

History of John Williams  
by his 2<sup>nd</sup> great-granddaughter Kathleen Edwards  
Faerber July 2014

John Williams was born at St. Bride, Glamorgan, South Wales, on Christmas Day in 1815,<sup>1</sup> the year of Napoleon Bonaparte's defeat at Waterloo. As was the custom among the poor in Wales, John's mother, Margaret David (Davis), probably left home as a teenager to work nearby. Perhaps she fell in love with a local farmer, William Penridge, who apparently became John's father. We know little about William Penridge except that John gave William's name when he needed to name his father for his marriage certificate in 1837. As to John's surname (Penridge, Padris, vs. Williams,) in the early nineteenth century, the Welsh patronymic system was fading out. Many children still used their fathers' *Christian* names as their surnames. After he came to the United States, records of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints showed that John used a surname/s other than Williams.<sup>2</sup>



### **John's Childhood in Wales**

John's mother was from Margum or Llangynwyd, Glamorgan shire, South Wales. These two places are in close proximity to each other. John was four years old and living with his mother, Margaret David, in Margum, when she married John Butler of Pitcot at St. Brides Major. This is probably the earliest place John remembered and that could be why he gave it as his birthplace even though he may have been born elsewhere. After much searching on our part, a christening record had not been found. Margaret's husband brought a son of his own (possibly illegitimate, seven-year-old Thomas Butler) to the marriage.

It is feasible that our young John was fostered out to Llangynwyd soon after his mother's marriage. He could have gone to live with his maternal grandmother, Ann Morgan, and others. Our reasoning for this comes from the fact that before John died in Manti, Utah, he dictated a letter<sup>3</sup> expressing his wish that saving gospel ordinances in the Manti LDS Temple be performed for certain persons who lived back home in Wales and who were dearly beloved by him. One of these families with whom John could have spent some years as a child was the David Hugh family at Llangynwyd. Their grown daughter, Eleanor Hugh, was John's special friend who showed him great kindness. Eleanor died when John was just twelve years old. John particularly wished to show his gratitude to her by requesting that Eleanor be sealed to him as a celestial wife. Other exceptional friends were the Treharne family for whom John probably worked as a

boy. In the old letter, John also names his grandmother, Margaret Davis. The temple work for these people has been done.

### John and Margaret's Marriage

Since the Welsh love music, we imagine twenty-one-year-old John was filled with joyous song as he wed his own true love, twenty-three-year-old Margaret Morgan, who was born nearby in the shire of Carmarthen. She was born 14 June 1814, and was the daughter of John and Ann Morgan. They were married 16 Oct 1837 by a Church of England parish priest in St. John's Church at Aberdare. The old chapel is still standing, surrounded as is the custom in Wales by tombstones of deceased parishioners. John and Margaret signed their marriage certificate with "X." <sup>4</sup>



Photos taken 1968 by Kathleen E. Faerber, Aberdare, Wales

### Coal Mining and Family



After John and Margaret were married, he went to work (or continued working) in the mines near Aberdare. Their first son, John, whom they named after the proud father, was born 4 Dec 1838 at Aberdare. A sweet baby, Ruth, joined them at their Mill Street<sup>5</sup> home on 8 June 1841, but she lived only two-and-one-half years when she died of croup. A second daughter, Mary, was born 9 June 1844, at Aberdare. John and Margaret moved their family from Mill Street to Llangynwyd Higher Spelters Works where John worked as a spelter man. Photo shows Spelters Works near Aberdare where John worked.

Sorrow again struck on 8 Jan 1847 when their beloved only son, John, died of atrophy. He was followed with the additional sorrow on July 16 of that same year by the death from small pox of his sister, Mary, age three. The grieving parents now had no children left.<sup>6</sup> Photo at right shows the old Llangynwyd Church and grave yard at Maesteg where the three Williams' children are believed to be buried.



## The Gospel Light Gathers to Zion

During this time of great sorrow there came into the lives of John and Margaret new hope that these children yet lived in heaven and that they could one day be together again. A messenger from America was setting the place ablaze around Merthyr Tydfil with his bold statements about a latter-day prophet to whom God had shown his will and given important instructions for all who would believe. This vigorous crusader was assembling an enthusiastic following of Welshmen to join the Latter-day Church and gather to Zion in the Rocky Mountains.

