

# Walter Walters and Sarah Rees Leigh<sup>1</sup>

Walter Walters, the son of Thomas Walters and Margaret Williams or Davis, was born 15 March 1794 at Llandybie, Carmarthenshire, Wales. Sarah Rees Leigh was born at Llangennech, Carmarthenshire, Wales, on 24 November 1806, the daughter of Daniel Leigh and Mary Rees. They were married on 21 January 1828 at Llanedy, Carmarthenshire, Wales, and became the parents of eight children. Mary was born on 10 July 1828, Ann on 27 July 1830, and Sarah on 20 April 1833 at Llanedy. William was born on 22 March 1835, Margaret on 10 May 1837, Hannah on 6 April 1841, Daniel on 15 February 1843, and Elizabeth on 6 April 1846, all at Llanelly, Carmarthenshire. The map below shows the relative location of these towns. From Llandybie to Llanelly is about 12 miles. Llangennech is about 3 miles east northeast of Llanelly and Llanedy is about four miles north and a little east of Llangennech



Llanedy, where they lived until about 1833 was a small town on the River Loughor.



St. Edith Church - Llanedy

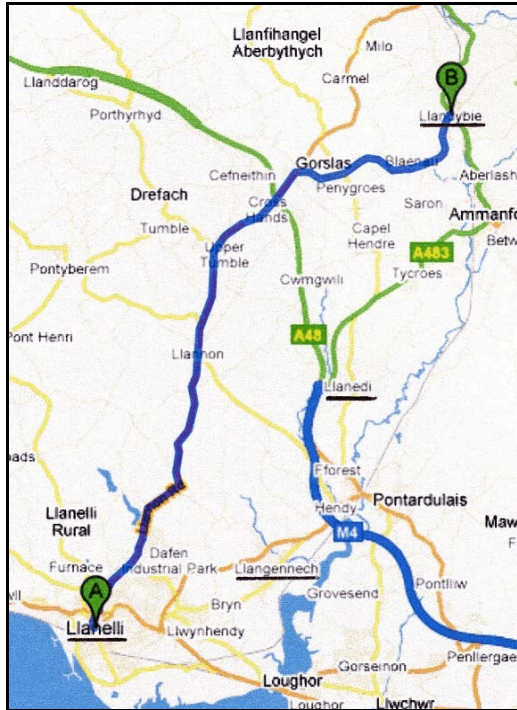
According to Lewis' *A Topographical Dictionary of Wales*, 1844, it was a village of about 800 people with farms, pastures and mines of high grade anthracite coal. The parish church where Walter and Sarah were probably married was St. Edith's, overlooking the river. The family moved to Llanelly, a few miles southwest sometime before William's birth in March 1835. Originally an agricultural town, its location on an estuary formed by the Burry River and the Bristol channel plus the opening of the coal and mineral deposits in the area had

turned the town into a thriving commercial, manufacturing and shipping port that grew into

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<sup>1</sup>Written by Blaine H. Hall, a 2<sup>nd</sup> great grandson, from several sources.

the largest county town and a good place for Walter to find a job as a laborer.  
*Pigot's Company Trade Directory*, 1835, says of it,



Llandybie to Llanelli

This town and its neighborhood has long been celebrated for its bituminous or binding coal [bituminous], sonthe-coal [anthracite], culm [anthracite coal dust] and fire-clay of which great quantities are shipped to various distant parts; and the abundance and excellence of these minerals has induced wealthy and spirited individuals to establish copper, iron, lead, and firebrick works, upon most extensive scales; the copper smelting work of the Nevell and Copper Company as well as those of Messrs Glascott, employ a great number of hands.

The several important establishments are the source from which the present flourishing trade of the port is derived; to

accommodate which, four commodious docks have been made, furnished with convenient loading stages.

