

5.3. Fredrick Lewis Biography

The following information is from *Our Pioneer Heritage*, Vol. 13, p. 412.



Figure 46. Fredrick Lewis

Stalwart Citizen

Frederick Lewis, the son of John A. and Ann John Lewis, was born May 29th, 1844, in the port city of Cardiff, Glamorganshire, South Wales. His mother died just before his sixth birthday. His sister, Ann, was nearly fourteen and his sister, Mary, ten and a half years old. His little brother William, a surviving twin, was three and a half.

Frederick's father was a rock mason by trade and a master builder. He and his brother built the Cardiff docks. He owned and operated a store, owned and leased twelve houses, accumulating quite a fortune. He had private tutors and a governess for his children and in addition, Frederick went to a Wesleyan school for boys. Frederick was known all his life for his beautiful penmanship, was an excellent reader and expressed himself well. Cardiff was a bustling city, one of the chief coal shipping centers of the world. There were iron and steel works and flour mills, it was the county seat and the City and County Hall was located there. Frederick and his little brother often visited St. John's parish church, and when allowed would visit [p.413] their mother's grave in the ancient churchyard that surrounded the edifice.

Frederick's father had been educated as a Wesleyan minister and did not hear of Mormonism until after his second marriage to Priscilla Phillips Merriman in 1851. Priscilla had a little daughter, Louise, and her deceased sister's daughter, Caroline Matthews, when they were married. The family studied the gospel carefully for two years before embracing it. Nine-year-old Frederick was baptized with his sister Mary and their father in 1853 before leaving their native land for America. They left Cardiff by train for Liverpool, England, January 22, 1854. Here the father secured first-class passage for his family on the sailing vessel

Golconda, January 25, 1854. They arrived at New Orleans March 16, having spent seven weeks on the water. Some days the high winds would drive the vessel back farther than it had progressed the previous day. They sailed up the Mississippi on the boat John Simmons, were delayed-stranded on a sandbar, but finally reached St. Louis where they joined other Saints at McFee's Camp Grounds on the outskirts of the city where all were preparing to move on to Utah. After about three months of preparation and delay they departed with the Darwin Richards Company, arriving in Great Salt Lake City, September 30, 1854.

For a short time the Lewises remained in Salt Lake, the father working on the Temple block. One day, President Young approached him, placed four peach stones in the palm of his hand and sent him on a mission to begin an orchard in Brigham City. He started the first trees to bear peaches in that community. Here and in Willard he built stone houses with his young apprentice, Frederick, to help him. Some of the old rock houses still standing in Willard were built by them. The family lived in Brigham City until '58 the time of the move south when they too abandoned their homes, settling in Spanish Fork.

Frederick continued to wear the clothing he had brought with him from Wales which consisted of short black broadcloth trousers and coat, black fine leather shoes and a black velvet cap. He was conspicuous among the boys who wore home-made cowhide boots, canvas pants and shirts and home braided straw hats. Naturally he was made the butt of their jokes and they delighted in tormenting him. His two sisters had married, but young Fred had a champion—little Agnes Ferguson who never failed to take his part. Perhaps it was his forbearance and his acceptance of life, as it was, that appealed to the diminutive Scottish lass who later became his wife. Agnes was not without a sense of humor. She and her twin Barbara looked so much alike they couldn't be identified and often wore some things of a different color to set them apart. For a dance one night they added handkerchiefs to their costumes [p.414] and wore them around their necks. During the evening they exchanged them. Fred was the victim of the joke; although he and Agnes were engaged to be married, he took Barbara as far as the gate when she laughed and told him he had better go back and get Agnes. They were married January 28, 1865, at the home of Barbara and her husband, Willard Orson Creer and the following October were sealed in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City. In March 1868 death claimed their two-year-old, Barbara Catherine, and that summer Agnes' twin, Barbara Creer, died following the birth of a baby son, William Orson. The infant was brought to Agnes who was at the time nursing her own babe, Priscilla Merriman. He and his four-and-a-half-year-old sister became a part of the family.

In June of 1873 Fred and Agnes Lewis and John and Adlinda Koyle were having dinner together, as they often did, and the question came up as to what the young women would do if anything ever happened to their husbands. One of them jokingly proposed that if one of the men should die the other would marry his widow and take care of her and her family. This they agreed upon and strange as it may seem, in just one week John Koyle was killed in a rock quarry in Spanish Fork Canyon. It was three years before the promise was fulfilled. Agnes and Adlinda had always been friends and loved each other dearly. When Fred and Adlinda were married there were two young Lewis daughters, and now with Adlinda's six the number took a sudden jump to eleven children. Between 1876 and 1880 each wife had two children. Altogether Frederick Lewis fathered eight daughters and one son, helped raise Barbara's two and Adlinda's six children.

Fred built Agnes the home they lived in most of their lives on 1st South and 1st West in Spanish Fork. After the death of his father's wife, he moved him from his first home on North Main Street into a little log house next to his own. As a young man, Fred homesteaded a farm on Spanish Fork River and was a successful farmer. From 1862–76 he was the leader of the martial band in Spanish Fork. During the Indian War troubles he was a drum major for the county and stood guard when raids were suspected, at which time he beat his drum to warn the settlement. He was the city marshal of Spanish Fork from 1870–77.

In 1883 Fred responded to a mission call to Wales. On arrival he went to Old St. John's Churchyard to visit his mother's grave, where he picked flowers which he pressed and sent to his sisters. He was a good missionary, and became a fluent speaker and upon his return home served as counselor to Bishop George D. Snell. He was an accomplished musician, and played the dulcimer for dances. The Lewis home was always open to their children and their friends. Their [p.415] grandchildren still reminisce of the holidays when they all gathered in the parlor around the flickering fire, and listened to the scores of stories grandfather so enchantingly told. They recall, too, that as pre-teenagers they were paid ten cents to go to the farm with Grandfather, fifteen cents if they stayed home.

On January 28, 1915, Fred and Agnes celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary in the Spanish Fork Auditorium when about four hundred guests gathered in a social and dance. It should be mentioned that at this date Fred had not yet lost a tooth. In the fall of 1918 he sold the old house in Spanish Fork and moved to Provo to be near "the girls." Frederick Lewis died June 28, 1920, and was buried at Spanish Fork. He was a gentleman—kind, thoughtful and understanding. He was honored and revered by his family for his teachings, his example, his love and his name. This was the heritage he bequeathed them. Agnes Reid Ferguson Lewis died three months following the death of her husband, October 6, 1920. Adlinda Hillman Koyle Lewis preceded them by over four years, February 21, 1916.

— Agnes Lewis Crandall