John Williams embraced the new religion and was baptized on 5 April 1845 in Wales. A family tradition is that Margaret, his wife, was baptized on 15 May 1849, but that is the day she died of cholera near St. Louis, Missouri. A baptism on this day would be unusual, unless it was a death bed decision.<sup>7</sup> We was likely baptized in Wales about the same time as her husband.

Much of the material in the following eleven paragraphs is taken from the excellent book by Ronald D. Dennis, "**The Call of Zion, The Story of the First Welsh Mormon Emigration.**" 1987 Bookcraft.

The first Mormon missionary assigned to Merthyr Tydfil was William Henshaw who baptized his first converts, the William David family, on 19 Feb 1843. In Dec 1845 Capt Dan Jones was called to preside over all Welsh Mormons and came to Merthyr Tydfil. He printed a monthly periodical (July 1846 - Dec 1848) in Welsh entitled, "Prophet of the Jubilee" *Prophwyd Y Jubili*. In nearly everyone of the thirty issues there was something about emigrating: "Description of California," "News from the Saints in the Wilderness," "Who is Ready to Start Homeward?" "Twenty-nine Welshmen Lose Their Jobs in Cwmbychan Because They Are Mormons." In the February 1848 issue, Jones announced that official approval had been given for the Welsh to begin making definite plans for emigrating in a year's time. All were encouraged to pay off their debts, and the wealthy were asked to be generous in assisting the poor to leave "Babylon" for the promised land. In the October 1848 issue appeared a new song, "Hail to California," to be sung by the Welsh as they sailed away to Zion.<sup>8</sup>

Even though John and Margaret could not read, they had friends who could and who helped them understand the new gospel as the Spirit of the Lord bore testimony that this new life was for them to embrace. Added hope came with the realization that they would have another child. On 15 May 1848, a lovely daughter, Naomi, was born as the family lived at Scuan Cordpank, (near Neath) in the Subdistrict of Cadoxton, Glamorgan shire.<sup>9</sup> This daughter would live a long life and bring a great posterity to forever bless the lives of John and Margaret Williams.

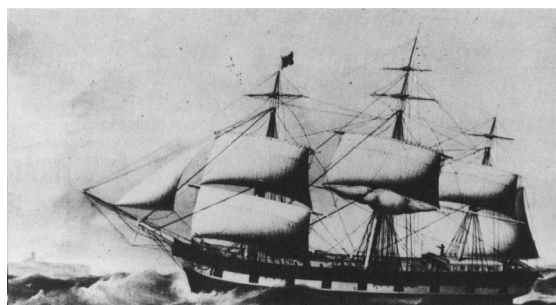
There was a lot of opposition from family and neighbors when John and Margaret joined the Latter-day Saints. They and their fellow Saints were graced with such epithets as "*deceivers, false prophets, weakheaded and unprincipled liars, idlers, the dregs of everything which stinks in the nostrils of everyone, and Satanists.*" These titles came especially from the Welsh reverends. The Saints' leader, Brother Captain Dan Jones' life was in such danger that his house was

attacked almost everynight for weeks before his leaving Merthyr. *Udgorn Seion* (Zion's Trumpet) reported in March 1849 that "his godly life was not safe in sleeping except between guards from among his brethren; and there were scoundrels so inhuman who had been paid to kill him as he left, so that he had to leave secretly the day before."

### From Swansea to New Orleans

The plan for emigrating called for all Welsh Saints to meet in Liverpool by 15 February 1849. Those from South Wales would converge at Swansea on the thirteenth and would make the thirty-four-hour voyage together by steamer. The gathering in Swansea caused a great sensation - amazement intermixed with pity- among the local residents. In part, *The Cambrian*, reported: "Emigration to California - Swansea was enlivened in consequence of the arrival of scores of bold peasantry- LatterdaySaints - who came to this town for the purpose of proceeding to Liverpool in the *Troubador* steamer, where a ship is in readiness to transport them next week to the glittering regions of California. This goodly company is under the command of a popular Saint, known as Captain Dan Jones, a hardy traveler . . . He arrived in town Tuesday and seems to enjoy the respect and confidence of his faithful band. He delivered his valedictory address at the Trades' Hall to a numerous audience . . . among whom were many substantial farmers . . . although they were well to do, they disposed of their possessions, to get to California, their New Jerusalem as they deem it, where their fanaticism teaches them to believe they will escape from the general destruction and conflagration that is shortly envelop this earth . . . It is their intention, not to visit the gold regions, but the agricultural districts, where they intend, they say, by helping one another, to reside in peace and harmony. . . "

