

# John Richard Wallis

John Richard Wallis was born 13 April 1859 at Whitechapel, London, England.<sup>1</sup> He was the oldest of twelve children of James Harknett Wallis and Jane Sarah Booth, seven of whom died young.<sup>2</sup> The family lived in the family quarters in the infamous Tower of London. His grandfather was turnkey of the tower for 40 years and his father was a government employee. In 1871, he was living with his family in London, Middlesex, England.<sup>3</sup> His mother died when he was sixteen years old and his father immediately remarried. John, his stepmother, and three siblings joined the Mormon Church in 1877 (his father was already a member; his own mother was not).<sup>4</sup>

John had a “restless spirit and itching feet” and with his parents’ permission he left home to look for work, roaming England and Scotland. When John was twenty, war broke out with tribes in Afghanistan, so he enlisted. He served fourteen years with the famous Royal Scots in tribal uprisings in Africa, Malta, and the West Indies. He almost succumbed to yellow fever in Trinidad. He fought with the Scots in the Boer War against the Zulus. He mustered out in 1891 and immigrated to America.<sup>5</sup> His father, stepmother, and two siblings had immigrated the year before.<sup>6</sup>

John married Elizabeth Jane Wallis in 1893 in Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah Territory.<sup>7</sup> They eventually had eleven children; five of whom died young.<sup>8</sup> They were living in Provo, Utah, Utah territory, in 1895, where John started his career with his brother as a pressman and mail clerk for *The Evening Dispatch*.<sup>9</sup> A few months after losing their second child, they moved to Fairview, Lincoln, Wyoming. John had decided he could make a better life as a farmer than in the newspaper business.<sup>10</sup> But by 1897, they were back in Utah Territory, with John working as the editor of the *Rich County Round-Up*.<sup>11</sup>

Joseph W Carpenter had been publishing a newspaper in St George, Washington, Utah, under several names, including *The St George Enterprise*, *The Union*, *The Union and Village Echo*, and *Farmers Agricultural Association*. John came to St George to investigate buying the paper. He complained about the bad tasting water in St George. He thought the plant was too obsolete to purchase and ordered a new plant.<sup>12</sup> He named the new paper the *Washington County News*. He fitted up Gardner’s clubhouse for an office.<sup>13</sup>

John published issues for a few weeks to test the advertising patronage. He wrote that “if he is to be starved out he wants to be starved out right away, rather than endure a lingering death”.<sup>14</sup> A month

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<sup>1</sup> Utah Death Certificates, 1904-1964; England and Wales Birth Registration Index, 1837-1920.

<sup>2</sup> *Familysearch.org*

<sup>3</sup> England and Wales Census, 1871.

<sup>4</sup> *Familysearch.org*

<sup>5</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 23 September 1939, p. 35; United States Census, 1900, 1910, 1920.

<sup>6</sup> New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957.

<sup>7</sup> Utah County Marriages, 1887-1937; *Salt Lake Herald*, 11 October 1893, p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> *Familysearch.org*

<sup>9</sup> *Evening Dispatch* [Provo, Utah], 15 June 1895, p. 4; 5 August 1895, p. 4; 14 October 1895, p. 4; *Salt Lake Herald*, 6 August 1895, p. 7; *Salt Lake Tribune*, 23 September 1939, p. 35.

<sup>10</sup> *Evening Dispatch* [Provo, Utah], 14 October 1895, p. 4; *Salt Lake Herald*, 6 August 1895, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 23 July 1897, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Southern Utah Memories: Newspapers of Washington County, Utah, 1864-1994.

<sup>13</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 8 May 1898, p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 24 June 1898, p. 4.

later the paper was full of advertisements.<sup>15</sup> He won a \$45 bid for furnishing the ballots for the upcoming election.<sup>16</sup> He charged \$1.50 for publishing notices for the city council<sup>17</sup> and \$7.80 for publishing the city delinquent tax list.<sup>18</sup>

In 1899, he became a naturalized citizen.<sup>19</sup> On the 1900 census, he was working as a publisher and living with his wife and son in St George, Washington, Utah.<sup>20</sup> The newspaper was published on Saturdays, and consisted of four pages of size 15x22 inches. A subscription cost \$2.00.<sup>21</sup> He sent a Gila monster to his brother James in Idaho. James worked the Paris Post newspaper there. Over 200 people visited the office to view the poisonous, two-foot long lizard.<sup>22</sup>

