

GEORGE PRINCE

George Prince was born 22 December 1815 at Fordham, Cambridge Shire, England. At the age of 18 he left his home, going to Suffolk, England. His parents were Richard and Mary (Harrold) Prince. George was the second child of eleven born to this couple. Soon after his father died 4 Aug 1835, George was called home to care for his mother. He remained with his family until he married Sarah Bowman, daughter of Francis and Sophia Bowman, on 10 October 1837, at Exning, Suffolk, England.

In 1841 Queen Victoria was offering grants of land in South Africa along with money to take people there to build up the country for the glory of England. George and his wife Sarah had originally planned to emigrate to Australia but the inducement seemed to be greater for South Africa. Sarah's health was not good. They had formerly lost their first born son, Francis William, from which she didn't seem to recover. George and his family were with the first group that went. George was about 26, Sarah about 23, their second son also named Francis was a baby. John Prince, George's younger brother was about 19, and accompanied them.

The trip was begun in the Spring and took 16 weeks and 3 days to travel by ship where they arrived at Cape of Good Hope, South Africa. They settled on the banks of the Orange River, far from towns in a forested area. Their neighbors were few and far between. Sarah was the only woman in the party traveling from England and it was some time before she saw another white woman. The natives were hostile to the settlers but a number of Hotentots were taken into the household to do the heavy work indoors and out. They were less antagonistic than other native tribes. One family was especially loyal, John and his wife KiKee and their children, with one son Walnee being a good friend to George's son William. They farmed, had orchards of oranges and peaches and also a tanning mill. It must have been a hard life for the adults but the children loved it.

This country teemed with many brilliantly colored birds, and numerous monkeys lived in their orchards. They never tried to drive them away as they always had more fruit than they needed.

The plantation ran down to the very banks of the Orange River on one side while huge forests and dense underbrush came down to the bank on the other. Along the forest side of the river the settlers had built a long, high brush fence, back some hundred feet from the river bank as a protection from wild animals. Here and there along this fence were left small openings so that the smaller animals could come and go. In these gaps small sapling traps were set to catch the little blue-buff deer of the antelope family, which was not much larger than a hare which were considered good meat.

Their home was a typical thatched dwelling with three rooms built close up to the base of a low hill. A Dutch oven was built outdoors nearby where once a week KiKee did all the baking for the family. Dirt was thrown up on the thatched roof of the house from the base of the hill leaving a shelf about 4 feet wide and 2 or 3 feet high.

They settled in a valley that was rich and fertile and it was not long before they prospered. George and his family took part in two wars while living there and he received several badges of honor. When the last war started he had stationed his son Richard on a hill overlooking the country to watch for the Negroes. When he was then approaching he notified the people and they all gathered in the mill or block house for safety. The men used port holes in the walls to shoot the enemy. In one battle there were about 15 white men and about 2,000 Negroes. John Prince was killed during this war. He had become impatient shooting through the holes and opened the door and was hit by an arrow. He died soon after and was buried on the battle fields of Africa. When the war was over they found hundreds of dead natives which they buried in trenches. All together they were burned out of their homes 3 times but the British government gave them aid and helped them set up again in new places. Eventually the natives were subdued and placed on reservations.

The family grew and Mary Ann, the third child was born 3 June 1843 in Grahamtown, Cape Colony. The next child was Richard who was born in Elephant Hooks, as were the next 5 children, he was born May 26, 1846. William was born Oct 23, 1848, Sophia on Nov 15, 1850 with George Jr. born Jan 26, 1854. The next two girls, Susannah and Sarah Ann were born Nov 14, 1855 and May 16, 1858.

Hardships were endured by the settlers. When earthquakes happened they used a trap door leading to the cellar beneath their home for safety. Another time they had their sheep stolen and suffered near famine.

One evening George told his wife that he had dreamed a dream in which two men appeared to him dressed in black broadcloth suits and high hats. He said this dream seemed real and he had the impression that what they told him was true. She said he was a visionary as Abraham of old but she knew they had been helped many times this way. Three years later in April 1853 the missionary system of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was introduced to South Africa by Jesse Haven, William Walker and Leonard Smith. Two of these men were the ones George had seen in his dream and on Feb 11, 1855, the Prince family was baptized. Feelings rose against the church members. One day George's son Richard, a boy of perhaps ten years, was directing Elder Haven around the area when a mob captured them. They put Elder Haven in a pen and the boy in an old well, but the police soon came and freed them.