This thirty-hour journeying the *Troubador* was a rude awakening to John and Margaret and their first experience with sea sickness as the ship pitched and rocked. Sea legs were slow to develop, but it was merely prelude to fifty days of Atlantic waves en route to New Orleans. One



Ship Hartley, Liverpool to New Orleans, Mar-Apr 1849 with our Williams Family

eye-opening experience after another followed for this young couple with their small baby. Liverpool was a large and bustling port city with fast-talking shrewd predators, but Captain Jones had prepared his group well. They had rented the "Music Hall," a large, six-story building with sufficient rooms in which the entire company could lodge. There were unexpected delays and John and Margaret were especially disappointed that they could not join the main group who sailed on the *Buena Vista*, but they were among the group of seventy-seven Welsh Saints who would have to wait several more days and board the steamer, *Hartley*, along with 161 English and Scottish converts. John and Margaret now found there were few with whom they could converse and the delays and changes seemed indeed a great disappointment. However, on 6 Mar 1849 the *Hartley* sailed from Liverpool. William Hulme, president of the Saints on board

the *Hartley*, reported a voyage that had “been more like a pleasure excursion.” The weather was pleasant with the sea and wind very gentle, having only one or two rough days. They reached the Bahamas on the thirty-fifth day, five days fewer than had been required for the *Buena Vista*. At that point, however, some calms and contrary winds delayed their progress. Consequently, the *Hartley* docked at New Orleans on 28 April 1849, fifty-four days after leaving Liverpool. When the *Hartley* was dragged into New Orleans, it was the first time for nearly all the passengers to behold the majestic Mississippi. There was an epidemic of cholera in New Orleans and it was considered unwise to linger. Although everyone feared the cholera, the Saints thought that their faith combined with the will of the Lord would allow them to arrive safely at their destination. The cholera had spread to St. Louis, Missouri, and had claimed many victims by this time.

### **Margaret Dies of Cholera at St. Louis**

The Church had assigned Lucius Scoville to greet the *Hartley* passengers as they arrived at New Orleans. Scoville arranged for the steamer, *Mameluke*, to transport the immigrants upriver to St. Louis. John Williams’ family was no doubt aboard the *Mameluke* when it left New Orleans on the evening of the third of May 7:00 p.m., all passengers being in good health.

...On the 4<sup>th</sup> of May (the morning after we sailed from New Orleans) we found that we had several cases of cholera on board and two deaths occurred on board... (The cholera continued to get worse, more people died) ...We arrived at St. Louis on the 12<sup>th</sup> of May...we had buried 30 saints and 4 deck hands between New Orleans and St. Louis....contracted with Capt. Brooks to convey our passengers to go up the Missouri river on the steamboat “Lightfoot” to Council Bluffs, Iowa, for \$5.00 per head for adults and children half price...”

The following, which shows that our ancestor, **Margaret Williams**, wife of John Williams, who was buried on the bank of the Missouri River on **15 May 1849**, is taken from the *Index to the Journal History of the LDS Church*, dated 8 June 1849.

“The passengers went on board the steamboat “Lightfoot” on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May 1849, 110 in number, and the boat left St. Louis at 1 o’clock a.m. on the 15<sup>th</sup>. We stopped at the mouth of the Missouri river and buried those who died while we stopped in St. Louis, namely, seven persons as follows: a boy of Bro. Thos. Thomas, who got burned to death; Wm. Williams, 20 years of age, from England; Elizabeth Davis, 50 years of age, from South Wales; Wm. Henry Thomas, 7 years of age, from South Wales; Phebe Davis, 44 years of age, from North Wales; **Margaret Williams, 35 years of age, from North (actually South) Wales**; and Stephen Davis, 4 years of age from North Wales. John William’s heart must have sickened to see his dear one sink into death’s unforgiving arms on May 15, 1849 and, having no other means, he buried her remains on the bank of the implacable Missouri River on the East side about ten miles above St. Louis.

William Appleby, who was on the Missouri River during the same time period as the Welsh immigrants, recorded in his journal a graphic portrayal of the scenes left in the wake of the cholera: “And to add to the horrid spectacle were the graves, side by side—beds and pillows half

burned up—pieces of tents, broken cups, bowls, pillows, mattresses, etc., lined as it were the banks of the river, near the boat; while blankets, mattresses, etc., on which the sick had died came floating down the river; while in town, nothing could be seen scarcely but carts and hearses loaded with rough coffins.”

