

## John Solomon Ferris

John Solomon Ferris was born 5 August 1840 in Bellville, Richland, Ohio. He was the second oldest of eight sons and one daughter of Jonathan Ferris and Charlotte Fullmer. The family moved to Chequest, Van Buren, Iowa and lived there until the 1860s.<sup>1</sup> In 1860, John's father deeded him 147 acres of wild land in Clark County, Iowa and he started farming.<sup>2</sup> He married Nancy Adelaide Salladay in 1861 in Davis, Iowa.<sup>3</sup> They had three children. The wedding was attended by a company of Iowa Home Guards in uniform with fife and drum in military array.<sup>4</sup>

In 1862, John started west and arrived in Salt Lake City, Salt Lake, Utah Territory in July 1862. He went on to Nevada for six months and then returned to Iowa.<sup>5</sup> He served in the Civil War as a private in Captain T.O. Norris' company of the Iowa Home Guards. He was a picket guard in charge of the post at Edina, Missouri.<sup>6</sup>

In 1868, Nancy left John and took their two children and went to live with her parents. John was very ill at the time. He went to see his wife and children and found she was engaged to remarry. Their divorce charged inhumanity.<sup>7</sup> In 1869, he left for Utah, arriving in November 1870. The next year he was baptized into the Mormon Church.<sup>8</sup>

In 1874, John was working in the stone quarry for the St George Temple. He took a week off in March to visit Elijah Thomas, an old California miner who lived in Leeds, Washington, Utah Territory. "We took a ramble up on to Quail Creek, north of Harrisburg, and in returning back we went up on the great white reef... we came to a crevice of copper stain ... we dug on it and opened up about a foot vein of ore of that class"<sup>9</sup> (more of his story has been written in *Silver, Sinners, and Saints*, by Proctor and Silas, 1991, pp. 35-37).

John called his mine Buckeye Reef in honor of his native state, Ohio. He gave some ore samples to J. B. Francis, then living in Kanarra. Francis sent the samples to the Walker Brothers in Salt Lake City, who outfitted and sent William Tecumseh Barbee, Thomas McNally, and Edward Maynard to the area in June 1875.

John and J. N. Louder of Silver Reef also discovered similar ore at Harrisburg, where Louder provided the arrastra.<sup>10</sup> The sampling mill from the Pearl mine of Brigham Peak in the Marysvale region was taken down and hauled to Silver Reef.<sup>11</sup> Pioche miners, knowing more of mining ways than locals, "jumped" the claims, and John lost his rich Leeds claim. The two Piochers who jumped it sold it for \$30,000 but soon it soon produced more than that amount in one month.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> United States Census, 1850, 1860; Iowa State Census, 1856.

<sup>2</sup> Diary of John Solomon Ferris.

<sup>3</sup> Iowa Marriages, 1809-1992; Iowa, County Marriages, 1838-1934.

<sup>4</sup> Diary of John Solomon Ferris.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> *Deseret News*, 29 July 1931, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Diary of John Solomon Ferris.

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

<sup>9</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 27 June 1899, p. 6; 1 February 1904, p. 6; John's 1920 letter to the editor of *Mines and Methods*, found in *Silver, Sinners and Saints*, by Proctor and Shirts, 1991, p. 35.

<sup>10</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 1 February 1891, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 17 April 1891, p. 8; 31 May 1891, p. 16.

<sup>12</sup> *Saga of Three Towns*, by Marietta Mariger, p. 88.

In 1879, John sold his Crystal Mine (gold, silver, lead) near Marysville, Piute, Utah Territory, to George M Scott for \$300. The mine showed promise but was far from the railroad.<sup>13</sup> In 1897, with improved road and railroad, this area developed into one of the most productive in the state<sup>14</sup>, with a modern mill of forty tons' daily capacity.<sup>15</sup>

In 1880, John is a widowed miner living in Marysville, Piute, Utah Territory, with his brother's family.<sup>16</sup> He had about 50 mining locations in the Mount Baldy range near Marysville, Piute, Utah Territory. He guided a professor of the School of Mines of Columbia College around the area.<sup>17</sup>

John served a mission to New Zealand from 1880-1883.<sup>18</sup> Afterward, he returned to mining. He discovered the Humboldt Mine in Sevier, Utah Territory.<sup>19</sup> Cass Hite saved John's life in a fearful storm in the San Juan River area, when John was taken with rheumatism.<sup>20</sup> In 1887, he discovered iron ore on Muddy Creek (now Coal Creek) south of Parowan, Utah Territory.<sup>21</sup>

