

William Stirling

William Stirling was born 31 August 1841 in Forfar, Angus, Scotland. He was the second of eight children of Thomas Stirling and Elizabeth Bell, three of whom died young. In 1851, the family was living in Forfar, Scotland.¹ William joined the Mormon Church in 1859.² He was a ploughman living in Inverarity, Angus, Scotland, in 1861.³ The next year he sailed with his sister Jessie from Liverpool, England, to New York, United States, on the ship "William Tapscott". They arrived 26 June 1862.⁴ They continued to the Utah Territory with the Horton D Haight Company, departing 10 August 1862 and arriving 19 October 1862.⁵ William drove an ox team across the plains. He moved to Dixie in December 1862.⁶ He became a naturalized citizen.⁷

William married Sarah Ann Leany in 1865 in Harrisburg, Washington, Utah Territory.⁸ They had fourteen children.⁹ He built a small two-room lumber house in 1868 in Leeds, Washington, Utah Territory (the Stirling-Olsen home). He helped fund his parents and two younger sisters to immigrate to Great Salt Lake City. He was a farmer, winemaker, and the chief executive officer for the Leeds Water Company. One winter he was riding his horse through Silver Reef (a silver mining town near Leeds) and noticed a frenzy at the Christy Mill. The boilers were under full fire, but the mill stream was frozen. Knowing an explosion was inevitable if the water was unavailable to cool the mill, he quickly rode to open the head gates which directed water from the Leeds Canal.¹⁰

The owners showed their gratitude by placing William on the payroll for a year with no expectation that he would work for the salary. He used the money to build his two-story brick home and gave his old house to his parents.¹¹ They ran a boarding house in the barn for miners. (Saga, p. 13). He purchased the brick in Kanarra and hired Samuel Worthen and Sons of St George to build his big house. It exemplifies the Dixie Dormer style, a popular architectural design of the time. The house is still standing, occupied by some of his descendants.¹²

In 1870, William was a farmer, living with wife and three children in Leeds. He owned an entire block in Leeds; he sold the corner lot in 1877 (where the Leeds Tithing Office now stands). The corner first held a Wells Fargo office, bank, and stage stop. When the Wells Fargo bank was built in Silver Reef, the stage stop was moved to that location. The Tithing Office was built in 1891.¹³ In 1880, William was a farmer, living with Sarah and nine children in Leeds, Washington, Utah Territory. He served as justice of the peace for Washington County in 1884.¹⁴ He married Naomi Emma Eliza Walton in 1889 in St George, Washington, Utah Territory.¹⁵ They had no children together, but she had ten children

¹ *Scotlandspeople.gov.uk*

² *Familysearch.org*

³ *Scotlandspeople.gov.uk*

⁴ New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957.

⁵ Utah Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel Database, 1847-1868.

⁶ *Deseret News Daily*, 22 December 1915, p. 12.

⁷ United States Census, 1900.

⁸ Utah County Marriages, 1887-1940.

⁹ *Familysearch.org*

¹⁰ *Saga of Three Towns*, by Marietta M. Mariger, 1951, pp. 106-7.

¹¹ *wchsutah.org*

¹² *Saga of Three Towns*, by Marietta M. Mariger, 1951, p. 23; *wchsutah.org*

¹³ *Silverreefutah.org*

¹⁴ *Salt Lake Herald*, 6 September 1884, p. 3.

¹⁵ They were sealed in the St George Temple in 1889 but their marriage record shows the date of 16 March 1901 (Utah Select County Marriages, 1887-1937).

from her previous marriage, several under age 18. William served as an election judge for Leeds in 1890, 1891, and 1893.¹⁶

As Silver Reef and its mines began waning, William realized that many of the empty wooden buildings still standing could be "mined" for other uses. In 1895, he purchased and moved the vacant St. John's Catholic Church of Silver Reef to Leeds. He converted it into the Leeds Social Hall or "Old Stirling Hall". Plays, variety shows, dances, and many festive activities took place in the building.¹⁷

In 1898, William served a two-year mission in Great Britain, spending time in his home country of Scotland. On the 1900 census, he was a minister, living with Sarah and nine children in Leeds, Washington, Utah Territory.¹⁸ Sarah died in 1900 in Leeds¹⁹ and was buried in the Leeds Cemetery. In 1910, he was a farmer, living with six of his children in Leeds.²⁰ He died of cancer of the neck on 24 November 1915 in Leeds and is also buried in the Leeds Cemetery.²¹



William Stirling seated in the center with mother (far left) and sisters
(image from *Findagrave.com*)

¹⁶ *Salt Lake Tribune*, 1 June 1890, p. 8; 19 July 1891, p. 3; 18 October 1893, p. 3.

¹⁷ *Saga of Three Towns*, by Marietta M. Mariger, 1951, p. 24; *wchsutah.org*

¹⁸ *Early Mormon Missionaries; Saga of Three Towns*, by Marietta M. Mariger, 1951, p. 26; *Deseret Evening News*, 30 June 1900, p. 23.

¹⁹ *Utah Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel Database, 1847-1868; Deseret Evening News*, 28 November 1900, pp. 6,9.

²⁰ *United States Census*, 1910.

²¹ *Utah Death Certificates, 1904-1964; Utah Death and Military Death Certificate, 1904-1961; Utah Death Registers, 1847-1966; Utah Cemetery Inventory; Iron County Record*, 10 December 1915, p. 1.



William Stirling (with hand on tree) and wife Naomi (far right)
(image from *Familysearch.org*)



Stirling-Olsen home in Leeds (image from *wchsutah.org*)



William Stirling home in Leeds, Utah (image from wchsutah.org)



(Image from Findagrave.com)

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