

**The Life and Times  
John Madison Chidester  
By Dale Eldon Chidester**

John Madison Chidester, the second son of John Peck Chidester and Mary Ann Gifford was born the 22nd of January 1809 in Pompey, Onondaga, New York He was unaware, as any child would be at that age, that another child named Joseph Smith, born in 1805 would one day change John's and millions of other children's lives, Nor that in that same future, John would travel thousands of miles -from his birth place, face nature at some of its extremes with little protection, confront mobs, Indians and governments and always remain faithful to the work started by this Joseph Smith. All of this was in the future as John lay in his mother's arms John's father, a doctor, died when John was only seven months old. This at times meant orphanages or cruel stepfathers but John was very lucky because his grandparents, David and Mary Chidester, with whom he lived awhile,<sup>1</sup> and Jeremiah and Phoebe Gifford helped care for he and his older brother David Starr with love and financial aid. Polly, his mother, had said at the death of her husband, "That she could never love another man." She had loved him that much. But two years later she remarried a widower named George Darrow who had 6 children of his own.<sup>2</sup> George proved to be a considerate husband and stepfather.

At an early age, like other boys, John was apprenticed and learned both the carpentry and millwright trades. This apprenticeship probably consisted of being signed over to a craftsman for up to seven years receiving an education, room and board.

The western movement during the early 1800's was in full swing and John's family was to be affected. John's Aunt Betsy Chidester Pratt and her husband Jared Pratt had moved into the Erie County in New York along with other families from the location. The stories that came back of rich soil, forests, and plenty of farm land encouraged the family. George Darrow and Polly with their family moved to Monroe County in the territory of Michigan. There they settled in the Summerfield Township, which is a section of the County and not a town. It is not know if John moved with his family or was still apprenticed.<sup>3</sup>

It was during this time of John's life that a new church started around Palmyra, New York, Joseph Smith, the before mentioned boy had a vision in the Spring of 1820 that shaped a new American religion. A personal visit by God, The Father and Jesus Christ, His Son left Joseph with the knowledge that God's Church must be restored to the earth. The next ten years would see Joseph receiving new scriptures, Gods Priesthood being restored, and finally on April 6, 1830 the formal organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

While this was happening John was busy. Years later he would record that he met and married Mary Josephine Parker in New York on the 28th of December 1829.<sup>4</sup> Mary had also at a young age lost her mother and had gone to live with her grandparents Eli and Polly Hull. She

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<sup>1</sup> John Madison Chidester. Anderson, Written Jan 1966

<sup>2</sup> John Madison Chidester. Anderson, Written Jan 1966

<sup>3</sup> John Madison Chidester. Anderson, Written Jan 1966

<sup>4</sup> John Madison Chidester. Anderson, Written Jan 1966

stayed there for at least several years. Later her father Joshua Parker would marry a Sina Smith. This new mother Sina would teach Mary, who was also known as Polly, through the first years of her married life and was there with her for her first child.<sup>5</sup> This romance between John and Mary lasted through 9 children, two other wives, and the test of time.

Shortly after they were married John and Mary moved into the Summerfield Township, Monroe, Territory of Michigan, in an area that would become Petersburg. Here they bought property, built a farm, and started raising a family when their first child was born, John Peck the 23rd of December 1831.

The L.D.S. Church was also growing between the years of 1830 and 1834. On September 26, 1830 the first Mormon missionaries were sent to preach the gospel to the world. Some of the first ones went to the Indian Nations on the western boundaries of the United States and on the way they started a small branch of the Church that would grow to become the Mormon city of Kirtland Ohio where the first Mormon temple would be built. Other missionaries would called by the Church in June of 1831 to spread the gospel across the United States and gather the believers to Kirtland and to the New Zion in Independence, Missouri.

The Chidesters in Michigan were caught up in the movement when Mormon Elders came to the Summerfield area. John and Mary both listened to their teaching, talked with their families, and decided together to join the Church, and were baptized and confirmed by Joseph Wood and David Patten the 24th of June 1832.<sup>6</sup> The following winter John was ordained an Elder, probably on the 23rd of February 1833 by Joseph Wood.<sup>7</sup> John then sold his farm in Michigan on a large term contract and John, Mary and their infant son set of on the first of many treks.<sup>8</sup> It seems they were either heading for Kirtland along the shores of the Great Lakes or were just looking for a Mormon community. They traveled as far as Florence, Huron, Ohio, where an L.D.S. branch was located. Here a daughter was born on the 18th of February 1834 and she was named Eunice.

As the Church grew with the flow of converts, it faced growing antagonism from those who resented the Church's beliefs and its growing local political power. Many of the Mormons had settled in the area around Independence, Missouri, here they built their homes and tried to create their own heaven on earth, which to them, would be called Zion. Part of this idea was to encourage Mormons to move into the area. This growth of outsiders in an area that never liked the political, philosophical, or social outlook of the Mormons caused problems. Where once the Saints had been welcomed into Independence, in 1831, by 1833 they were faced with mob action. These mobs became so large and violent that the Mormons were left homeless. The hatred of these many mobsters became so intense that the Mormons were forced out of their communities north into Clay County, Missouri. Here they were accepted as refugees, until they could find someplace else to move.

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<sup>5</sup> Mary Parker Chidester 1809-1879

<sup>6</sup> Family Records

<sup>7</sup> Journal History 5th Quorum Seventies

<sup>8</sup> John Madison Chidester, Anderson, Written Jan 1966

Hearing of their distress, Joseph Smith sent a call for men to aid and defend beleaguered Church members. John and Mary heard the call and obeyed. When Joseph Smith called for volunteers starting on the 24th of February, John seems to have enlisted readily. So packing his wife and children, John was ready and willing to assist his Church.

Between the 1st and 9th of May several bodies of men left Kirtland and headed for New Portage, now part of Akron, Ohio. Here was the rendezvous set by Joseph for the organization of the Camp. From John's testimony he was with the leading groups of men that had met at New Portage and were waiting for the prophet. After placing 130 men, a few women and children and twenty baggage wagons into proper marching order the Camp set out. They were to march nearly 900 miles through Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. Then when they reached Missouri they were to be ready to fight for their brethren, in fact making them an army.

The daily routine of Zion's Camp was like most armies. The men themselves unless they were sick marched along side the wagons over the roads that varied from hot and dusty to cold and muddy. Many carried not only guns but knapsacks and it was not unusual to march 35 miles a day. This despite blistered feet, heat, heavy rains high humidity, hunger and thirst. At night armed guards were posted around the camp. At 4:00 A. M. the trumpet sounded for the men to get up. Each company had a prayer and then they worked at their given assignments, such as cutting wood, hunting, etc.

Feeding the camp was a problem, often the only thing to eat was limited quantities of coarse bread, rancid butter, cornmeal mush, strong honey, raw pork, rotten ham and maggot-infested bacon and cheese. Often the men and the few women and children went hungry.

The camp was never without problems. They were threatened by the towns they pass through, water was bad, and even members of the camp rebelled against Joseph. Cholera broke out in the camp and over 60 people would contract it and 14 died.