John sold the newspaper to D U Cochrane of Oregon in 1900. Cochrane renamed it the *Dixie Falcon*. John promised to return when "times got better", moved to Idaho, and became the editor and publisher of the *Long Valley Advocate* in 1908.<sup>23</sup> That same year, he bought a house and lot in St George, Utah, from Mrs Addie E Price for \$900.<sup>24</sup> He started publishing the *Washington County News* again. The first issue was in six-column format, with a total of seventeen columns of first class reading matter.<sup>25</sup> He was elected secretary-treasurer for the Commercial Club.<sup>26</sup>

John leased the business to John F Stauffer for two years.<sup>27</sup> He then continued as the editor of the *Washington County News* until 1933<sup>28</sup>, living with his family in St George.<sup>29</sup> He retired due to ill health, selling the business to Edgar R and Hazel Simpson of Los Angeles. He had spent thirty-two years of his life as reporter, editor and publisher on innumerable frontier newspapers of the old west, including Utah, Idaho, and Wyoming.

John spent the rest of his life quietly tending the garden of his St George home.<sup>30</sup> In 1940, he was living with his wife and two children on South Main Street in St George, Washington, Utah.<sup>31</sup> He died of old age on 15 December 1951 in St George, Washington, Utah. Buried in St George City Cemetery.<sup>32</sup> Elizabeth died the next year and is also buried in the St George City Cemetery.

NOTE: The paper was purchased by Clyde and Nora Lyman and they owned it until 1958 when it was purchased by Frank Mountford for \$50,000. He sold it in 1975. The Mountfords became Classic Printing in 1986.<sup>33</sup> The *Washington County News* continued to be published until 1988.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *Washington County News*, 23 July 1898.

<sup>16</sup> *Washington County News*, 22 October 1898.

<sup>17</sup> *Washington County News*, 26 November 1898.

<sup>18</sup> *Washington County News*, 14 January 1899.

<sup>19</sup> United States Census, 1910.

<sup>20</sup> United States Census, 1900.

<sup>21</sup> Rowell's American Newspaper Directory, Vol 32, 1900, p. 1050.

<sup>22</sup> *Washington County News*, 23 June 1900.

<sup>23</sup> Ayer Directory of Publications, 1908, p. 135.

<sup>24</sup> *Washington County News*, 19 March 1908.

<sup>25</sup> *Washington County News*, 13 February 1908.

<sup>26</sup> *Washington County News*, 22 October 1908.

<sup>27</sup> Newspapers of Washington County, Utah, 1864 to 1994 - Part Two.

<sup>28</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 23 September 1939, p. 35.

<sup>29</sup> United States Census, 1910, 1920, 1930.

<sup>30</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 23 September 1939, p. 35.

<sup>31</sup> United States Census, 1940.

<sup>32</sup> Utah Death Certificates, 1904-1964.

<sup>33</sup> Newspapers of Washington County, Utah, 1864 to 1994 - Part Two.

<sup>34</sup> *Deseret News*, 10 March 1988 p. 31.

