For five days the camp had been on constant watch for the threatened Indian attacks. After the tension lessened and all weapons had been stored away in the bottom of the wagons, the attack came, one evening as they were camped in a narrow valley. They were engrossed in the preparation and eating of a late meal, the saints were horrified to see Indians closing in on them. Many arrows were shot into the camp circle--but the main purpose of the raid was to drive off the cattle and horses, which were grazing outside the camp at the time. The raid was a success for the Indians. From then on Jane walked a great deal since the Indians had taken their horses.

Later in the journey west they were crossing a large river in a boat during another river crossing Jane remembered struggling in quick-sand, and the fear of drowning loomed before her. In Wyoming the company was forced to stay for several weeks because Jane had the chicken-pox and Maggie had the measles.

At one place along the way the ground was covered with a white substance that resembled snow. A missionary told them it was soda, and advised them to take a flour sack full. On October 2, 1866, the James Chipman Co., arrived in Salt Lake City. Only a few shade trees appeared on the landscape. While in the Salt Lake valley the family acquired some cattle. After spending about ten days there, a group of saints, including the Roberts family, journeyed to Malad Valley. When they arrived in Malad, they found about seven families and only four or five houses. The Roberts family lived in a dugout on the public square for some time. After the town was surveyed, the Roberts family moved to the lot that is now just south of the L.D.S. First Ward LDS Chapel. They lived there in a dugout until a two room log house was constructed. David R. Thomas, a half-cousin, was the first white child born in Malad Valley. (He was the father of Lillian Thomas Talbot's good friend Sue Ward)

Jane Lewis Roberts was married to David Davis Thomas, February 8, 1874. In 1877 they made their home up Deep Creek, where they resided until David's death. He died July 22, 1922. Mary Louise Henderson, one of their children was born in Malad on July 24, 1880 and grew up on Grandfather Thomas' homestead up Deep Creek. The Thomas homestead was located about a mile downstream from the Henderson ranch home. Grandfather Thomas died in 1922 and the homestead was then operated by Mother's youngest brother, Robert. After Uncle Robert's death, the Thomas homestead was operated by his son Sam (Gordon) Thomas until his death in a tractor accident in 2004.

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David Henderson recalled: "Grandma Thomas lived a block away from our Malad home. I spent a great deal of time there when in Malad. We subscribed to the *Deseret News* during the winter. As the *Deseret News* didn't publish on Sunday, I always went to Grandma's to read the Sunday funnies from the *Salt Lake Tribune*. Uncle Edward was a bachelor most of his life and lived with Grandma. My cousin Lillian (Talbot), who is my age, lived with and cared for Grandma for many years until she married Andie in 1938. Her older sister, Deloris, had lived with Grandma until she graduated from high school in 1932. "

Lillian remembered one time when she was taking care of her Grandma Thomas; it was her birthday, she didn't think anyone would even remember it, but after school Aunt Mary

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<sup>7</sup> Recollections of David Henderson 2006,



Henderson showed up with homemade ice cream and cup cakes she had made for Lillian (phone call to Lillian Talbot, 11/8/06).

Jane had one sister, Maggie, who was baptized when she was eight, and an older brother who died. She was very close to Maggie all of her life as this sweet picture shows. Maggie married Charles Edward Bolingbroke September 08, 1876

Jane's daughter Mary Thomas Henderson became her primary caretaker after Lillian and Deloris moved away. Mary cared for her mother until Grandma Thomas died at about age 95 on Jan 24, 1947. Mary's brother Edward was a bachelor and had been a hobo most of his life. In later years, Mary helped care for him as well.