As the camp arrived in Missouri local conditions would not permit their use. The Governor of Missouri, who said he would support Zion's Camp, backed down on his word and would not permit the Camp in nor would he help the Saints driven from their homes. Faced with open civil war against the Saints if Zion Camp continued, and following a revelation, Joseph disbanded the Camp. To many the Camp seemed wasted time, but from the ranks of Zion's Camp many of the Churches future leaders would be chosen. John, it seems, was one of those men who gain much from the experience of the Camp. His testimony would remain strong through out his life. He also finally met the prophet he had chosen to follow. He recorded his impressions of Joseph in these words:

“My first recollection of seeing the Prophet Joseph Smith was at a place about sixty or seventy miles from Kirtland, where two companies of Zion's Camp met. My impression on beholding the Prophet and shaking hands with him was that I stood face to face with the greatest man on earth. I testify he was a prophet of God. “

“Zion’s Camp in passing through the state of Indiana had to cross very bad swamps, consequently we had to attach ropes to the wagons to help them through, and the Prophet was the first man at the rope in his bare feet. This was characteristic of him in all times of difficulty.”

“We continued our journey until we reached the Wakandaw River, having traveled twenty-five miles without resting or eating. We were compelled to ferry this stream; and we found on the opposite side of it a most desirable place to camp, which was a source of satisfaction to the now weary and hungry men. On reaching this place the Prophet announced to the Camp that he felt impressed to travel on, and taking the lead, he invited the brethren to follow him.

“This caused a split in the Camp, Lyman Wight and others at first refused to follow the Prophet, but finally came up. The sequel showed that about eight miles below where we crossed the river a body of men were organized to come upon us that night.”

“When we reached Salt Creek, Missouri, the Allred settlement had prepared a place to hold a meeting in. Joseph and Hyrum Smith and others were on the stand at the meeting when two strangers came in and were very anxious to find out which of them were Joseph and Hyrum, as they had pledged themselves to shoot them on sight. But the Prophet and his brother slipped away unobserved, being impressed that there was danger of their lives being taken.”<sup>9</sup>

After the disbanding of Zion’s Camp most of the men returned to Kirtland and other locations where their families waited. Some were requested to stay in Missouri by Joseph. Because of this request John and his family settled at Liberty, Clay, Missouri. Possibly John made the trip back to Kirtland and then returned to Liberty.<sup>10</sup> Here it was recorded that it was voted on and carried that Daniel Stephens and John M. Chidester would receive recommends to go forth to preach the gospel.<sup>11</sup> John never got the chance to preach. The Mormons were not to stay here long as mob action once again threatened the Saints in Missouri. One story about John during this time period must have been well known because it showed up in his obituary, “At one time during the Missouri mobbings he was caught by the mob and condemned to death by hanging, for, as they said, the theft of a horse. Endeavoring by threats to make him own to the stealing, they only succeeded in arousing his indignation until he undauntedly informed them that the first one who laid his hands on him he would “lay out.” The sympathy of part of the mob was aroused in his behalf and they swore with an oath such a brave man should be set at liberty.<sup>12</sup>

The people who had let the Mormons move into Clay County never wanted the Mormons to settle there, they were just being kind. When it looked as if the Mormons might stay they were asked, very pointedly to leave. Faced with the possible start of further mob action, the decision to leave was made. The early fall of 1836 saw the Saints leave their newest homes and flee to the northern part of Ray County, Missouri. John and Mary were not in this movement. Mary had a third child born on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August 1836 and named her Mary. John’s wife’s health was not

<sup>9</sup> Journal History of the Church 1934 Nov. 3 page 9

<sup>10</sup> John Madison Chidester, Anderson, Written Jan. 1966

<sup>11</sup> Far West Records, Cannon, page 96

<sup>12</sup> Journal History of the Church 1893 Aug. 31 page 10

goad during this pregnancy and the baby was born sickly and weak, with Mary to weak to nurse the child properly.<sup>13</sup> Faced with being forced out of their homes, the constant fear of violence and the lack of protection from the elements John did the best he could for his wife, new child and the rest of the family, but it was not enough. The infant Mary, according to family tradition, died as a result of the mob actions February 11<sup>th</sup>, 1837. These illnesses and death must have been the reason the Chidesters did not move to the new city of Far West, Missouri until after the first of 1837.

Far West was in the northern part of Ray County that became a haven for the Saints in December of 1836. This section was organized into Caldwell County and Far West became its central city. With the aid of hundreds of families like John and Mary's the whole county became a beehive of industry. Far West grew rapidly. In April of 1837 a Church Conference was held there and site for a temple chosen. The corner stones were set on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1837 and converts from all parts of the country added to the growth of the area.

The final spurt of growth came after the failure of the Kirtland Safety Society. This bank, formed in Kirtland, failed not only because of a general national depression, but because of heavy land speculation by members of the Church. Joseph was blamed, he had warned against this very thing, apostasy became a plague, even to the point of sword and guns being brought into the Kirtland Temple. Joseph Smith and Brigham Young were driven out of the city in January of 1838 and were followed by all those still faithful to Joseph in what was called Kirtland Camp. All of these members had arrived around Far West by the next summer. So the spring of 1838 found the population of Far West at over 5,000 people, a very large frontier town. It had over 150 houses, 4 dry good stores, 3 groceries, 6 blacksmith shops, 2 hotels and a printing establishment.<sup>14</sup>

John's family grew with the town. It was a matter of pride, it is said, that at this time Joseph Smith lived across the street from John and that his children played with the Prophet's children.<sup>15</sup> He was ordained a 70 in the 5th Quorum by Joseph Young February 25, 1837,<sup>16</sup> and he wrote a small history of himself at that time.<sup>17</sup> And a child named Jared was born on the 18th of March 1838. He, like his sister Mary, was born with frail health. His life was short, but it was long enough to span the time it took for lawless mobsters and immoral politicians to drive the Saints from their homes again and from the state of Missouri.

The differences in religion, political philosophies such as slavery, life styles between the older settlers and the Saints and the fact that the Saints were plain guilty of the unforgivable crime of being different triggered the coming tragedy. August 6, 1838 was election day in Gallatin, Davis, Missouri. A group of older settlers (not in age but having been in the area longer) decided that the Mormons had no right to vote. So they gathered, armed with clubs, to stop the Mormons. A fight broke out when those same Mormons insisted on their constitutional rights. There were a few cracked heads and the Mormons voted.

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<sup>13</sup> Mary Parker Chidester 1809-1879

<sup>14</sup> The Refiner's Fire, Dyer, page 146

<sup>15</sup> John Madison Chidester, Anderson, written Jan. 1966

<sup>16</sup> Record #1-C Seventies page 3 5th Quorum

<sup>17</sup> Information from Jim Kimball Church Historian

When the news of the fight spread, all hell literally broke loose. Mobsters from across the state gathered in “legal” Militia to protect their rights and attacked the Saints quite openly, with murders, rapes, tarring, and burnt and destroyed homes. No government help for the Mormons was offered nor given when it was asked for. The Mormon town of DeWitt was attacked and placed under siege between the 21<sup>st</sup> of September to the 11<sup>th</sup> of October. After the town surrendered and attacks on the Saints in smaller towns increased, places like Adam-on-di-Ahman, Gallatin and Millport were evacuated, and their residents moved into Far West.