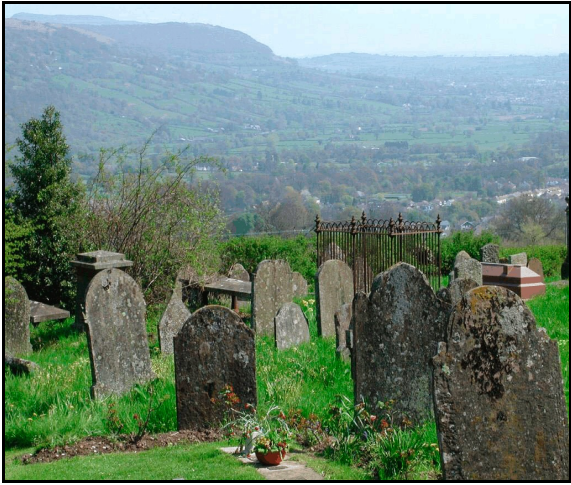
An analysis of baptismal records in 1837 showed that the male occupation of the town had changed from mainly husbandmen to colliers, mariners, pilots, and shipwrights. By 1850 the town had copper works, tin-plate works, pottery, lead and silver works, and three foundries. The collieries employed about 800 men, women and children. In 1851 its population was 8,415, and it was becoming a major



Industrialized Llanelli 1800s

industrial town based on iron and tin-plate production.

The 1851 Census of Wales lists Walter's occupation as general laborer, so the family had probably moved to Llanelly to find better work, although I don't know what industry



Llanelly Cemetery and Town - 1989

Walter worked in. His oldest son, William, age 16, was listed as a coal wagon driver so his father may have worked at a colliery, a coal mine with its associated buildings. The family at that time consisted of the parents and six children. Mary, the oldest, and Ann, two years younger, were not living at home. Mary had immigrated to the United States in February of that year with an L.D.S. immigration group, and Ann was apparently living away from home, possibly working elsewhere, or may have died. She did not come to America with her parents and the other members of the family. Their last child, Elizabeth, was three years old.

Through the influence of Mary, who had been baptized into the Mormon Church on 15 December 1847, the family had all joined the Church. After her baptism, her father had turned her out of the house. But he later relented when his daughter Ann was healed of a six-month life-threatening illness by the Mormon missionaries. Martha Walters Owen Hall, Mary's daughter, tells the story in a history of her mother:

One day she [Mary] went to her mother and asked if she could bring the Mormon elders to administer to her sister. Her mother's reply was, 'Oh, Mary, if you do your father will be so angry I don't know what he would do, as you know how he feels toward the Mormon elders now. But I am perfectly willing.' So with her mother's consent, she went and got the elders, Brothers William Leigh and Walter Ridge, who administered to her. She sat up in bed, and they administered to her a second time and told her to dress herself, which she did. They administered to her a third time and promised her that she would walk and get strong. They asked her if she would like to walk with them to her uncle's house and have dinner with them, as they were invited there for dinner. It was a distance of about two miles. She walked with them and her sister Mary to her uncle's. She felt good and enjoyed her dinner.

When her father came home at noon, he went to the bed as usual, which had curtains around it, and pushed them back and said, "Ann." But no Ann was there. He said, 'This is some of Mary's work. It was bad here last night, but it will be worse tonight.' When he came home from work that night, Ann was singing and rocking by the grate. He was overcome to see her so well. Because he knew it was through the administration of the Latter-day



Saint elders that she was made whole, he sat back in his chair so overjoyed that he did not speak for some time. Raising his head, he said to his wife, 'Sarah, we will all go and be baptized tomorrow,' which they did.

