

# John Henry Alphin

John Henry Alphin was born 28 October 1837 in Payson, Adams, Illinois. He was the second of eleven children of Israel Dodge Alphin and Burnetta Collins. John's father had three plural wives and fathered 27 children in all.<sup>1</sup> Four of these children drowned in the devastating flood at Pine Valley, Washington, Utah Territory, in 1863. A cloudburst sent a fifteen-foot wall of water down the gorge into the stream, washing away their house. They were buried in the old Pine Valley Cemetery. A later flood washed out all but four graves in that cemetery, and the bodies of these four children were never found. The four were transferred to the present cemetery site.<sup>2</sup>

In 1840, the family lived in Quincy, Adams, Illinois.<sup>3</sup> That year and the next, the family joined the Mormon Church. The family moved to Walker, Walker, Texas,<sup>4</sup> after the death of John's grandfather, and to support his grandmother. They are found there on the 1850 census. The next year they moved to Madisonville, Madison, Texas.<sup>5</sup> Most of the family crossed the plains to the Great Salt Lake Valley in 1857, but it is unknown when John crossed.<sup>6</sup> They arrived in the midst of Johnston's Army under the extermination order of US President Buchanan. Everyone left their homes as the army entered the canyon with the intention of burning everything. The army marched through the city and past to make camp. Eventually the people were able to return to their homes.<sup>7</sup>

John married Elmira Sprouse 23 December 1861 in Utah Territory.<sup>8</sup> They had six children. The family moved from Salt Lake City to Corinne, Box Elder, Utah Territory, by 1870.<sup>9</sup> This was when the transcontinental railroad was completed nearby, perhaps John worked on the railroad?<sup>10</sup> They moved that summer to Helena, Lewis and Clark, Montana Territory,<sup>11</sup> traveling by stagecoach. Tickets for the family had to be purchased weeks ahead. It took five days and nights to make the trip, stopping just to eat, change horses and rest for an hour.<sup>12</sup>

After one year in Helena, John sold his business and headed for the gold fields of Nevada by way of Corinne. Unfortunately, they were traveling on a stagecoach that carried an unusually heavy shipment of bullion from the mines and money from the miners to their families back east. The second day they were held up by stage robbers. The "shotgun messenger" was killed and the bandits disappeared after warning the driver to drive on rapidly and not look back. They reported the incident at the next station, but the bandits were never captured.<sup>13</sup>

They spent the winter in Salt Lake City, and John headed to Pioche in the spring of 1871, leaving the family behind until he could prepare a place for them to live.<sup>14</sup> In 1872 John was a defendant in court

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<sup>1</sup> *Familysearch.org*

<sup>2</sup> *Findagrave.com*

<sup>3</sup> United States Census, 1840.

<sup>4</sup> United States Census, 1850.

<sup>5</sup> Biography of John Henry Allphin, by Mage Becraft, at *Familysearch.org*

<sup>6</sup> Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel, 1847-1868.

<sup>7</sup> History of Israel Dodge Allphin, by Sherry M Smith, at *Familysearch.org*

<sup>8</sup> Biography of John Henry Allphin, by Mage Becraft, at *Familysearch.org*; US and International Marriage Records, 1560-1900.

<sup>9</sup> United States Census, 1870.

<sup>10</sup> Biography of John Henry Allphin, by Mage Becraft, at *Familysearch.org*

<sup>11</sup> United States Census, 1870.

<sup>12</sup> *Overland Monthly and the Out West Magazine*, 1868-1875, 1916, pp. 501-506.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

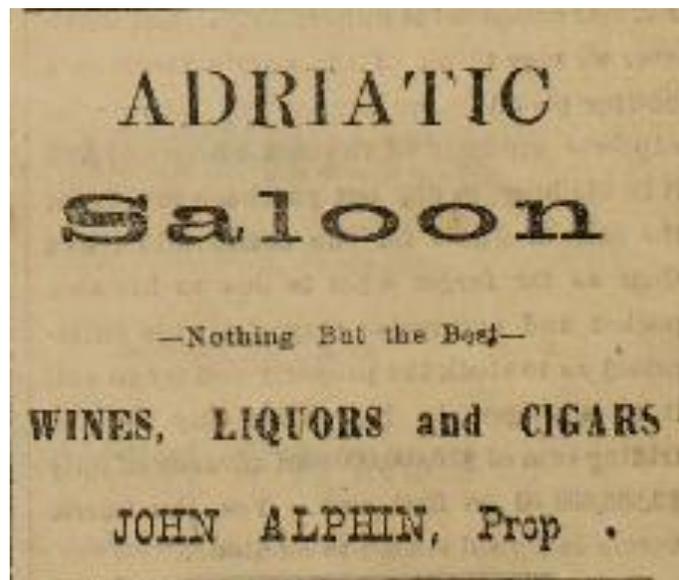
<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

case filed by Mr. Pender in Salt Lake County for debts owed.<sup>15</sup> By 1874, the family was living in Pioche, Lincoln, Nevada, where John is listed as a musician, living with his wife and four children in Lincoln, Nevada.<sup>16</sup>

By 1879, John was the proprietor of the Adriatic Saloon in Silver Reef, Washington, Utah Territory.<sup>17</sup> He was listed as a musician, living with his wife and five children in Silver Reef, on the 1880 census.<sup>18</sup> His brother Joshua and his family as well as their father also lived in Silver Reef at this time. By 1885, John was a hackman, living with his wife and five children in Mesa, Colorado.<sup>19</sup> Elmira died 1 October 1886 and was buried in Durango, La Plata, Colorado.<sup>20</sup>

In 1902, the US court of claims reversed an adverse decision in the case of Daniel E. Kimball and John H. Alphin of Cripple Creek, Colorado. The men had sought to recover \$2,000 for loss of horses and equipment in the Indian wars in Nevada in 1859. The court had ruled that the “evidence in the case did not establish that the property lost was used by the US or its agents”, but then reversed its decision.<sup>21</sup> Together they received \$2,068 and John received an additional \$90.<sup>22</sup>

John died 26 December 1906 in Cripple Creek, Teller, Colorado,<sup>23</sup> and was buried there.



(Image from the *Silver Reef Miner*, 1 October 1879, p. 1)

Research by Elaine Young, 2016

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<sup>15</sup> Salt Lake County Utah Civil and Criminal Case Files, 1852-1887

<sup>16</sup> Nevada State Census, 1875.

<sup>17</sup> *Silver Reef Miner*, 1 October 1879, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> United States Census, 1880.

<sup>19</sup> Colorado State Census, 1885.

<sup>20</sup> Biography of John Henry Alphin, by Mage Becraft, at *Familysearch.org*

<sup>21</sup> *Weekly Gazette*, 6 March 1902, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> Annual Reports of the Department of the Interior, Vol 19, 1906, p. 451.

<sup>23</sup> Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel, 1847-1868.