Some Saints tried to stay in their homes which caused more problems. Some were kidnapped and the Mormon Militia tried to rescue them on October 25th. During the attempt a fire fight broke out with the mobsters holding the victims. This fire fight cost lives on both sides, including the man who confirmed John, David Patten, now a member of the Church’s Quorum of the Twelve. The kidnapped members were set free and the Mormon Militia went home. (It is likely that John was a member of this Militia simply because of his friends being there, and because later he would enlist as an officer in the Nauvoo Legion.)

The infamous Governor Boggs of Missouri, hearing of the battle, and hating the Saints for his own reasons, issued, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October, the most repulsive edict, ever written by a long list of corrupted American politicians. This “Extermination” Order gave legal permission to either drive the Saints from the state or to kill them. This permission to kill was carried out first on the 30<sup>th</sup> of October when over 200 mobsters attacked the small town of Haun’s Mill. When they left the town was in flames. Every male they could find had been shot or hacked to death with bladed weapons. Seventeen Mormon men had been killed and mutilated without mercy and 12 more were severely wounded.

The horrifying news of the massacre arrived the same day followed by General Lucas and his mobsters turned State Militia. With them entered the final act of the Missouri Tragedy. Six to eight hundred Saints, (here again I believe John was with these men) formed a fortified line to the south of the city in a show of strength. It was to accomplish nothing. Their own commander, Colonel George Hinkle, on the 31<sup>st</sup>, held a parley where he turned Joseph Smith, Sidney Rigdon, Parley P. Pratt and other leaders of the Church over to General Lucas and his mob. Then to finish his act of betrayal, Hinkle marched the Mormon Militia out of their positions on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November and had them lay down their arms.

The City of Far West was burnt, its men beaten, some killed, its women raped, and its leaders imprisoned or driven into hiding. The Saints were ordered, under pain of death, to leave the state. Under the direction of Brigham Young these wrenched people left their homes in Far West in the middle of winter, leaving tracks of blood in the snow. Many left the state then and all were out of the state by the middle of April 1839.

According to family tradition John stood by the side of Joseph through this time period as a body guard and that he was with Joseph when he was betrayed by Colonel Hinkle.<sup>18</sup> The story goes that he followed Joseph through his being taken to Independence, then to jail in Richmond where he stayed with other prisoners during the mockery of a trail that lasted 13 days. One night

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<sup>18</sup> John Madison Chidester, Anderson, Written Jan. 1966

in the middle of November the Mormons lay in their Jail listening to the guards blaspheme, swear, and brag about their murders, and rapes of the Mormon people. Parley P. Pratt tells how he could scarcely refrain from speaking when Joseph suddenly rose to his feet. There he was shackled and unarmed, but in a voice of thunder he roared:

“SILENCE, ye fiends of the infernal pit. In the name of Jesus Christ I rebuke you, and command you to be still; I will not live another minute and bear such language. Cease such talk, or you or I die THIS INSTANT!”

“He ceased to speak. He stood erect in terrible majesty. Chained and without a weapon; calm, unruffled and dignified as an angel, he looked upon the quailing guards, whose weapons were lowered or dripped to the ground; whose knees smote together, and who shrinking into a corner, or crouching at his feet, begged his pardon, and remained quiet till a change of guards.”<sup>19</sup>

Here again, according to family legend John was near to his prophet.<sup>20</sup> Joseph and others would escape in April, Pratt and others in the summer, and the last of the Mormons would be free by October. All this suffering for the crime of defending themselves.

John’s family had not left the area of Far West with the rest of the Saints. Jared was not well and if legend is true John was with Joseph. The family stayed when all friends had gone and only lawless animals dressed as humans surrounded them. They stayed, apparently faithful to the Church until Jared died at Far West on the 11th of October 1839.<sup>21</sup>

The major body of the Church had settled at what would become the City of Nauvoo, Illinois, When Joseph arrived there in May of 1839 he gave the spirit to start again. Homes and farms were being built when John and his family arrived sometime in November. John would sign, with others a list of the cost of worldly goods lost in Missouri, John’s being \$2660.00, the price of two farms.<sup>22</sup> No one, I’m sure, tried to count the cost of the anguish and loss of loved ones. The United States did nothing, the Government of Missouri paid about \$2,000.00 total for the Churches losses.

Nauvoo was literally raised out of the swamps to become a “City Beautiful”. It became for a few years a Mormon refuge, and a home. John and Mary built their home on an acre plot of land described as block #34 lot 4.<sup>23</sup> It was located on the northwest corner of the intersection of Hyrum and Woodruff Streets. Here six months before the City of Nauvoo received its charter, another son, named David, was born the 5th of June 1840.

John prospered in Nauvoo, although he had lost everything in the Missouri exodus. The family was happy. John P. now sixteen was working with his father as a carpenter and turner. The other children were healthy and growing. And John and Mary were involved in the start of

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<sup>19</sup> Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt, Pratt, page 179-180

<sup>20</sup> John Madison Chidester, Anderson, Written Jan. 1966

<sup>21</sup> The Chidester-Chichester Heritage, Anderson, page 99

<sup>22</sup> Journal History of the Church 1839 Nov. 29 page 9

<sup>23</sup> The Chidester-Chichester Heritage, Anderson, page 133

the Nauvoo Temple in April of 1841 and as John worked on the building Mary cooked, cleaned and sewed for the work crews.<sup>24</sup>

John was also active in other areas. He paid taxes, in 1842 he listed his personal properties that were worth tax purposes as \$30 of oxen, \$30 wagon, and \$30 of other items. He signed his name to two petitions, one to remove a house used as a hotel at the Nauvoo Landing and another to extend Knight Street. And he applied to be a member in the Masonic Lodge in Nauvoo on December 21<sup>st</sup>, 1843. He was accepted on January 18, 1844.<sup>25</sup> Belonging to the Masonic Lodge was very common in the period of time the Saints were in Nauvoo. There were at least two lodges in operation and both Joseph and his brother Hyrum were members in good standing of their lodge.

Around 1842 John was called on a mission for his Church. He accepted, (at this time you went without funds depending on the good will of others to feed and shelter you) and was sent to his home state of Michigan. He was able to convert his mother, and a half-sister and half-brother that same year.<sup>26</sup>

The paradise in Nauvoo couldn't last with mobsters still thirsting for blood and government officials either hostile or indifferent. For protection the Nauvoo Legion was formed and John joined it ranks. A few months after his 6<sup>th</sup> child was born, Joshua on February 1st, 1834, John was commissioned a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cohort, Nauvoo Legion in June of 1843.<sup>27</sup> Here again as officers in the Legion stood guard on Joseph's home and went on patrols around the country side John was protecting his prophet.