In 1889, John married Mrs. Martha Catherine Frederick Shoemaker Stoker Stevens as her fourth husband; they had three children together. Martha had divorced her second husband (Stoker) on grounds of desertion (but really her husband divorced her due to her corporal punishment of the children). He took the older children and she kept the six-month old baby girl. When Martha died in 1896 (leaving him with three young children, soon adopted to other families), Mr Stoker visited John and begged him to give up the 13-year old girl. John refused and threatened to shoot Stoker if he interfered; Stoker invoked the law to get custody. The trial brought out that John had left his family for ten months while he was in Oregon, during this time they were dependent on charity (even though he had 160 acres of land with water rights and 400 acres of undeveloped mines). The girl testified that she loved John as a father and could not bear to be parted from him, but the court decided to award custody to her biological father.<sup>22</sup>

John struck a rich lead of tellurian gold on the west side of Mount Baldy about 12 miles north of Beaver in 1891<sup>23</sup>. He encouraged the development of a railway to reach the Mount Baldy region<sup>24</sup>, as the roads were poor and the depth of the snow was a drawback.<sup>25</sup> John located a heavy vein of jet in a lime formation, southwest of Beaver. He exhibited samples at Fenimore's store.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps it was one of these samples that John sent to the Smithsonian Institute (one of 450 specimens received that year for examination and report).<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, Enos A. Wall also sent a specimen of petrified wood, shot through with horn silver, to the Smithsonian.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 12 June 1896, p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 7 December 1897, p. 6.

<sup>15</sup> *Mining and Scientific Press*, 1897, Vols. 75-76, p. 127.

<sup>16</sup> United States Census, 1880.

<sup>17</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 26 September 1880, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> *Familysearch.org*

<sup>19</sup> Henry Mining District, Sevier, Utah, 1883-1896.

<sup>20</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 25 January 1893, p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 28 July 1889, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 23 October 1896, p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 12 July 1891, p. 12.

<sup>24</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 24 May 1891, p. 7; *Salt Lake Tribune*, 2 April 1897, p. 7.

<sup>25</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 12 May 1891, p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 6 November 1891, p. 8.

<sup>27</sup> Ferris, J.S., Silver Reef, Utah: Mineral, 1042 (XVI)", in Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution, 1891, pp. 43. 47. "The first number relates to the record of specimens sent for examination and report. The number in parentheses relates to the record of permanent accessions. The third number, in Roman and parentheses, relates to the department to which the specimen was referred."

<sup>28</sup> *Memories of Silver Reef*, in Utah Historical Quarterly, 1930, Vol 3, No 4, p. 108.

John (now referred to as Colonel<sup>29</sup>) incorporated the Ferris Gold and Silver Mining Company in 1891 for a general mining and milling business. John held one million shares of stock.<sup>30</sup> The company owned twelve gold and silver mines and extensive mineral lands near Marysvale, Piute, Utah Territory. They had advertised that Presidents Woodruff, Cannon and Smith held stock in the company, but the presidency wrote them a letter, declining the gift of 5,000 shares of stock each, and reminded the company that it could not put their names on the list of stockholders to induce people to invest in the company.<sup>31</sup>

John was continually submitting articles to the newspaper on mining finds such as the Blair Mine, which had extracted the best silver in Southern Utah.<sup>32</sup> Its free milling ore took the lead of everything in Southern Utah since the Buckeye at Silver Reef had closed down.<sup>33</sup> He stressed the search for radium and uranium and other rarer metals and minerals throughout Washington county.<sup>34</sup>

John wrote: "The farming lands of the great Sevier Valley, the timber regions of Panguitch, the coal regions of Kannara [sic], the mountains of iron in Iron County, and the Bull Valley range, the copper mines of the volcanic district of Washington county, the sand reefs of Leeds, Harrisburg and Silver Reef, are all on the route [of the] Rio Grande Western through the southern portion of Utah."<sup>35</sup>

He went to Salt Lake City with specimens of quicksilver rock from the King David Mine.<sup>36</sup> He discovered a mountain of cinnabar near Marysvale in 1892.<sup>37</sup> He owned the Brown Bear lode near Cedar City.<sup>38</sup> He spent time prospecting in Oregon<sup>39</sup> (including the Bonanza and the Anaconda mines<sup>40</sup>). He also spent some time in the Ohinomuri gold fields of New Zealand in 1895.<sup>41</sup> He and two Neilsen brothers made a strike near the Crystal mine in the Marysvale region in 1896.<sup>42</sup>

John was also involved in local politics and his community. He served as an election judge. He received authority to organize lodges of the Order of the Silver Knights throughout Utah Territory.<sup>43</sup> This organization supported the interest of free coinage of silver. John gave a speech about the Honorable Frank J Cannon in 1899.<sup>44</sup>

On the 1900 census, John is a miner living in Springdale, Washington, Utah, boarding with Andrew Gregersen and his family.<sup>45</sup> In 1902 he described finding a monster vein of uranium, gold, lead carbonides, and iron.<sup>46</sup> Then in 1903 he discovered diamonds in the Bull Valley mountains in

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<sup>29</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 6 March 1892, p. 15.