After Burying (sic) these passengers we proceeded on our journey to Jefferson City where we found the fatal “Monroe” tied up. There we also found Bros. Farnum and Appleby’s company or all that was left of them, 25 in number, which we took on board on the 17<sup>th</sup> ...”

(Later in the narrative it states) “We also buried the chief Pilot and Fireman (of the steamboat “Lightfoot”). “All of these were buried on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May at Iowa Point where we were obliged to stop for want of a pilot several days...the river was high and the current so strong that the steamboat “Lightfoot” could not stand the current. Consequently, we had to return to St. Joseph for another boat...The captain of the “Lightfoot” hired the steamboat “St. Croix” to carry us to Council Bluffs.”

“We...arrived at Winter Quarters on 8 June 1849. We had buried 21 persons between St. Louis and Winters in the Omaha Nation. We (had) left New Orleans on 3 May and arrived at Winter Quarters on 8 June 1849...”

### **Baby Naomi Survives**

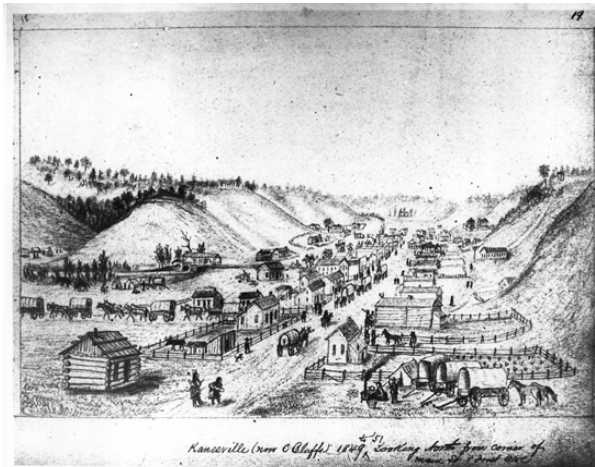
Thus, Margaret Williams became one of at least twenty out of the seventy-seven Welsh passengers on the *Hartley* who died between Liverpool and Council Bluffs. Baby Naomi was exactly twelve months old when her mother was taken. Did someone provide the essential mother’s milk to keep her alive during these crucial months of her infancy? Was there a surrogate mother to whom we are indebted for nursing our ancestor that she might survive the journey to Zion?

### **Council Bluffs - Off the Water at Last**

Rejoicing was made difficult by the unfathomable sorrow which enshrouded the Welsh immigrants as they dragged themselves, literally, into the city of Council Bluffs. Many times while still in Wales and during the crossing, they had reviewed with great anticipation what they would do when they reached Council Bluffs. Here was where the *Buena Vista 249* church members would reunite with the *Hartley 77* church members. Here was where the Welsh would be surrounded by the English and where the former would begin studying their new language in



earnest. Here they would begin preparation for the trek westward, where others would search out employment, begin saving toward their opportunity to complete the journey to the Salt Lake Valley. And here the constant swaying and rocking caused by the Atlantic, the Mississippi, and the Missouri would cease. However, many, like Margaret, were absent. Sixty-seven had died at various points along the way. A number of the “Hartley” Welsh had remained at St. Louis to care for their sick.



Council Bluffs was becoming rather cosmopolitan with its English, Norwegians, and Welsh. Interpreters were kept busy. The need for the Welsh to learn English was diminished by their banding together and forming a Welsh-speaking branch of the Church, the first in that part of the world. Dan Jones arranged for the Welsh who remained in Council Bluffs for a time to have their lands adjoining; he then purchased a land claim of about 150 acres near the Welsh holdings and gave it to William Morgan to administer as a gift to the Welsh. Morgan reported an element of prosperity among the Welsh Saints: “Some in this company who

had not a penny when they landed here have cattle and sheep now; in fact, I know of no family in this country who has not a cow or two” (*Udgor Seion*, Nov 1849).

We do not know exactly how or when John and his infant Naomi arrived at Council Bluffs, but it was probably sometime in late June 1849. He may have joined the Welsh-speaking branch. K. Faerber checked to see if their names were listed in the Mormon Overland Travel Index for pioneers crossing the plains, but there is no listing for John or Naomi Williams or Padris.