Since the persecution against Joseph was increasing the Saints did everything they could to protect him. Family legend tells the story of when John was out in the country peddling apples. The Prophet met him and asked for his help, for a mob was after him. John rearranged the apples so that the Prophet was completely covered, all but his feet. There wasn't time to do more. The mob came up and demanded he submit to a search. They looked all around, but did not see the uncovered feet, and finally left. Where upon John turned his wagon around and headed home. At a lark in the road John decided to take the shortest route, but as he turned into that road a blinding flash of lighting struck just ahead of the horses. They were frightened and began to run, out of control. By the time John was able to calm them he found that they were well on the way down the opposite road. He drove on and when he arrived home he discovered that, had he gone the first route, he would have met the mob again and probably not been so successful in evading them.<sup>28</sup>

In 1834-35, after the death of John's step-father, John returned to Michigan and disposed of the last of his property. He also helped his mother settle her affairs and move to Nauvoo. Later, during the Mormon trek to the Rocky Mountains, she was married to John Young, brother

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<sup>24</sup> Mary Parker Chidester 1809-1879

<sup>25</sup> Information received from Jim Kimball, Historian Church Historical Department

<sup>26</sup> Journal History of the Church 1893 Aug. 31 page 10

<sup>27</sup> Executive Record, 1643-47, Vol. 4 page 54

<sup>28</sup> The Chidester-Chichester Heritage, Anderson page 99-100



to Brigham Young. During the last years of her life she lived with her son John in Washington, Utah and was active in doing Temple work in the St. George Temple.<sup>29</sup>

Attempts to arrest Joseph Smith reached the point in the summer of 1844 that Joseph and his brother Hyrum, fearing for their lives fled Nauvoo. Then because of letters from some members of the Church and his wife, Joseph returned. He and Hyrum surrendered themselves to mobsters serving as state lawmen on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June 1844. They were taken to Carthage, Illinois and held for trial. There on the 27<sup>th</sup>, a mob attacked the Jail, possibly aided by not only the jailer, but by Governor Ford of Illinois, and Joseph and Hyrum were killed and John Taylor wounded. When their bodies were returned home on the 28<sup>th</sup> and buried on the 29<sup>th</sup> the entire city of Nauvoo was in deep mourning. John had lost not only his Prophet and friend with Joseph, but with Hyrum who had adopted him, in the Church, as his son.

The Church didn't falter as some had claimed it would if Joseph were killed. Most members followed Brigham Young and the Twelve Apostles. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 1844 John received a Patriarchal Blessing from John Smith.<sup>30</sup> The 8<sup>th</sup> of August saw the Church formally accept Brigham and the Twelve as their leaders. Also the Nauvoo Legion was kept active and on the 14<sup>th</sup> of December John advanced to 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cohort Nauvoo Legion.<sup>31</sup>

After the repeal of its charter in January of 1845, Nauvoo had less than two years to become a ghost of its former self. Despite growing persecution life went on for the Saints, even trying to finish their temple under adverse conditions. Knowing that their time was probably limited, and that they would be forced to leave Nauvoo, John with the rest of the Saints worked hurriedly on their temple. Mary had another child on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April 1845 and he was named James Madison, he lived five days and died on the 16<sup>th</sup>. The sorrow of this newest death was soothed a little when on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December 1845, the Temple was complete enough that John and Mary could receive their endowments.<sup>32</sup>

Faced once more with a hostile state, growing mobs, and demands for their removal, the Saints left Nauvoo, starting in February 1846. For months before the city had been trying to prepare to leave and go west, with wagons being built, homes sold and supplies gathered. Most homes were sold for very little or just left behind because non-Mormon knew the Mormons had to leave. Many of the Saints lost everything again and had little to buy wagons and supplies. Many of the leaders were desperately needed to go west and were just as poor as their neighbors. Asked specifically by Brigham Young to be ready for a western march, Ezra Taft Benson was told to ask for the items he needed to move. He asked John for a wagon and John gave him his.<sup>33</sup> John still managed to move his family across the River to Sugar Creek, Iowa and they would be there until funds were available to move on.

The staging area for the trip west was at Sugar Creek that February of 1846. John and his family stayed with the rest in the sleet and snow. Those that didn't have the luxury of a cut

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<sup>29</sup> The Chidester-Chichester Heritage, Anderson, page 71

<sup>30</sup> Record History Office, Patriarchal Blessing Vol. 7 pg 13

<sup>31</sup> Executive Record, 1843-47, Vol. 4 page 238

<sup>32</sup> Special Collections of the Church Film #0183372

<sup>33</sup> Diary of Ezra Taft Benson (Indexed) page 17

timber tent, made a frame and hung walls of bed quilts, bark and brush. Then they lived in these shelters through snow storms that lasted for days.

While waiting for their turn to head west John and his family built a raft and busied themselves in helping other Saints cross the Mississippi River.<sup>34</sup> Quite often John P. guided the craft. The family stayed through the departure of 500 wagons headed west on March 1<sup>st</sup>. They were still there on May 1<sup>st</sup> when the temple was finished and may have still been there when the last Saints were driven out of Nauvoo after the battle there in the middle of September. While running the ferry, a daughter was born on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May 1846. She was named Ester. John disguised as a woman, (a hard job no doubt) cared for his wife and baby. Most of the Saints had gone and the family cared for itself. Mobs would not, at that time, hurt women and children.<sup>35</sup> The Chidesters ran the ferry until the spring of 1846.<sup>36</sup>

A song and poem were written during this time period, perhaps they will describe John and Mary's feelings. First the songs:

#### EARLY THIS SPRING WE'LL LEAVE NAUVOO

1. Early this spring we'll leave Nauvoo, and our journey we'll pursue  
We'll go and bid the mob farewell, and let them go to heaven or hell  
So on the way to California in the spring we'll take our journey  
Far above the Arkansas fountains, pass between the Rocky Mountains
2. The mobocrats have done their best, old Sharp and Williams with the rest  
They've burn't our house and our goods and left our sick folk in the woods
3. Below Nauvoo on the green plains they burn't our houses and our grain  
And if fought they were hell bent to raise for help from the government
4. Old Governor Ford his mind so small, has got no room for a soul at all  
If heaven and hell should do their best, he neither could be damned or blessed  
So out of the way old Major Warren, you can't come it over the Mormons  
Far above Arkansas fountains, pass between the Rocky Mountains
5. Now since it's so we have to go and leave the City of Nauvoo I hope you'll all be strong  
and stout, and then no mob can buck you out
6. The Temple shining silver bright, and Christ's own glory gives the light  
High on the mountains we will rear a standard to the nations far.<sup>37</sup>

The poem was written by someone who stayed like John and Mary.

