

Holden and Heath

"It has been the destiny of most men to live and die unheralded in the pages of history, and unremembered in the hearts of others. But some fortunate few, through the diligent inquiry of their descendants, are rescued from oblivion and obscurity," wrote Rulon N. Smithson. "It is judged appropriate to set forth, in this memorial letter, facts concerning the mortal existence of Joshua Holden, as those facts have been preserved in scattered remnants of the history of the land, of the church and of the family, in order that the memory of Joshua Holden shall live on."¹

"The modern imagination, sheltered from suffering and protected from pain, can only guess what misery stalked the last days of Joshua Holden, as he lay on a crude bed in some forgotten pioneer cabin in that little village of Nephi, territory of Deseret. Neither youth and early manhood in the hill country of southern Tennessee, his marriage and the rearing of a large family, their removal to southern Illinois where he and his family first heard of the Mormons and joined with those who believed in the restoration of the ancient Gospel and Church of Jesus Christ, of subsequent persecution and hardship, of the death of his wife in a frontier town in Iowa, nor of the journey west, and the remaining ten years of his life spent in the desert valleys of Utah. But it is to be hoped that the present chronology of the life of Joshua Holden may be further completed, and that it may serve as well to strengthen the bond of common interest among all those to whom it shall come."²

Aunt Vera wrote a sketch about the Holden family

from materials taken from *Pioneers and Prominent Men of Utah*, *Under Dixie Sun* and the booklet cited above. The rest of this chapter is taken from her account.

Joshua Holden, the son of James and Bridget "Biddy" McDonald (or McDonnell) Holden, was born on January 7, 1800 at Montgomery County, North Carolina. He emigrated to the Pendelton District of South Carolina and remained there about nine years. Then he emigrated from there to Franklin County in Tennessee.

When Joshua reached the age of nineteen years he decided to take a wife. He married Mary Talley, the daughter of George Washington and Lucy McDaniel Talley, on September 23, 1819. She was born on January 7, 1802 in Wayne County and was seventeen years of age when she married Joshua. They made their first home in Lincoln County, Tennessee, but later they were back in Wayne County again.

Family tradition gives Joshua's mother as Biddy McDonald or McDonnell. The 1850 census of Wayne County, Tennessee, home of the Holdens for many years, lists a Biddy Holden, age 83, born in Virginia (family number 805). Both the name Biddy, which is derived from Bridget, one of the saints of Catholic Ireland, and McDonald or McDonnell are Irish. The family name McDonald was most often McDaniel throughout Virginia, and in Irish records occurs these, and still other variant spellings.

Lucy McDaniel Talley might very well have been a relative of Bridget McDonald or McDonnell. McDonald, McDonnell and McDaniel being variant spellings of the same name in the south-eastern part of the United States.

Joshua and his family spent their early life in Tennessee on a farm. Besides farming he was a cooper or barrel maker by trade. Aunt Vera said that she has

always heard that her great-great grandparents had black slaves working for them. While living on this farm in Wayne County, my second-great grandmother, Huldah Mariah Holden, was born, number four in a family of fifteen children.

Young Huldah Mariah got what education that was available to the children of that day. She was taught the rudiments of housekeeping and cooking by her mother. She was taught by her parents to revere the Lord. Then when she was thirteen years old her parents moved the family to Pope County in southern Illinois. It was here that the Holden family heard the message of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Joshua and Mary Holden believed the message they received and were baptized on March 23, 1840 by Elder George P. Dykes. Joshua had such a strong testimony of the gospel that he was ordained an elder of the church the same day. A year and a half later, on November 29, 1841, Huldah Mariah was baptized and later confirmed a member of the church.

In 1842 Joshua Holden moved his family to Nauvoo, on the Mississippi River. Nauvoo, the City Beautiful, where the Mormons were gathered at that time. Consequently they experienced the terrible persecutions heaped upon the saints in that city. Family tradition is that they lived just a few houses from the prophet Joseph Smith. Mary Ann, Joshua's daughter, was told that as a child she sat upon the Prophet Joseph's lap.