### **Crossing the Plains to Salt Lake Valley**

John and Margaret’s little daughter, Naomi, was four years old in 1852 when she crossed the broad American plains. As a grown woman, Naomi applied for membership in the Daughters of Utah Pioneers and wrote that she crossed the plains coming to Zion in company with her future husband, Harrison, and his family. Harrison Martin Edwards was eleven years old at the time. They both probably walked most of the one thousand miles. Their Pioneer Company, the Robert Wimmer Company,<sup>10</sup> departed Kanesville (Council Bluffs) Iowa in early July 1852 with 230 individuals and about 130 wagons and arrived in Salt Lake Valley 15 Sept 1852. The published list of individuals known to have traveled with the company numbers only 197, so if John and Naomi were on the company, as Naomi claimed they were, they were among the thirty-three whose names were not listed. Since John probably didn’t speak much English at the time, this

could be plausible.

### **John and Naomi Settle in Manti**

Not much is known about John and Margaret after they arrived in the Salt Lake Valley or when their pioneer company was assigned by Brigham Young to continue on south to settle in Manti. Three years earlier, in the Spring of 1849, a delegation of Ute Indians under the direction of Chief Walker, had come to Salt Lake requesting some pioneers to come to the San Pitch Valley to teach them how to till the soil and build houses.<sup>11</sup> The first group of 224 white settlers was sent to make a settlement in San Pete Valley by Brigham Young under the leadership of Isaac Morley. They had arrived in November of 1849 and set to work making dugouts on the south side of what was later called (Manti) Temple Hill. The families of George Washington Bradley and Daniel Buckley Funk and others were among this pioneer group. Almost from the beginning, serious Indian troubles and harassments increased the hardships of frontier life.

John Williams and the other immigrants in coming to Zion pushed on with faith to learn the new language, customs, and desert farming; they confronted grasshoppers, savage Indian raids, and other pioneer wilderness experiences in those early days in Manti. John and Naomi's first home, if not a dugout, must have been a one-room log house with a dirt floor.

When Margaret, the wife of his youth died, John was only 34 years old. After ten years as a widower, John married a Danish lady, Anne Hansen, on 18 Oct 1859, in the Salt Lake Endowment House. He was 44 and she was 53. She and her first husband, Andrew Jensen, had joined the LDS Church in Denmark. He had died on the trail coming to Zion and she was sealed to him in the Endowment House on the same day that she married John.<sup>12</sup>

St In 1869, at age 54, John Williams was married in polygamy to his third wife, Johanna Hansen, age 39, who was born in Prussia. They were sealed in the Endowment House on 22 Nov 1869.<sup>13</sup> There were no children born from either of these two marriages.



Naomi Williams Edwards  
c. 1886

Naomi Williams Edwards wrote: “ My father done many good things for the up building of Utah. He donated freely toward building the Manti Tabernacle and the Manti Temple. He was Justice of the Peace for many years. Also, school trustee for years.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Naomi's Family**

When John and Margaret's daughter, Naomi, was seventeen, she married her childhood sweetheart, Harrison Martin Edwards, on 10 Mar 1865 in Manti. Their marriage was sealed in the Salt Lake Endowment House 23 May 1870. Naomi and Harrison lived in Manti



where their first eight children were born. In 1882 they moved to Sterling where the last three children were born. Thus, John Williams who came to Zion with one little child now had a numerous posterity.

### **On To Eternal Reward**

The 1880 U.S. Census, Manti, Utah, shows John Williams living with his two wives, Ann and Johanna. One year later, 9 Oct 1881, Johanna passed away. John followed on 9 Aug 1887, and Anne, 17 July 1891. They are all buried next to each other in the Manti Cemetery. The old grave markers have disintegrated, but in 2006, a new gravestone was placed in the Manti Cemetery on the east side of the north-south road (old section), near the east-west intersection at the center of the cemetery. This site is next to the tombstone of his daughter, Naomi, and her husband, Harrison Martin Edwards. Thank you John, Margaret, and Naomi for your faith, courage, and perseverance. We do remember and honor you!