The silvery notes of the temple bell

<sup>34</sup> Journal History of the Church, 1893 Aug. 31, page 10

<sup>35</sup> The Chidester-Chichester Heritage, Anderson, page 100

<sup>36</sup> Journal History of the Church, 1893 Aug. 31, page 10

<sup>37</sup> Saints of Sage and Saddle, Austin and Alta Fife, page -

That we loved so deep and well  
 And a pang of grief would swell the heart  
 And the scalding tears in anguish start  
 As we silently gazed on our dear old homes.<sup>38</sup>

In church history it was recorded that the Saints that stayed in Sugar Creek after the main body left for the west were faced with starvation. It seemed that the sick outnumbered the well and the cries of the hungry children could be heard from the cold camp. After many prayers had been offered a miracle happened when large flocks of quail flew into the camp and landed on the ground. Letting themselves be caught by the hungry Saints. Mary Chidester Formo recalled that her grandmother Rebecca used to tell this story about her husband David, John's son. "They had traveled and were starving, and had not eaten for a long time, and this one night they circled their wagons during their usual encampment and all of them knelt down to pray for guidance and help, and when they opened their eyes, they saw this big black cloud in the sky and it was coming directly toward them. They were all terribly frightened, but it was a covey of quail, and they lived (landed) in the middle of the encampment and just stood still. The "Saints" hurriedly rung some of the quail necks and when they had gotten enough for food, the quail took off."<sup>39</sup> Perhaps they are both the same story as seen through the eyes of a five year old boy.

Leaving Sugar Creek finally, John and his family started the long trip west. They wintered at Garden Grove Iowa, spent time at Mt. Pisgah where they signed a request asking for mail service,<sup>40</sup> and went on to Kaneshville, now Council Bluffs, Iowa. All of these places were Mormon way stations where Saints could stop, put in crops, harvest, raise money, and move on. At Council Bluffs they settled at Ferryville, and John built a grist mill powered by horses and ground corn and wheat into meal to sell as well as to feed the family. The family also worked to fashion wagons and carts for the Saints heading for Utah.<sup>41</sup>

Crops were planted and if someone moved to the valley others would harvest, as was custom. When on the trail they danced almost every night and sang camp songs and religious hymns. Maybe John and Mary listened to Captain William Pitt's brass band. When in camp, like Winter Quarters, (Council Bluffs), hardtack or sea biscuit was made. Hardtack is bread that when made is hard as clay brick. It tastes okay if it's fresh (and has water and salt and knead it until it is too stiff to work in anymore flour by hand. Then place the dough on something hard and flat and pound in more flour with the flat side of a broad axe or sledge hammer. When the dough is very stiff beat it into a slab ½ inch thick, bake it, then store it in cloth sacks. You could eat it plain, soak it, pore boiling water on it mixing it with molasses or honey and make pudding out of it.

Finally around the family was bale to cross the plains into the Salt Lake Valley. Different records exist as to when and with whom John and his family made this trip. In the records searched and recorded by the author of the books, Heart Throbs of the West it states that

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<sup>38</sup> The Mormon Trek West, Brown, page 9

<sup>39</sup> Things I remember About David and Rebecca Chidester, by Mary Chidester Formo

<sup>40</sup> Journal History of the Church, 1846 Jan. 20, page 24

<sup>41</sup> The Chidester-Chichester Heritage, Anderson, page 100

John Chidester entered the Valley in the Kimball Company in 1848.<sup>42</sup> In another volume they recorded that David and his older sister Eunice crossed the plains with a company in 1851.<sup>43</sup> Church Emigration records list John Chidester, his wife Mary, son John Peck and daughter Eunice entering the Valley in an independent company in 1850.<sup>44</sup> Then the personal diary of Warren Foote and the diary of his company both record that John Chidester with 3 other people traveled with the Warren Foote Company in 1850.<sup>45</sup> Any one of these, or all of these records could be correct. Many families split up into different groups to cross the plains and many men acted as teamsters to earn the money to cross for their families. Since the Foote diary is an original document it is probably the most correct so to tell the story of the Chidester crossing his journal will be used.

When a Mormon family was ready to cross the plains into the Salt Lake Valley they normally joined up with a Church sponsored wagon company. These companies would have a leader who was responsible for the company and its well being. The company would have its own set of rules, its own organization of company guards, hunters, herders, cooks, doctors, guides and any and all other personnel it needed. The company would then be divided into different groups. Each company numbered about one hundred families, so the company as a whole was called a Hundred. Each Hundred was divided into 2 Fifties, and 10 Tens, each with its own leader. With this organization most Mormon wagon trails were better able to deal with the problems on the trail better than non-Mormon groups.

In June of 1850 Warren Foote left Kaneshville (Council Bluffs; and headed for the meeting place that the Church had set aside for the newest company to cross the plains. This meeting place was 18 miles south of Kaneshville and on the south side of the Platte River. There Apostle O. Hyde organized the gather Mormons into a company and appointed Warren Foote as its captain. In his company were 105 wagons, 476 people, 743 cattle, 19 horses, and 273 sheep. John along with the family was listed as part of this group. They were in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Fifty under Wm. Wall and in the 5<sup>th</sup> Ten. This 2<sup>nd</sup> Fifty would normally travel as a different group than the 1<sup>st</sup>. They had 51 wagons, 237 people, 365 cattle, 10 horses, and 153 sheep. John was listed as having 1 wagon, 3 people and 4 cattle.<sup>46 47</sup>

John, with all the traveling he had done in wagon trains, probably had never been with such a large group. So it would have been very exciting for the family. Since, in reality the Mormons were a very small group, John would have known many of the people they would travel with.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of June the officers of the Company met and set up these rules for the Camp

“Resolved, first-The horn shall be blown at 4 o’clock in the morning, when the people will arise, and, after the necessary preparations for starting, the horn will be blown again for the

<sup>42</sup> Heart Throbs of the West, Carter, Vol. 9 page 45:8

<sup>43</sup> Heart Throbs of the West, Carter, Volume 12 page 4:35

<sup>44</sup> Church Emigration of 1850, December 31 Supplement 22

<sup>45</sup> Warren Foote Diary, Volume 1 page 435

<sup>46</sup> Warren Foote Autobiography & Journals Volume 1 pages 110-126

<sup>47</sup> From Kirtland To Salt Lake City

people to come together for prayers, and at half past eight at night the horn will be blown again for evening payers, which each family will attend in their wagon.

“Resolved, second-That if any person while on guard at night shall neglect his duty by sleep or other-wise, for the first offence he shall be reported publicly, and if afterwards found guilty of neglect he shall again be reported and be subjected to extra duty in the day time herding cattle.

“Resolved, third-That any number of this camp who shall indulge in profane language shall be reported by his captain of ten, and if he shall afterwards persist in profanity he shall be published publicly.

“Resolved, fourth-That if any persons practice unnecessary cruelty to their animals, and after being reprovod by their captain of ten, shall still persist in such cruelty, they shall be brought before the captains of the camp, who shall levy such fine or punishment as they may deem just.” These rules were upheld the entire trip.

