

# HISTORY OF JOSEPH WARRINGTON McALLISTER

By his daughter Neemie M. Pearce and with additions  
by Maude M. Cottam

Joseph Warrington McAllister was born on the 6th day of November, 1854, the son of Richard Wesley and Elizabeth Eleanor Bell McAllister. He was born in Philadelphia, Pa.

When a young boy he crossed the plains with his parents, coming to Salt Lake City. His parents had previously been converted to the L.D.S. Church by John D.T. McAllister, Martins McAllister's father, who joined the Church in Philadelphia, had gone to Utah, and later returned to Pa. and preached the gospel to his relatives, converted them and baptized them. My father, Joseph Warrington McAllister, spent his boyhood days in Salt Lake City. When 15 years old, he was spading a place in the yard for his mother to plant a flower garden, and he hurt his knee with the spade. The wound gave him much trouble and he was in bed for many weeks at first and it never did get well. He suffered much from it all his life and it finally made a hole clear through his knee. He never complained, but went to the Temple every day with a smile on his face. He never allowed anyone to dress it but himself until the last week of his life. He told me that he was almost never free from pain and when he was, it was like Heaven.

While young he worked in John Snell's store in Salt Lake and sang in the Ward Choir. When 21 years old he married Mary Ann Miller in the old endowment house. They were married by D.H. Wells, and Uncle John T. and Joseph F. Smith were the witnesses. He then worked in the wool mills with his Uncle John. There son, Joseph, was born in Sugar House where the mills were located. Here my father taught a night school. He had attended Morgan College before his marriage.

My father went to Kanab to teach school when his son Joseph was very young. While in that city he led the choir, took part in theatricals and was clerk for the High Council. He was accissor and collector besides teaching school.

In May 1882 he went to Glendale, Kane County, to teach school. I take the following from his journal of that period: "The boys and girls seem to like me and with the help of God, I will make them like me even more so that I can do almost anything with them."

Here again he was conductor of the ward choir and teacher in Sunday School. His journal tells of juvenile choir practices and of writing school which he seemed to have taught every where he went. He was a beautiful penman.

Next he went back to Kanab to teach, where he received a commission to assess Kane County. He started another writing school here, and was leader of the choir.

Shortly after this he was in Salt Lake for the purpose of finding work when he received word to go to St. George to work in the Temple as clerk. I understand that Uncle John D.T., knowing his need, and also knowing what a writer and bookkeeper he was, helped him get the position. Uncle John was president of the Temple at the time. He was set apart as assistant to James J. Bleak on Nov. 5, 1883, and the next day was his 30th birthday. Here in St. George he again started a writing school, starting with six pupils and after a short time he had 33. It is interesting to read from his journal the names of these boys and girls.

He was in St. George a month before he could get his family from Kanab, finally paying a man \$12 besides a cupboard worth \$15 to bring them down.

The first house they lived in, they rented from Mansfields for \$3 a month.

The first time that he did the calling at the font in the Temple was the 8th of Jan., 1883. He became very adept at this. He had dictionaries or pronunciation guides of the German, Dutch, Swiss, etc., and could call their names as perfectly as he could the English ones. He did this for 33 years.

He married Agatha Walker as a plural wife on Dec. 30, 1884. She bore him 13 children. We have always the utmost respect for Aunt Aggie and her family, and are proud to call her children brothers and sisters.

The place on the corner of 2nd East and 1st South, my father bought from a Mr. Thurston for having 700 names done in the Temple. He would hire the men and women and pay their wages for so much a name and it would count as payment on the house. My mother lived there for many years, and I (Maude) was born there. Then mother moved and Aunt Aggie lived on there until she died. Afterwards my brother, Richard, bought the house. He was born there, too.

Father was conductor in St. George and clerk of the High Council for many years. At one time he was leader of four choirs at once: The Stake Choir, Temple Choir, ward choir, and M.I.A. choir. He was Supt. of the first ward Sunday School and ward teacher and High Priest.