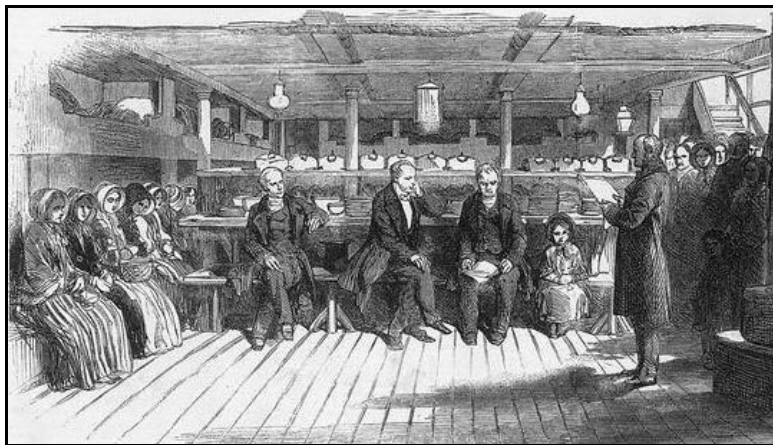
Determined to go to Zion, Mary left Liverpool on the ship *Ellen Maria* on 1 February 1851, arriving in New Orleans on 6 April. She paid for her passage by doing washing for the sailors and some of the saints. She married a sailor, George Gasketts, and went up the Mississippi River to St. Louis and was living across the river in a little river town called French Village, Illinois, where she had two children, George, Jr. Born 18 July 1852, and Sarah Ann, born 4 April 1854. George died on 20 April 1854, only two weeks after his sister was born.

Walter and Sarah and the four youngest children immigrated to New Orleans on the ship *Golconda* from Liverpool on 4 February 1854 in a company of 464 saints. The two oldest remained in Wales until later. Sarah had married Leonard Jones on 20 January 1854 in Llanelly and didn't immigrate until 1869. William married Margaret Williams on 9 February 1855 in Llanelly and immigrated to Utah in 1866. But the four



*Golconda*

youngest, Margaret, age 18; Hannah, age 15; Daniel, age 11; and Elizabeth, age 7 sailed with their parents to their new home in America. A fellow voyager, John J. Davis, left this recollection of the voyage:



*A Mormon Sunday Meeting Aboard Immigrant Ship*

We enjoyed ourselves very good while traveling on sea. Our president was Elder Curtis, he was returning from his mission. He organized us and appointed

teachers to look after us. And we had meetings every Sunday. We had a good voyage and but one storm and that was a fearful and I shall never forget it. It lasted about 4 hours and I was on deck to see it all. The waves as big as mountains. The sailors got all the sails fastened before the storm was very bad. The thunder and lightening was terrible and the rain a pouring down but the ship done well but she sprung a leak, but it was soon stopped. The storm quit about dark. The next day the ship was in full sail again and we all felt to rejoice for fine wether once more and I tell you my friends that we did feel indeed to rejoice.

The ship arrived without further problems in New Orleans on 18 March 1854. About the last of March the company boarded a small steamboat to go up river to St. Louis, where they arrived about 10

April. The Walters family joined Mary and her children at French Village, St. Clair County, Illinois, across the Mississippi River from St. Louis. Shortly after they arrived, Mary's little boy died. And Mary received word that her husband had been drowned at sea. Daniel said they stayed there about two or three weeks before heading for Kansas to make the trek to Utah, taking Mary and her baby with them.



Westport Landing by William Henry Jackson

The Mormon wagon trains leaving for the west in 1854 left from Westport (present-day Kansas City), Missouri. According to the "Crossing the Plains Index" created by the Church History Library, the Walters family were members of an unidentified company of that year, which could have been the Hans Peter Olsen company. Daniel Walters said that they camped in Kansas about three weeks before receiving their teams and wagons to cross the plains. He also wrote, "The plains to me was uneventful as I was but 10 years old." (He had actually turned eleven in February while still aboard the *Golconda*.)

When they arrived in Salt Lake City on 5 October 1854, they were met by Alexander Wright, who had married Hannah Leigh, Sarah's sister, in Salt Lake City in January of 1851.<sup>2</sup> After a short stay with the Wrights in Millcreek, the family traveled on to Brigham

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<sup>2</sup>We are indebted to the "History of Daniel Leigh Walters and Family," 1914 at USU Special Collections for information about the family's early years in Utah.