Many people talked of the boredom of crossing but the Foote Company had enough excitement and fear to keep most people occupied and these problems started right off. The 18<sup>th</sup> of June a child was born, a boy was ran over by a wagon and it rained all day. On the 20<sup>th</sup> they ran into a California group of emigrants who were going home discouraged. They told how the disease of cholera had been terrible in companies in head. The Fifty John was traveling with had already found out about cholera. In many places along the trail the graves of those who had died of cholera. And several people in Foote’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Fifty had already contracted the plague and one person had already died. The 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> had four children in the Thomas Spafford family die.

By the 24<sup>th</sup> several more people in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Fifty had died and a special meeting was held to pray for help. This was followed by another death on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Then on the 27<sup>th</sup> the First 50 was hit by the cholera. A boy much like John’s sons started out in the morning to drive stack and died that afternoon, with his sister dying the next day.

This death rate from cholera would keep up until the Foote Company passed Fort Laramie in August. Then a half a mile east of what was called The Bend in the Road near Dead Timber creek a stampede happened behind the Chidester’s Ten with one man being killed.

Death seemed to fill the pages of Foote’s Diary but other things were mentioned. Missionaries and messengers from Salt Lake, driving rain storms, heat, dirt, lack of food for cattle, buffalo herds and the sight of grave and abandoned goods from other wagon trains. It must have been quite a trip.

Finally on September 25<sup>th</sup> the company camped on the Last Creek at the foot of Little Mountain for one last meeting before they entered Salt Lake City. The next day they entered the City and ended their long Journey from Nauvoo.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> From Kirtland to Salt Lake City

Those who didn't have any friends to greet them met in a camp on the west side of the Jordan River and waited until they found out where there was a need of new settlers.<sup>49</sup> The Church in the early years of Utah would call on their local Bishops when each new wagon train arrived. They would be asked what profession or trades their communities needed. Then the newly arrived Saints would be told that Salt Lake needed shoe makers, Lehi a brick mason, Fort Union a nurse, and Bountiful a spinning wheel maker. John made spinning wheels so they moved north to Bountiful after they had wintered in Salt Lake, and they stayed in Bountiful for about a year.<sup>50</sup>

Some time in the fall of 1851 several families located themselves by Utah Lake in an area that would form the town of Palmyra, Utah. In December a small Mormon Branch was formed and other people moved to the area. John's family was called, or asked by the Church to move to the new area, so sometime late 1851 or early 1852 the Chidesters moved to Palmyra.<sup>51</sup> Here, John was elected Mayor of the new city and John P. as one of the aldermen or councilors.<sup>52</sup> Also family records show that John served as the presiding elder (Bishop) in the area. Church records don't show this but an article in the Pioneer Odyssey reports the following:

"During the winter of 1856-7 around Christmas time, Mr. Cornaby had gone to Salt Lake on business. While there he became seriously ill and a friend wrote advising Mrs. Cornaby that she should come to Salt Lake if she wished to see her husband alive again. Mrs. Cornaby made several desperate attempts to make the trip and was just about to realize fulfillment when a terrible storm came making all travel impossible.

"New Year's Day dawned, with the snow so deep around our dwelling that I could scarcely make my way outside. A meeting would be held that day at the next house, on the same block, to which I wished to go; but found it would be impossible to get even this short distance.

"While pondering over this difficulty, Brother John P. Chidester called to tell me of the meeting, offering to carry the children if I wished to go, adding that his wife, Susan, expected us to dinner after the service.

"Of course I went to the meeting, which was no sooner opened than the presiding elder, Father John M. Chidester, directed his wards to myself and by the spirit of God uttered a prophecy in which he told me that my husband was alive, and that the crisis of his sickness was past; that he would live to return home; and that for many years we should enjoy each other's society. I knew by the same spirit that what he said was true, and my mind became easier."<sup>53</sup> John and Mary's home became a civic center in the new town. There was no church so meetings were held in their home and when visiting authorities came they ate and spent the night with the family.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Warren Foote Autobiography and Journals Volume 1 pages 110-126 MS1123 1-3

<sup>50</sup> Journal History 9 September 1893

<sup>51</sup> The Chidester-Chichester Heritage, Anderson, page 100

<sup>52</sup> The History of Spanish Fork, Warner, page 35

<sup>53</sup> Pioneer Odyssey, published in the Deseret News, 29 Aug. 1964, Hannah Lash Cornaby, As printed in John Madison Chidester, Anderson, Written Jan. 1966

<sup>54</sup> Mary Parker Chidester 1809-1879

After the deaths and work of the trail being in an established town would to us seem to be the end of the trail, but the Chidesters still faced many challenges. In Palmyra the winters were very hard and the irrigation of the farm land brought alkali to the surface of the land, killing the crops. Isaac Brockbank Jr. told of how in the fall of 1852 many settlers had moved into the area. They lived, most of them, in dug outs and few houses. The winter was reported to be a hard one with only rabbit for meat and the cattle having little forage. When spring came along they had to double team their plows to break the sod and dig ditches. By 1853 the local Indians were threatening the settlers and Brigham Young advised all communities to build their own forts. The fort in Palmyra was built to enclose about ten acres with a wall, then the small homes for each family with its back to the wall and its door to the center. This fort was forty rods square and ten feet high and the work of building it was very hard.

A few families lived in the fort as soon as it was built but most avoided the damp crowded interior of the fort until July 17, 1853. It was then that the Walker Indian War started and most families moved to the safety of the fort.<sup>55</sup> There they stayed along with some families that moved in from the upper settlement from the fall of 1853 through the fall of 1854.

Both John, (he served as chaplain)<sup>56</sup> and John P. served in the militia that fought in the scattered battles of this war. Since David was thirteen he was considered able to do the farming and herding that was needed by the family, (by this time he had three younger brothers and sisters). This farming would have been done with armed guards or with the constant fear of Indian attack. Palmyra was close to the Fighting and was raided twice by the Indians. Once in July of 1853 and again in November of the same year.<sup>57</sup> David with other boys his age worked hard to bring in the crops, plant and care car new ones, and then harvest them. But being short of help the food supply of Palmyra was very short for the winter of 1854.

After the Indian war ended in August of 1854 there were hopes for an easier life in Palmyra, in fact John and Mary were finally sealed together by the Church in the Endowment House by John Markham, August 11, 1854, 8:00 a.m.<sup>58</sup> But more problems arose. After the fields had been cleared of their crops in the fall of 1854 a massive cloud of grasshoppers moved into the empty fields and finished any food or graze that was left over. The settlers didn't worry too much about them until the next year when grasshoppers begin hatching by the millions. That summer the Saints lost almost all their crops in Palmyra. It was said that the wheat had come up wonderfully when one day about 11 a.m. the sun darkened with kind of a haze in front of it. This haze turned out to be grasshoppers without numbers. They flew lower and lower until they landed in the fields. They covered any thing green. Heads of wheat were counted to have as many as 27 hoppers on them. And any field they landed in were stripped bare in a day.

These pests seemed to have been in the fields for days. The settlers at times would all turn out trying to drive them back. They tried to drive them into the rivers or ditches but they just climbed out. They were beaten and smashed but they stayed until the fields were devastated. They then flew of in a cloud and landed in the Great Salt Lake where they died.

