

JOHN THOMAS COVINGTON (1840-1908)

Taken from life sketch written by his granddaughter, Lourie Meeks Morrell

John Thomas Covington was born in Noxubee County, Mississippi, August 7, 1840. His father, Robert Dockery Covington, a son of Thomas B. and Jane Thomas Covington, was born August 20, 1815 in North Carolina. His mother, Elizabeth Thomas, was born in Murlbor, DSC April 21, 1820.

John's father, Robert, was an overseer on two plantations. He was loved by all the black slaves who respected his word at all times. While taking care of the plantations he and his wife joined the church, and, when they left for Utah, their going was loudly lamented by the slaves.

John was a very small boy when his parents joined the Church, too small to be led into the waters of baptism himself, but big enough to "baptize" his little black playmates in the muddy ponds, much to the horror of their owner, who didn't want their children to be Mormons.

After arriving in Utah, the family accepted a call to Dixie in Southern Utah. They settled in Washington, Utah where Robert was made Bishop of the ward.

When John T. was twenty-two years old, he made a trip north for supplies. As he neared Washington on his return trip he was met by his father who, during the rest of the journey, brought him up to date on the town news. "Any new girls in town?" asked John.

His father answered that there were several new girls, but the prettiest one was a little Swedish girl. "And," his father concluded, "If you don't marry her, I will."

It was not long after that when John, after a brief courtship, married the sixteen-year-old Swedish girl, Johanna Lundblad, and they began a long and happy life together.

From Washington the young couple moved to Cache County. They returned to Washington but again moved, this time to Beaver to be near Johanna's mother. From there they went to Adamsville.

John was a good musician, often composing his own music for his violin. One night the whistling of a bird kept ringing through his head until he couldn't sleep, so he arose and wrote the notes for his violin. This was so popular with the ladies that he called it the "Ladies' Favorite." He and his sister, Emily's, husband, Winslow Farr, wrote a song called, "The Big Cottonwood Waters."

Wherever he lived he and his violin were called into service. It was a usual sight to see him playing his violin as he danced the square dances with his partner clinging to his coat tail. Often he walked miles to play for a dance, and then, after the dance was over, he would walk home again.

He was full of fun and took great pleasure in teaching his children to play and sing. He had a whole orchestra in his family; and their friends, as well as his children, liked to gather around their organ and sing.

While living in Adamsville, he took as a plural wife, Elizabeth Adams. To this union was born thirteen children.

The family wasn't satisfied in Adamsville, but was undecided where to go. Lizzie was anxious to move to Wayne County where her people had gone, but Johanna said, "I think it would be better if we were to go where none of us have relatives." So it was decided that they should come to Orderville. They left Beaver April 5, 1877, and immediately on their arrival here joined the United Order. John and his wives were all

good workers. He worked in the gardens and fields part of the time but most of his time was spent herding sheep.

The Indians were bad at this time and he exercised great influence over them. He, with others, was often called on to make peace with the Indians.

The United Order owned a great deal of the Buckskin Mountain. They had a big dairy there and also used it for range for their sheep. The Indians resented their occupancy and claimed the land was theirs. They were very ugly, and the white people were in constant danger from them.

Brother Covington was herding sheep on Buckskin when his dog, a prize one, that the Order had traded a cow for, was shot while on duty with the sheep. Reports reached John that George, an Indian with a mean temper, was making threats against him. One day, while out with the sheep, he crossed a deep wash. When he came up on the bank he met George face to face. John was unarmed, but, putting on a bold face, he said, "I hear you were going to kill me. Now is your chance. Kill me if you want." George, impressed by his bravery, would not shoot and later was a very good friend.

John married his third wife, Lydia May Carling, while living in the Order. They were the parents of seven children.

When the Order was broken up, the Covington family drew the ranch at the mouth of Dairy and Main Canyons as their share.

They milked cows and made cheese and butter during the summer and lived in town during the winter. Brother Covington raised wonderful gardens there. He had a generous nature, and he would give sacks of vegetables to anyone who called. Often he would start for Orderville with a load of vegetables for his families for winter, but everyone he met he would stop to talk to; so by the time he got home the wagon would be almost empty. His home, though humble, was always open. Everyone was welcome.

At the time of the raid on the Polygamists, he and his son-in-law, Thomas Chamberlain, were arrested and sent to the penitentiary for having more than one wife. He served six months in the penitentiary with his violin for company. One morning he wasn't feeling well and didn't get up at the regular time. He was still in bed when the doors were unlocked for breakfast. When he tried to open his door, he found it locked again. The other prisoners said, "You won't get out now." John took his violin and played the "Old Methodist's Prayer." He fairly made the violin talk. When the guard came along, he found the corridor crowded with prisoners listening to the music. He swore and said, "Covington, if you'll stop that violin, I'll let you out." So he got his breakfast with the rest.

After his first wife's family was able to care for themselves, John, with his two wives, Lizzie and Lydia May, moved to Rabbit Valley in Wayne County where he spent the rest of his life.

He died peacefully in his sleep at the age of sixty-eight on June 3, 1908.

At his funeral his friends filled the building to overflowing, bringing armfuls of flowers to show their respect. Glowing tributes were paid to him for his fine qualities.

Although he never accumulated worldly wealth, he was rich in friends.