<sup>30</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 9 October 1891, p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> *Millennial Star*, 1891, Vol 53, pp. 703, 735; *Salt Lake Herald*, 20 September 1891, p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 10 February 1892, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 7 November 1892, p. 8.

<sup>34</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 1 February 1904, p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 10 February 1892, p. 2.

<sup>36</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 29 April 1892, p. 8.

<sup>37</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 5 April 1892, p. 5.

<sup>38</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 24 April 1894, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 17 September 1895, p. 6; 23 November 1895, p. 6; *Salt Lake Herald*, 25 April 1895, p. 3; *Garland City Globe* [Garland, Utah], 14 January 1911, p. 3.

<sup>40</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 10 April 1895, p. 3.

<sup>41</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 3 May 1895, p. 3.

<sup>42</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 30 July 1896, p. 6; 22 August 1896, p. 6.

<sup>43</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 18 September 1895, p. 8.

<sup>44</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, 16 February 1899, p. 8.

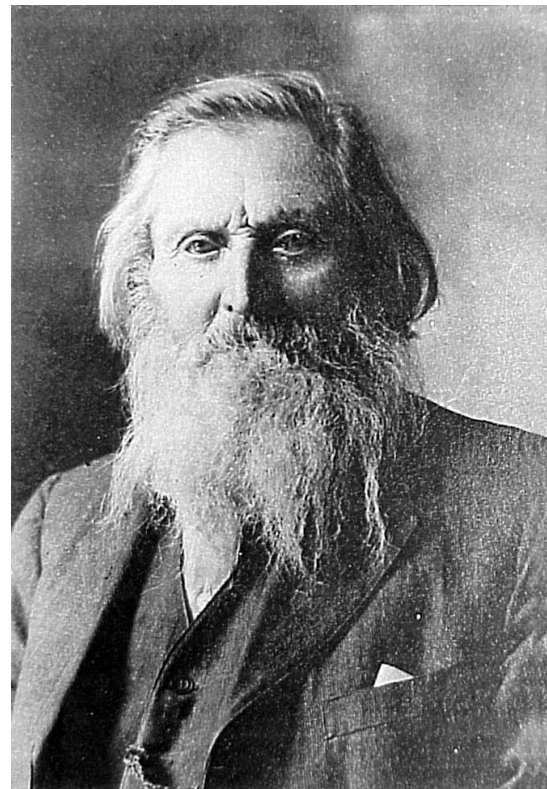
<sup>45</sup> United States Census, 1900.

<sup>46</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 17 November 1902, p. 6.

Washington County, Utah.<sup>47</sup> He described stones as large as partridge eggs; he was working with a prominent jewelry house in Chicago. He also discovered copper near Cedar City, Iron, Utah.<sup>48</sup>

Information on John is very slim from here on. On the 1910 census, his son John had been adopted by Lyman and Elizabeth Johnson and his youngest son Elton had been adopted by Robert and Adeline Richey.<sup>49</sup> On the 1920 census, he was back in Rye Valley, Baker, Oregon, where he had mined for many years.<sup>50</sup> In 1922, he was planning to enter the poultry business in Beaver, Piute, Utah.<sup>51</sup> In 1929 he retired as a prospector and geologist. He suffered heat stroke in July 1931 and died 27 July 1931 in Beaver at age 90.<sup>52</sup> (familysearch.org but see *Deseret News*, 29 July 1931).

John was an ardent student of geology and astronomy.<sup>53</sup> He was known as a “reliable, square man”<sup>54</sup> but also called the “Rattler” perhaps due to his irascible temperament.<sup>55</sup> He was one of the best known prospectors of Utah Territory<sup>56</sup> and “knew the southern mining country as well as a policeman knows his beat”.<sup>57</sup>



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<sup>47</sup> *Logan Republican*, 26 September 1903, p. 2; *Coalville Times* [Coalville, Utah], 25 September 1903, p. 2; *Iron County Record* [Cedar City, Utah], 24 October 1903, p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> *Iron County Record* [Cedar City, Utah], 24 October 1903, p. 1.

<sup>49</sup> United States Census, 1910.

<sup>50</sup> United States Census, 1920.

<sup>51</sup> *Beaver City Press*, 7 April 1922.

<sup>52</sup> Utah Death Certificates, 1904-1964.

<sup>53</sup> *Deseret News*, Wed., July 29, 1931, p.6.

<sup>54</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 12 July 1891, p. 12.

<sup>55</sup> *Silver, Sinners and Saints*, by Proctor and Shirts, 1991, p. 35.

<sup>56</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 25 April 1895, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> *Salt Lake Herald*, 24 May 1891, p. 7

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