Family of Harrison Martin Edwards & Naomi Williams - Sterling, Utah 1886

Front Row: Harrison, Rosella, Naomi, Solon, Mary Samantha; Back: Maria Antonette, John William, Harrison Martin Jr. Margaret Ann; Yet Unborn: Ina Ruth & Arseneth

## Endnotes

1. Manti LDS Ward Records, Early to 1877, GS #6381 pt 1, Family History Library, SLC, Utah
2. JOHN'S NAME: John Williams called himself by various names, no doubt because of language difficulties and the Welsh patronymic system. He was illiterate in Welsh (signed legal documents with "X") and the transition to English as an older adult must have been a great challenge.
  - (1) His marriage certificate from Somerset House, London, #MA 813304, (the earliest legal document of which we have record) states his name as "John **Williams**, son of William **Penridge**." The same name "John **Williams**" also appears on the birth and death certificates of his children who were born and died in Wales.
  - (2) A Salt Lake Endowment House document (10 Oct 1859) states that "John William **Padrigh**" was married for time only to Anne Williams Hansen, (John's second wife) and sealed for eternity to his first wife, Margaret Morgans. Family group sheet source #29.
  - (3) A Salt Lake Endowment House Document (22 Nov 1869) states that "John William **Pedies**" was married and to Johannah Hansen (John's third wife.) Family group sheet source #33.
  - (4) John's daughter, Naomi wrote her name on her application for membership to the Daughters of Utah Pioneers as "Naomi **Pedris Williams** Edwards" Other documents state the surname as "**Padris**."
3. See the instructions in "John Williams' Old Letter," a copy of which is to be found in the "Notes" section of the family group sheet on PAF for John Williams and Margaret Morgan.
4. Marriage Certificate for John Williams and Margaret Morgan, married Oct 16, 1837, by Banns. Somerset House, London. John and Margaret signed their marriage certificate with "X."
5. A letter from the District Council of Aberdare, Glamorganshire, South Wales, explains that the present name for Mill Street is "Trecynon."
6. Birth and death information from Somerset House, London, for John, Ruth and Mary Williams can be verified by checking the family group sheet of John and Margaret Williams and family.
7. A vicarious baptism was performed 21 Jan 1890 in the Manti Temple for Margaret Morgan, most probably by her daughter, Naomi.
8. Ronald D. Dennis, The Call of Zion, The Story of the First Welsh Mormon Emigration, BYU, 1987, Bookcraft, Salt Lake City. Appreciation is expressed to Mr. Dennis for researching this material.
9. Birth certificate from Somerset House, London. See family group sheet.
10. See [www.lds.org/churchhistory Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel, 1847-1868](http://www.lds.org/churchhistory/Mormon%20Pioneer%20Overland%20Travel,%201847-1868).  
**The Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel Index, 1847-1868** was searched for the name of **John Williams** (and Padris, Pedris, etc.) Search results show that in 1852 only one company traveled with a member listed as "John Williams" (age unknown): the **Joseph Outhouse Company (1852)** which departed from Kanessville, Iowa (present day Council Bluffs) on 10 June 1852 with 50 individuals in the company and arrival in Salt Lake Valley on 6 Sept 1852. (Naomi wrote that she and her father arrived with their pioneer company in Salt Lake Valley Sept 15, 1852 and that they traveled with the Elisha Edwards family, so the above may not be our John Williams?) 11. A. B. Sidwell, Reminiscences of Early Days in Manti, 1889, Family History Library, 35 North West Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah, 84150, GS #979.2A1, #58.

12. Ann Williams Hansen's Endowment House TIB card states John Williams' name as "John William Padrigh." Evidently, John Williams started using the surnames Padrigh, Padris, Penridge, etc. after he emigrated to America, either because of language difficulties or because he decided to use the patronymic system. His legal documents in Wales used the surname "Williams" See Endnote #1 above.

13. A film at GS Library in Special Collection #1,149,515 Sealing to Spouse, Endowment House, shows "John William Pedies" born 23 Dec 1815, St. Brides, Glamorgan, Wales, to Johannah Hansen, born 10 May 1830, Ellum, Tunder, Prussia. Her own endowment record shows her to be a daughter of Christian Hansen and Margaritta Nielsen, and that she was baptized 6 Nov 1869. See Endnote #2 above.

14. Application for Membership to Daughters of Utah Pioneers #1879 of "Naomi Pedris Williams Edwards," (in quotations as Naomi wrote it), wife of Harrison M. Edwards, in Right of Descent from..."John Pedris Williams" and "Margaret Morgan Pedris Williams." Application received in Manti Camp on Feb 19, 1925 (Note: Kathleen Faerber's visit at DUP Museum, Feb 2005, revealed only two items in Naomi's file: (1) a copy of her obituary (2) a copy of her DUP Application. This history will be submitted to the file.)