The Prince family began thinking of emigrating to America, thinking it might be an improvement in climate considering Sarah's poor health. Also, the lure to Zion with the rest of the Saints was hard to resist. On a trip to the Cat River area with oranges, George met with other church members and made plans to sail for America. Many of the plantation owners along the Cat River had joined the church, among them the Bodley family who became great friends of the family.

Next came the selling and trading of land and goods to raise money to pay their passage. They were only allowed a minimum of baggage they could take, mainly personal items, bedding and housewares and seeds. The wagons and oxen took them first to the Cat River area where they met up with the rest of their traveling party. There were about 30 in their party. It took several weeks to travel to Algoa Bay and Port Elizabeth, which is 435 miles northeast of Cape of Good Hope. Unfortunately, they missed the ship by a few days and were forced to wait a year in Port Elizabeth until the next boat could take them to America.

Accounts differ as to when the family left Africa which gives different dates to their arrival and future trip. An account from The Encyclopedic History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, by Andrew Jensen states: "On March 9, 1859 about 30 Latter-day Saints, emigrating to Zion from the South African Mission sailed from Port Elizabeth on the barque "Alacrity," in charge of Elder Joseph R. Humphreys, a local Elder." Possibly this same ship made more than one trip. Family accounts include: 1. sailed Oct. 5, 1860; 2. Boarded the boat Mar. 9, 1859; 3. Spring of 1860; and 4. 1860. In any case, the trip took about 3 months on the old wooden sailing vessel. Sarah was ill most of the trip and the care of the children ranging in age from Sarah Ann less than 2 years of age to Francis age 20, to George and the older children. They encountered one violent storm that shifted the cargo and made the ship list. All on board had to remain quietly in the hold, [After three days the storm had died when there was no wind] for fear of rocking the ship making it sink. They were also lost on one occasion and had to ration their food. Their route took them from Algoa Bay to Cape Town then to St. Helene for supplies. While there they visited the grave of Napoleon. Jane Pittam Bodily (Bodley) gave birth to a baby girl Lucy on April 12. Others in the group were a Smadley family and Henry White, a bachelor.

Given the different sailing dates one account has them arriving in Boston in the summer of 1860 another Oct 5, 1860. They made plans to travel to Winter Quarters, or Florence, Nebraska. They took the train from Boston to St. Louis, then traveled up the Missouri River on flat boats to Florence, Nebraska. They met persecution on the boats from the crew of the boats in bad language and tormenting of the children. Many of the party had dysentery. One day while on the way to winter quarters their party was surrounded by soldiers whose captain demanded to know if they sympathized with the cause of the North or South. Their captain replied that they were immigrants and had not formed an opinion on the subject of slavery. Some of the soldiers wanted to kill them but when the officer heard they were going west he let them go, remarking that the Indians would kill them anyway.

Again, the dates of their trip crossing the plains differ. One account has them leaving Winter Quarters late summer of 1860 under the leadership of Captain Hooper arriving Oct 5, 1860. Two other accounts have them leaving July 1861 and arriving in Salt Lake City Oct 2, and Oct 5, 1861 and under the leadership of Captain Budge. They were the last company of Saints to cross that season. One account said the trip took 3 months.

George had sufficient money to outfit them for the trip. He bought a new invention called a cook stove and Jersey heifers, 2 of them plus other essential equipment, such as food, machinery tools, wagon and oxen. There were over 400 persons, 55 wagons, 115 oxen and about 70 cows. It was a long hard trip and all the family walked except for Sarah, as her health was poor and when the journey was a little more than half over she gave birth to premature twins which they buried hundreds of miles out on the plains. After their arrival in October they rested before moving to Kaysville. The Saints had only been in the valley 13 years and it was still quite a desert, quite different from their previous home in South Africa where they lived for 15 years.