<sup>55</sup> Memories That Live - A Centennial History of Utah County. Emma N. Huff pages 378-385

<sup>56</sup> Journal History of the Church, 1856 July 24, page 9

<sup>57</sup> The History of Spanish Fork, Warner

<sup>58</sup> Special Collections, Endowment House Records # -

Enough wheat was saved for the cattle but none for the settlers. Wheat was rationed first to a pound of flour a day per person, then a half a pound and then further cuts. Food became so short that the settlers were forced to eat pig weed (lambs quarter) and try to fish Utah lake to survive the winter.<sup>59</sup> They sent south to Fillmore to obtain bran to be used to make bread, and soaked the leaves of trees in the Provo River bottom to get the sugar like substance off of them. With alkali starting to pollute the best farming land Palmyra's days were numbered. In early 1856 Brigham Young advised the people to abandoned the town and move to a new town site at Spanish Fork.

Life continued through this crisis like it had through so many others. John on August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1855 was listed as a President of the 5th Quorum of 70s in Utah County.<sup>60</sup> He preached in the Spanish Fork Ward on 25 May, 1858.<sup>61</sup> John helped rebaptize over 400 people in one mass baptism, an early practice.<sup>62</sup> Also following Church practice, and with Mary's consent, John was married to a second wife on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January 1857. Her name was Leah Jane Thompson, and they were sealed by Brigham Young in the Upper Room of the Priest Office.<sup>63</sup> This marriage appears to be an effort to help someone in trouble. Leah was 17 years old and bore a son on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 1857, who was named James Thompson.

The Chidesters stayed in Palmyra for one more year. During that time Johnston's Army, a Federal army sent to put down an imaginary uprising, was approaching the Valley. Most young men were formed into militia. David was by now 17 and a grown man by the day's standards. His older brother John was in the militia and served up Echo Canyon. There is a good chance David was with him the winter of 1857-58. This militia was in force until Johnston's Army agreed to enter the Valley in peace. There was no fighting hut John and his Family would battle the ideas and morals this army brought into the Valley for the rest of their lives.

Some time in 1858 John moved his family, along with the married pair of his family to Parleys Park above Salt Lake City. This was a small settlement on the Parley P. Pratt ranch in what is a now called Parley's Canyon They left behind his new wife Leah , who had died the 20<sup>th</sup> of February 1859. Mary had taken over the care of James and he grew up as her child. They stayed in Parley park about a year and then moved to the 16<sup>th</sup> Ward in Salt Lake City by the Zera Pulsipher family.

When the L.D.S. church first entered the Salt Lake Valley, they entered with the idea of becoming self sufficient from the rest of the United States. Colonies or towns were started to not only settle the state but also for economical reasons. Cedar City, for an iron mill, San Bernardino for a sea port, Las Vegas to connect the colonies and places like Logan for farm land. In 1860-61 it was decided to send a group of settlers into the Washington County area of Utah. There it was hoped that crops unable to grow in northern Utah would be able to thrive. Crops such as cotton,

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<sup>59</sup> Memories That Live - A Centennial History of Utah County Emma N. Huff page 383-384

<sup>60</sup> Journal History of the Church, 1855 Aug. 22, page 1

<sup>61</sup> Genealogy Library Film Number 6528 Part 1, page 39

<sup>62</sup> Journal History of the Church, 1856 Sept. 28, page 7

<sup>63</sup> Special Collection Film Number 183374



indigo, sugar cane, grapes and fruit trees would be tried, if the settlers were able to grow these things, they could trade them with the settlers up north.

On Sunday, October 19, 1862 two meetings were held in the Salt Lake Bowery. Elder Daniel Spencer and President Heber C. Kimball preached in the forenoon and in the afternoon, Thomas Bullock read the names of 200 Missionaries called to the Cotton Mission (Washington County, Utah) after which Elders Wilford Woodruff and Enoch Reese spoke. John was listed in this calling as a turner his son John P. was also formally called along with his son David who had already helped settle the towns of St. George and Hebron. The meeting ended and President Heber C. Kimball met with the newly called Missionaries at 6 p.m. in the Tabernacle. He told them that there was not one required to go unless they could go as well as not- had selected good men- not one sent to get rid of him- went a settlement down there of men who can be relied on- God is inspiring this mission, we do not know the results of it-would not wonder if we (Young and Kimball) went down.<sup>64</sup>

This call helped scatter John's Family all over Utah. John P. and his family would stay close around John and Mary in the town of Washington. Eunice and her husband, Levi Harmon would settle to the west of Washington. David would marry Rebecca Price and her half sister Margaret Pearson and settle Hebron, Utah, Clover Valley, Nevada, St. George, Utah, Washington, Utah, and Leeds, Utah. Esther and her husband William Pulsipher would also be in Hebron, Clover Valley, and St. George. Joshua and his wife would travel north to Bear Lake and Willard and James being young would stay at home for awhile.

The trip itself was easy enough until they reached Cedar City. To that point the trail was well used and there were towns to stop in and old friends to meet. The trail started at Payson and ran through Nephi, Fillmore, Beaver and then into Cedar City. After Cedar the trail went to Harmony and then the road became rugged. From Harmony the trail followed Ash Creek through the massive ridge of volcanic rock that became known as The Black Ridge. Brakes were used constantly and often juniper trees were dragged behind the wagons. At a place called Peter's Leap wagons had to be taken apart and lowered down a slope with ropes. Once the Black Ridge was crossed there was an area of sand that exhausted the animals pulling wagons. The trail ran past Grapevine Springs, Quail Creek, Cottonwood Creek, and then through Grapevine Pass that emptied above the struggling town of Washington, Utah on January 1, 1863.

Washington had been in existence since 1857 but had struggled to survive the whole way. A dam had to be built to force water onto the best farm land sitting on the high side of the river. This dam washed out at least once a year and some years it washed away three or four times. Each time the dam washed out the channel became bigger that had to be dammed and the materials to build the dam became impossible to find. Ditches had to be built through sand and then solid rock and maintained against floods and gophers which dug small hole that destroyed whole ditches. The main crop of cotton that they had been called to raise struggled in the salty soil and they had to learn new ways to make it grow. Homes and community buildings needed to be built and cattle needed to be feed on the barren slopes.

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<sup>64</sup> Journal History of the Church, 1862, Oct. 19, page 5.

The Chidesters were in the second wave of settlers to enter the area. Most of the first batch had left and because of the work and hardships many of the second batch would leave. The Chidesters stayed and thrived. The settlers lived for a long time in their wagons or in dug-nuts (cellars). Their place of worship was a bowery, located where the church is now. Since the work was never ending, their clothing wore out quickly and was replaced with the local material (cotton). As a visitor stated, it was made out of their own cotton and everyone wore the same cut of cloth. Its color was a kind of blue that made everyone look like they had the chills. Since water had to be stored in dams and transported by canals, a haven for mosquitoes was created. They brought malaria, which hit Washington the hardest. The Chidesters still thrived.