City, Box Elder County, but Daniel stayed with his uncle in Salt Lake. The following spring his mother came from Brigham City and took him home. They walked the 65 miles in four days.

That spring in Brigham City, Daniel drove five yoke of oxen to plow a field to put in a crop. But in August the grasshoppers came and ate the crop and all the grass. He records in his history the plight of the family during 1855 and 1856 as they struggled to survive the harsh winter. I quote the following in his own words and spellings:

The years of 1855 and 6 was the hardest in the history of this country since it was settled by white people, and how we lived through that winter would be hard to tell and hard to believe. We had to eat bran bread and anything we could get. The cattle was so poor that in instances they would freeze to death standing.

We had no team we had to carry wood on our backs the wood that we burned that winter. The house we lived in Father built it with willows and



Sego Lilies

plastered with mud. We had neither door nor window, a quilt for the door and a peace of white cloth for a window. I was the only boy. My brother William had staid in the old country and the hard work fell to the girls as I was only leven years old at that time. Along towards spring when the hills began to get bair in places we would sharpen a stick and go out on the bair spots and dig Seagose for breakfast and also dinner and then go to bed hungry. Henary Thomas had married my sister Margaret in

the fall of 1855 and they had a cow. And it was our task every day to go up the mountain and cut dry grass and carry it home and saved the cow.

Nearly all the stock died before spring. What did not die were so thin that they could not worked until after the grass grew for there was no other way out. During the winter, Henary Thomas and I pulled a bushel of wheat from Brigham to Willard to an old mill owned by Malarny on hand sled. We succeeded in getting it chopet. Some time in the night we got home and had a great feast. One time father drove a yoke of oxen and wagon with some wheat to the mill in order to get the bran to eat. I remember trying eat the bran bread my mother made out of bran. It was pretty rough.



Walter and Daniel made another trip to the Willard mill. They had nothing to eat on the trip and became so hungry that Walter said, "I have never begged in my life but I can stand it no longer." They went to the door of John H.

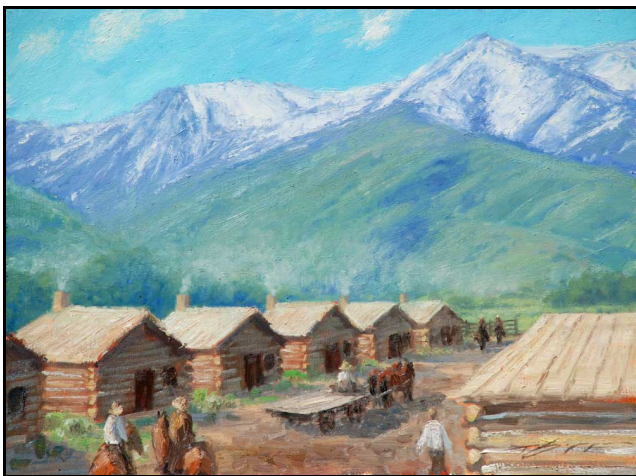


**Brigham City Foothills and Mountains**

Bankhead in Willard to ask for a slice of bread. Nancy Bankhead gave them a whole loaf. Later, when they were both living in Wellsville, they reminisced about this incident.

In the spring of 1858, Brigham Young ordered all the saints north of Salt Lake City to move south in preparation for the anticipated arrival of a hostile U.S. Army under the command of Col. Albert Sidney Johnston, sent to put down a supposed Mormon rebellion in Utah. The Walters family left nearly everything behind and headed south. In Salt Lake City, they stayed with Alexander Wright, who was also getting ready to leave. Daniel and his uncle made two trips to Spanish Fork, Utah County, with two wagon loads of their belongings. About this time John Owen, who had married Mary Walters in 1856, arrived from Cedar City with others and 25 wagons to help move the poor saints south. He took the Walters family with him the 300 miles south to Cedar City, where they remained until the spring of 1859, when they moved back north. John Owen had purchased ten acres of land in Wellsville (then called Maughan's Fort), Cache County, from William Hamblin, the hired

man of one of the original settlers of the town, who had also moved south to Cedar City and decided not to go back north.