While he was in the first ward Sunday School he labored getting up concerts and plays. He established a library and when the wards were consolidated that library was the finest in the Stake. He had written the inscription in all the books himself and had a cupboard to hold them. They were well taken care of.

By request of Adolphus R. Whitehead, he got up a concert of Stake members which was a great success. He got Robert Easton, the great tenor from Salt Lake to come down and sing in the concert. He got up many such concerts, and he put on the first opera that was ever given in St. George, training the choruses and dialoug for many months.

Brother Pace, an uncle of John W. Pace helped father a great deal with the opera "Pinafore". Mr. Pace was a musical man and he was made business manager of the musical. My father took the main part and they practiced for 6 months on it, he and Brother Pace training the singers and they left nothing undone to make it a success. My mother made all the costumes. This opera, while probably not in the class with the ones his son, J.W. put on later at Dixie College, was the beginning of these fine things that followed many years after this. It was the first of it's kind, theatre and concert combined that Dixie had had.

My brother Joseph tells me that when he was a young lad he used to sit in the audience at concepts and meetings and operasa and watch father conduct. He would think that if he could just lead like that he would be so happy; Well, we all know how his wishes came true, but not through sitting idly by and wishing. It took much hard work as all such ambitions do.

My father was quite an actor, very dramatical in style. I remember when a very young child going to see him play in some of the theatres. With Erastus B. Snow and Horatio Picett he leased the social hall to put on theatricals, some of which were "Jessie Browning", "East Lynn", "Dutch Recruit", and "Pozaro". These men got a chance to buy some very splendid scenery for this hall from a firm back East that had gone broke. It cost them \$1500, but was worth much more. They used it in the social hall until it was sold to the U.S. Sugar Co. No matter what kind of a scene they needed it was there, whether it was an outdoor scene, or a parlor scene, or in the woods, prison, gardens, or by the ocean. In fact, it was the best and only scenery of it's kind in this part of the state. I remember that wonderful curtain. How it used to thrill me when a child and my brother tells me that the last time he heard of it, it was in the Washington fields being used for a dam.

Father had a beautiful tenor voice and hundreds of times he sang in public alone or with his wife, Mollie, as she wass always called by him. His brother Will, who lived in Kanab for many years, sang at the dedcation on the temple and my father sang at the 50th anniversary of the dedication.

He served six months in the State Prison for having a plural wife. While there he led a choir of "toughs", (He called them.) I guess he wasn't supposed to be "tough". He taught the warden's son who was very unruly. The warden said, "If he is mean, knock his block off, Mac." But father managed him very well.

He was very fastidious in his personal appearance. His clothing was often old and threadbare, but always clean and pressed. His shoes were always shined and his white beard and hair neatly trimmed. I remember when he used six brushes every morning before he went to the Temple, two for his hair, one for his clothes, one for his teeth, one for his beard, and one for his shoes. He used to bathe so much and finally his skin burned so much that he couldn't sleep at night. He wrote to a doctor friend of his in Salt Lake, ( a Doctor Caldwell) and asked him what to do. The doctor wrote back and said, "Joe, you must cut down on that bathing. You're washing all the oil off your skin and making it so dry. That's why you itch."

He loved and was very tender with children. If he ever had to chastise us he would pick us up afterwards and love us and kiss us better. He used to carry my children around with his face against theirs and sgy how soft and lovely their little faces felt. When he'd meet his grandchildren on the street, he'd reach in his pocket and get a nickel or a dime and give it to them. They all remember that.

He was recorder in the St. George Temple for 46 years, longer than any other person in the Church. He was out of the Temple sick just one week before he died. He died at the age of 75 years on March 25, 1930 in full fellowship in the Church that he loved so much. He left in wealth no money, but he left us a heritage of great pride in an honorable name and a life of service. May his numerous posterity follow in his footsteps.