John and John P. became very prominent in the early history of Washington. They were both pioneer mechanics and John made caskets for many years. His shop was located on what is now U.S. Highway 91 on the corner west of a store owned by Quentin Nisson.<sup>65</sup> John P. was the draftsman and superintendent of construction of the new Washington Dam.<sup>66</sup>

Seeing the need of a mill or factory to weave their own cotton, the people of Washington started to build one. John was active in this venture, even though his son James Thompson died on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 1863. John sold his water rights on the Mill Creek so that the factory could be built.<sup>67</sup> John helped construct the building and in hand carving the reeds that went into the looms.<sup>68</sup>

The area grew hampered by the harsh living conditions. In spite of the years their fields had been worked and the effort spent, they made slow gains. A list made in 1864 of the land under cultivation read like this: Corn 168 acres, cotton 140, cane 94, wheat 74, peaches 40, alfalfa 118, vegetables 13 and tobacco 2. It was said that no one ever starved to death, but at times food was hard to come by. In 1865 cornmeal sold for \$15.00 per hundred weight, Flour went for \$25.00 per hundred weight and wheat sold for \$5.00 a bushel if you could find it.

Defying the hardships John and Mary still seemed to have enjoyed life. On October 10, 1864 a reunion for the members of Zion's Camp was held at the Social Hall in Salt Lake City. From the reports there were speakers, dancing and eating until 1:00 a.m. Tuesday morning.<sup>69</sup> Three years later to the day in 1867, John married his third wife, Anna Charlotte Eldredge. They were married in the Endowment House by Wilford Woodruff and were witnessed by W.W. Phelps and D. McFarland.<sup>70</sup> Anna was the wife of George Hinkle, the Mormon Militia commander that had turn Joseph Smith over to the mobs. When he was excommunicated from the Church he refused to let any of their large family go with Ann and she had been without a family until this time.<sup>71</sup>

By 1870 John was 61 years old and was still active at a time when 60 years was a life time. Fr awhile he moved by his son David and helped settle the town of Hebron, Utah. He

<sup>65</sup> The Red Hills of November, page 191

<sup>66</sup> Under Dixie's Sun, page 72

<sup>67</sup> I Was Called to Dixie, Larson, page 191

<sup>68</sup> The Chidester-Chichester Heritage, Anderson, page 101

<sup>69</sup> Journal History of the Church, 1864 Oct. 10 pages 1-6

<sup>70</sup> Special Collections Film Number # -

<sup>71</sup> History written by Patricia Sanderson

moved back to Washington and was kept busy by the work started on the St. George Temple. When it was dedicated in 1877 it would hold much of John's handiwork seen on the carved wood. The temple was the first John had the opportunity to enjoy. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 1879 John, Mary and their children were sealed for time and eternity.<sup>72</sup> John was also serving as Senior President of the 5th Quorum of 70s.<sup>73</sup>

Mary died on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 1879. I'm sure that despite his work in the temple, (he did quite a bit including doing work for a signer of the Declaration of Independence)<sup>74</sup> his wife Anna and his family, John missed his wife Mary. When he died on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August, 1892, he and Mary were reunited forever.

It was reported in John's obituary: "He was intimately acquainted with the Prophets Joseph and Hyrum, and it was his unflinching joy to the last to bear testimony of their virtue and of the great work they were instrumental in founding in the latter days. Unflinching and undaunted in the cause of Zion, he was yet humble as a child.

Father Chidester was the parent of nine children, six of who survive him. He was grandfather to 54 children, 39 of who are now living. His great grandchildren number 73, of whom 64 survive.

May he rest in peace until the morning of the resurrection."<sup>75</sup>

#### FATHER CHIDESTER

I can see him as a tall man,  
Face set like granite yet full of youth.  
When he heard the gospel preached by Elders,  
Asked for baptism, he had found the truth.

How did the water feel that morning,  
Or was it night the sky filled with stars.  
I think I know just how he felt  
His life was free no without bars.

He moved and took his family  
On a road to long to know.  
To the sands of Washington County  
And the high Rocky Mountain snow.

He must have gone through Kirtland  
On the way to Zion's Camp.  
Did he feel her heavenly spirit,  
Lighting the world like a lamp.

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<sup>72</sup> Genealogy

<sup>73</sup> Journal History of the Church, 1870 June 3, page 5

<sup>74</sup> Temple Work History kept by John Madison Chidester

<sup>75</sup> Journal History of the Church, 1893 Aug. 31, page 10

In God's Army he first met Joseph,  
He learned to love that wonderful soul.  
And through the years of coming trial  
Tried to reach his heaven sent goal.

They marched to Liberty, he and his family,  
Shared the pain and trials on the way.  
After Liberty settled at Far West,  
Built a home and built to stay.

Built a home to last forever,  
Built their churches, built their schools.  
Set land aside to build a temple,  
And raised children, heavenly jewels.

But forever didn't happen  
The mobs came and drove them out.  
They left children dead and buried,  
To rise in glory, someday, no doubt.

Nauvoo was just a dream, buried in a swamp,  
And the Mississippi rolled along its way.  
He came to build, to work, to sweat,  
To drain the swamp and drive the river away.

Nauvoo the city beautiful,  
Rose on the flat and hill on high.  
He built a home there, listened to Joseph there,  
Helped raise a temple to the sky.

Happiness is bought and earned,  
Salvation's price came dear.  
The mobs came and they took Joseph.  
And he died to bring heaven near.

I'm sure that he felt humble,  
When he heard that Joseph died.  
I'm sure that he and all his family  
Sat down and thought and prayed and cried.

Yet again they turned the mobs loose.  
And again they had to run.  
Crossed the river in the winter,  
Set out to follow the setting sun.

No, they never went with the first group,  
Nor the second or even the third.  
But they slowly worked across the plains,  
Of that at least I've heard.

Mt. Pisgah, Council Bluffs and Windless Hill,  
All went by as they marched past.  
Courthouse and Chimney rocks went by  
And they reached the Valley at last.

From Salt Lake City to Utah Valley,  
To Palmyra by the shore.  
To fight Indians, drought and grasshoppers.  
To leave souls battered, but not poor.

They left, but not to mobbers,  
The drought and grasshoppers drove them out.  
They went to Parley's Way and to Salt Lake,  
Stops to train his sons grown stout.

A call came and they went to Dixie.  
A family moved together, leaving one.  
That one went to Bear Lake,  
And missed out on Dixie's Sun.

Together they crossed the Provo,  
Spanish Fork and Scipio Pass,  
Till at last they passed the Black Ridge,  
And saw Pine Valley's lovely mass.

In Washington he stopped and made his home,  
His sons and daughters had their own.  
He still built mills and dug ditches,  
Then a temple made of stone.

In St. George they raised a temple.  
Capped it off and followed their call.  
John and family were sealed for forever,  
In that sacred, holy hall.

He stayed there and he died there.  
In Dixie's soil his rest had come.  
Now he works and watches from glory.  
His heritage is quite a sum.

by Dale Eldon Chidester