**Maughan's Fort**

Daniel records that about 10 April 1859, he, along with several other families from Cedar City and elsewhere arrived in Wellsville, then called Maughan's Fort, just about the time the original settlers of the town were returning to their homes. Daniel said, "We put in a crop and had a good crop of wheat." With the arrival of the new families in Wellsville, a new addition was added at a right angle on the north

end of the fort along what is now 200 North to accommodate the new families. They lived in tents until their log cabins were ready. According to the 1860 census, Walter and Sarah Walters with their daughter, Elizabeth, age 14, were living in Brigham City. In 1861 they moved to Wellsville and may have lived with other family members in the fort. The city was surveyed and platted in October 1863, when the settlers started moving onto their city lots.



**Cache Valley and Wellsville Mountains in Spring**

I have been unable to find out much about Walter and Sarah in Wellsville. They were likely given a city lot when they were assigned in 1863 and probably built a house on it. Walter, like most of the other early settlers probably farmed, but I know little about his life there, except that when Daniel recorded being sick for some months, his father would whistle or sing a tune and Daniel would try to play it on his violin. This helped him to learn to play, and he became very adept at it.

This family picture shows Sarah with the five of her children then living in



**L-R. Margaret, Daniel, Mother, Elizabeth, Mary, William  
Children of Walter and Sarah Leigh Walters**

Wellsville. All their children married and had families, except for Ann, giving Walter and Sarah a large posterity. All, except Ann and Hannah, lived, died and are buried in the Wellsville Cemetery. Mary married John Owen, and they were sealed in the Endowment House on 9 September 1856. She died while visiting her daughter, Sarah Ann Gunnell, in Rexburg, Idaho, on 30 August 1888. Sarah had married Leonard Jones in Wales and didn't immigrate to Wellsville until 1869, where she died



on 25 January 1915. William and his wife Margaret Williams arrived in Wellsville from Wales in 1866. He died on 25 January 1901. Margaret married Henry William Thomas in Brigham City on 15 February 1856, and died in Wellsville on 6 November 1888. Hannah became a plural wife to her uncle, Alexander Wright, on 23 November 1856 in the Endowment House. He had previously married her mother's sister, Hannah Leigh. They moved to Utah's Dixie where she died on 17 February 1880 in Virgin City, Washington County, where she is buried. Daniel married Martha Stennett Poppleton on 26 December 1864 in the Endowment House. He died in Wellsville on 27 November 1917. The youngest child, Elizabeth, married Evan Owen, the brother of Mary's husband John. Elizabeth died in Logan, Utah, on 12 February 1929 and is buried beside her husband in Wellsville.

Those early days in the fort in Wellsville were not easy. The log cabins were small, and the roofs made of straw covered with dirt leaked badly when it rained. But all suffered the same privations and difficulties. They also were confined to the fort because of the threat of Indian depredations. After Colonel Patrick Connor and his army troops attacked and massacred the Shoshone winter camp on the Bear River west of Franklin, Idaho, in January 1863, the Indian threat lessened greatly. That fall Wellsville City was surveyed and the people began to move their fort cabins to their city lots.

The rigors of pioneer life probably took a heavy toll on Walter who died, according to his headstone, on 27 May 1867, only about three years after the people moved to their city lots. He was 73 years of age and was buried in the Wellsville Cemetery. His homemade headstone, a slab of sandstone with crudely carved inscriptions, shows the ravages of time, a reminder that time will obliterate us all from memory unless we are kept alive by our recorded life stories. Sarah lived until 30 November 1892, according to the Wellsville Cemetery records, dying at the age of 86, and was buried beside her husband.



Walter Walters Headstone



Sarah Rees Leigh Walters Headstone