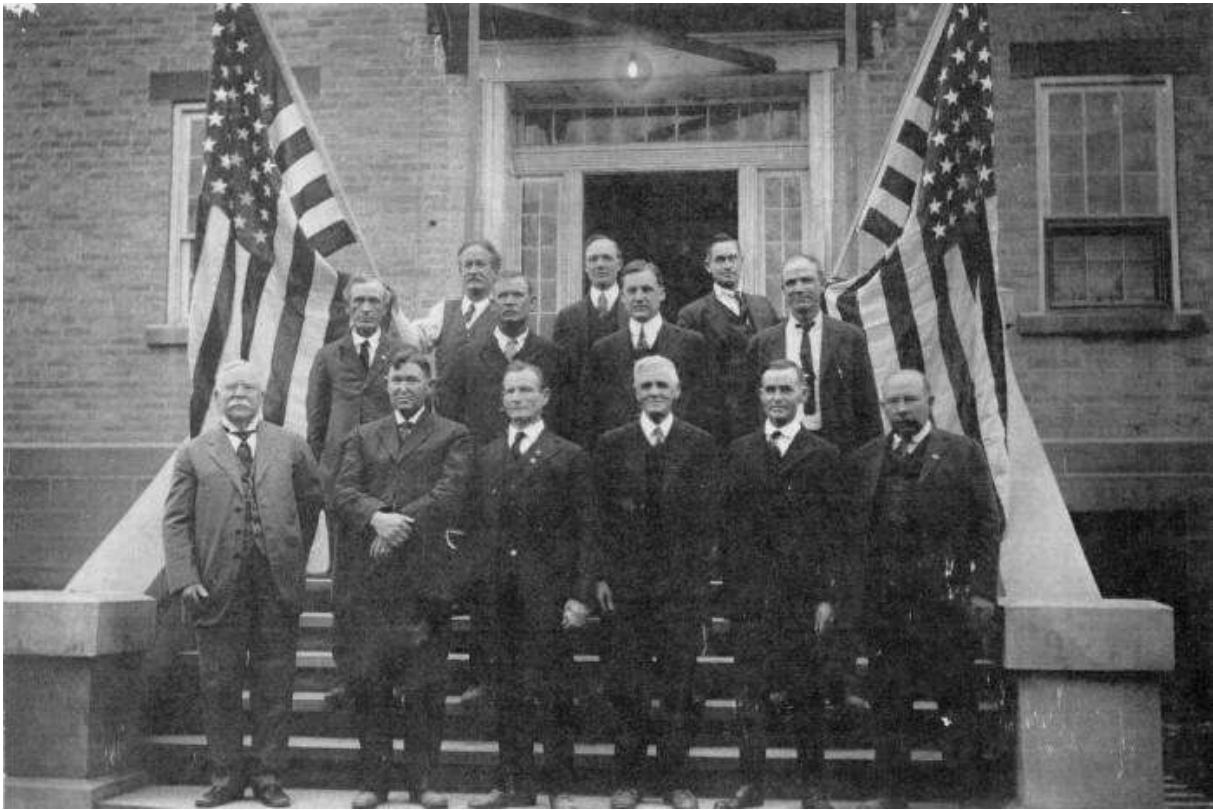
The Washington County News building is located at 23 East 100 North in St George. "The County News building is a pioneer structure, the front of which was an old saloon from the ghost town of Silver Reef. A few additions were added to the back of the building."<sup>35</sup> "The building that housed the Washington County News was originally a saloon in Silver Reef in the 1880s. After the mining boom ended, the building was moved to its present location in St George. The building has housed many other businesses since that time."<sup>36</sup>



The *Washington County News* office in St George, Utah (image from [wchsutah.org](http://wchsutah.org))

<sup>35</sup> Newspapers of Washington County, Utah, 1864 to 1994 - Part Two.

<sup>36</sup> A Stroll Through History: Historic St George Downtown Walking Tour at [stgeorgechamber.com/downloads/historicDowntown.pdf](http://stgeorgechamber.com/downloads/historicDowntown.pdf)



World War I Council of Defense, Washington County, Utah, 1918.  
John was in charge of publicity. He is the third from the left on the front row  
(image from *Ancestry.com*)



(Image from *Familysearch.org*)



(Image from *Findagrave.com*)

**WASHINGTON CO. NEWS.**

JOHN R. WALLIS, Editor and Prop.

Entered at the postoffice at St. George, Utah, as second-class matter.

**RATES OF SUBSCRIPTION.**

One Year.....	\$2.00
Six Months.....	\$1.00
Three Months.....	Fifty Cents
Single Copy.....	Five Cents

Subscriptions must be paid in advance.

**ADVERTISING RATES.**

Professional Cards per month..... \$1.00  
Professional Cards when paid in advance \$8 per year.

Legal Notices ten cents per line each insertion  
Local Notices two cents per word for one insertion, one cent per word each subsequent insertion.

Display Advertising \$1 per inch per month, 50c. per inch each issue. Special rates on big space contracts by the year.

All legal work must be paid for before being taken from this office

All communications should be addressed to  
THE WASHINGTON COUNTY NEWS, St. George, Utah.

(Image from the *Washington County News*, 16 July 1898).