The property George Prince bought in Kaysville consisted of a fine farm, a good house and orchard. For these, he traded farm implements, wagons and even the new cook stove that had never been used. While in Kaysville they met the James Imlay family which were to be friends for many years. They remained there possibly two years and their last child Lucy Naomi, was born there Dec. 29, 1861. President Young was calling people to help settle Southern Utah, the Dixie area and the Prince family decided to go, again hoping the more temperate climate would be helpful to Sarah. So in the winter of either 1862 or 1863 they left Kaysville for Souther Utah.

Again they traveled by wagon and it was a difficult trip. When they reached Cove Fort they camped in 18 inches of snow, but eventually they reached St. George. Middletown was to be their new and final home, so named because it was 2 miles west of Washington and 3 miles east of St. George. Their first home was a dugout in the side of a hill and they began farming. They later had an adobe house. Several Indian tribes lived in Southern Utah and they were troublesome for many years. One day Sarah was sitting in a homemade rocker, singing her baby to sleep, when the door was darkened by someone entering it. Looking up she saw Bill, an Indian who had been raised by the white people, and who understood their ways and language. He was dressed in an old dirty shirt, and greasy overalls. His face was daubed with streaks of red and brown paint. Sarah had on a full black skirt with a tight fitting blue basque. The children were dressed in plain long dresses with panties reaching to their ankles.

The Indians came in and walked across the room where George's gun hung on its accustomed peg, and reached for it saying, "Mrs. Prince, that is a good gun, me thinks Bill take it." "No you won't take our gun, you cannot have it," replied Sarah. "I will kill you if you won't let me have the gun," declared the Indian, if you will give it to me I will leave and won't hurt you." Throwing the baby to Sarah Ann, who was a girl of about six years, Sarah turned to one of the other girls and said, "Susan, go and call for help."

"No help is near," and Bill laughed, "me see all men go to field, Indian will have gun, I will kill you, me already kill Berry boys." He took a strap from his pocket and hit her over the shoulder and back, but she would not let him have the weapon. Soon Susan came running into the house. "Hold on to the gun, mama" she cried, "Papa and the boys are coming," Bill turned hurriedly to go but took time to remark, "You heap brave squaw, Indian like brave squaw." "Brave or not, I am not going to be killed by my own gun," said Mrs. Prince.

This is only an example of the trouble the Indians caused them. The men often spent the night guarding their homes and families, and working hard in the fields all day raising cotton and cane. In spite of trouble with the Indians, bad weather, poor crops, or invasions of grasshoppers, with hard work the family grew and made a home in that area.

The children had to walk three miles to the school at Washington. The school was a one-roomed log house with hand made benches. They would open school by song and prayer, then all the children would stand in a circle and take turns reading a verse from the "Book of Mormon." Other books they had were McGuffey's Reader and Elementary Speller.

Their Sunday Schools were not like the kind we have. They have not church building, so they would meet at one of the homes, where they held what they called Sunday Socials. On Sunday afternoons the people would gather at George's home where they held Sacrament Meeting. He always took an active part in church work.

Pioneering was hard for the frail wife and mother who had given up a life of luxury to come to Zion, but never regretted the step she had taken. At the age of 57 Sarah died on July 13, 1875, after living and interesting life that had involved much traveling and hardship. She was a true Latter-day Saint.

In 1879 George called all of his children together to come to St. George to be sealed in the temple to their parents. Some of them had married and moved away but on the day set for them to meet, they were all there.

A few years after his wife died George married Francis Sophia Wilkins. They had two sons, John David born March 19, 1879 and Thomas Albert born in Jun. 8, 1881, both in Middleton. George later moved to Escalante, Utah where he died at the age of 90 on January 22, 1905. Again, a very difficult but I'm sure exciting life full of travel, hardship and adventure. One can only admire such courage in these early pioneers.

A discription of George shows him as a small man, not much taller than his wife Sarah. He had piercing, pale blue eyes with heavy overhanging eyebrows, light brown hair and a full forehead.

(This history of the life of George Prince was copied from the (LIFE OF GEORGE PRINCE" --a paper in the possession of Mrs. Frederick Lewis Leslie--and typed by Mrs. H. D. Prince) Also some information from Manetta Prince Henrie.