

Thomas James

Thomas James was born January 1835 in Swansea, Glamorganshire, Wales.¹ He was the oldest son of Daniel James and Anna Williams. He emigrated to America in 1860 and was later naturalized.² He married Ann Phillips in 1864 in Baltimore, Maryland. They had eleven children, eight of which lived to adulthood.³

Thomas was a soldier in the Union Army during the Civil War.⁴ In 1868, Thomas took his family to Sierra County, California, where he engaged in placer gold mining. On the 1870 census, he was a miner in Sears, Sierra, California, living with his wife and two children in the home of Charles Peirce.⁵ In 1872, the family moved to West Jordan, Salt Lake, Utah Territory.

Thomas carried on business in various parts of Utah, including Ophir and Dry Canyon. In 1877, the family was in Frisco, Beaver, Utah Territory. Frisco was known as the wildest town in the Great Basin area, with 23 saloons. Drinking water had to be freighted in.⁶ One writer described Frisco as “Dodge City, Tombstone, Sodom and Gomorrah all rolled into one”. Murder was so common that city officials contracted a wagon to pick up the bodies and take them to Boot Hill for burial.⁷ The Frisco Cemetery was the largest in the state at the time due to the average of 12 murders a night.⁸

In 1880, Thomas was one of seven butchers living in Silver Reef, Washington, Utah Territory. He lived there with his wife and five children.⁹ He owned the Thomas James mine.¹⁰ From there, the family moved to Frisco, Beaver, Utah Territory, where Thomas had a butcher shop on Main Street.¹¹

The Gold Mountain Mining District (Piute County, Utah Territory) was organized in 1889. Thomas and his son Walter were involved in mining there.¹² Thomas also heard rumors of rich mineral discoveries on the northwest slope of Mount Baldy (65 miles east of Frisco). He and W H Raht (Walter’s father-in-law) struck a ledge of gold-bearing quartz and drove a 600-foot tunnel.¹³ The tunnel was made straight into the mountain, with a 30-foot shaft sunk at the end of the tunnel. The vein measured 4.5 feet and two assays averaged \$300 per ton. He made plans to move his family there.¹⁴ In 1891, Thomas, his wife, and his son Walter were guests at the White House Hotel in Salt Lake City, for the purpose of negotiating the sale of their mining property.¹⁵

In 1895, Thomas was granted an original State of Utah pension.¹⁶ In 1897, his daughter Henrietta “Retta” married in the family home of her parents, to one of Frisco’s most popular business men. After

¹ A Cultural Landscape Study and History of the San Francisco Mining District and Frisco, Southwest Utah, by Heather Renee Puckett, 2013, p. 4:33.

² United States Census, 1900.

³ *Familysearch.org*

⁴ *Salt Lake Tribune*, 6 November 1904, p. 1.

⁵ United States Census, 1870.

⁶ The Historical Guide to Utah Ghost Towns, by Stephen L. Carr, 1986.

⁷ Utah Legends: Frisco – A Ten Year High.

⁸ *Familysearch.org*: Frisco, Utah.

⁹ United States Census, 1880.

¹⁰ Utah Gazetteer and Directory, by Sloan and Dunbar, 1884, p. 94; The Resources and Attractions of Utah, 1882, p. 41.

¹¹ A Cultural Landscape Study and History of the San Francisco Mining District and Frisco, Southwest Utah, by Heather Renee Puckett, 2013, p. 4:33.

¹² *Salt Lake Tribune*, 14 August 1890, p. 8.

¹³ *Salt Lake Herald*, 2 July 1890, p. 12.

¹⁴ *Salt Lake Tribune*, 25 April 1891, p. 8; 8 June 1890, p. 8.

¹⁵ *Salt Lake Tribune*, 11 March 1891, p. 8.

¹⁶ *Salt Lake Tribune*, 27 April 1895, p. 1; 7 December 1902, p. 2.

supper, the guests adjourned to Sackett's Hall where dancing was held until the wee small hours of the night.¹⁷

On the 1900 census, Thomas was a butcher in Milford, Beaver, Utah Territory. He was living with his wife, five children, a son-in-law who was a liquor dealer, a granddaughter, a cook, and four boarders.¹⁸ He transferred his butcher business to his son Daniel and relocated to Salt Lake City,¹⁹ where he died just before Christmas in 1902.

¹⁷ *Salt Lake Tribune*, 27 June 1897, p. 10.

¹⁸ United States Census, 1900.

¹⁹ A Cultural Landscape Study and History of the San Francisco Mining District and Frisco, Southwest Utah, by Heather Renee Puckett, 2013, p. 5:39.