Joshua was ordained a seventy in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on October 12, 1844 by Jesse P. Harmon and Hosea Stout.

Joshua and Mary Holden had a large family of fifteen children, however, only six of them lived to maturity and married. The Nauvoo Neighbor, the news

media of the day, reported on May 12, 1845 that Jephtha Vinan, son of Joshua and Mary Holden, died of "Lung Fever" aged nine and a half years. Then in the same paper the week of April 22 to 29, 1845, appeared the entry, "James Holden of Iowa, twenty-two year old son of Joshua Holden, died of "Winter Fever" in Nauvoo. He had probably been working or living across the river in Iowa and died at the home of his parents.

So Joshua and Mary Holden knew sorrow, but they also experienced joy while living at Nauvoo. While many of their children did not live to marry, some did. And they found joy in their posterity.

When Huldah Mariah reached marriageable age she was courted by a mature young man by the name of James Harvey Heath. He was the son of John Walderod and Mary Hill Harvey Heath and was born on March 26, 1814 at Crystal Springs in Washington Parish, Louisiana. Harvey Heath, as he was known, was also a member of the Mormon Church. So, when she was twenty-one and when Harvey was thirty-one, they were married at Nauvoo. They received their endowments in the Nauvoo Temple on January 30, 1846. The next day, on January 31, Joshua and Mary Holden also received their endowments in the Nauvoo Temple.

The father of James Harvey, Thomas Hartford Heath, served in the Continental Army in Colonel Samuel Willis Regiment from Connecticut along with his oldest son, Thomas Heath Jr.

The persecution of the saints continued and the Holden and Heath families were driven from their homes in Nauvoo into Iowa. On the first of April Joshua recorded in his journal, "Joshua Holden and family, including daughter Huldah and her husband, Harvey Heath, abandoned their homes in Nauvoo,

crossed the Mississippi River in Father Holden's wagon and set up temporary camps in Bonaparte, Van Buren County, Iowa on the Des Moines River." A few months later they moved with the Heath family to Council Bluffs, Iowa. James Harvey Heath records that he and Huldah spent about a year at the Bluffs after leaving Nauvoo in April of 1846, and staying awhile in Bonaparte, Iowa.

During this time Joshua's son, William Riley, aged twenty, married Elizabeth Gustin in Davis County, Iowa. Soon afterward they set out for Council Bluffs. On January 20, 1848 Joshua Holden, James H. Heath, Wiley H. Holden and John Holden are among a group who petition for a post office near the log tabernacle at Pottawottamie, Iowa. The Holden family is still in Pottawottamie County in 1850 and can be found in the census record as follows: Joshua Holden, age 50, wife Mary Holden, age 40, Elizabeth, age 18, and Mary, age 13.

On April 5, 1851 Joshua's wife for thirty-two years, Mary Talley Holden, died. Her obituary appeared in the *Frontier Guardian* on April eighteenth Published at Kaneshville, Iowa, it read:

"DIED, at Bluff Branch in this County (Pottawottamie) on Saturday the 5th instant, MARY HOLDEN, wife of Joshua Holden, died of inflammation of the head, age 49."

A short time later Joshua remarried. His second wife was Dorothy Ridley Guz, the daughter of Joseph and Catherine Ridley of Liverpool, England. The marriage was performed by Orson Hyde at Kaneshville.

Soon after her Mother's death, Huldah and Harvey Heath and their three children left Council Bluffs,

(Kanesville) for the long trek across the plains. There were five organized companies which left that early summer of 1851 and one of these contained the Heath family. After arriving in the Salt Lake valley that fall they were sent to Weber County to make their home, living first in Hooper and then in South Weber. Five children were added to the Heath family in this area. Tressie Jane arrived first on the fifth of February in 1852 followed by Mary Louisa, James Harvey Jr., Mariah Lucinda and Dortha. It was here also where the family knew deep sorrow when five year old Martha Elizabeth was taken in death.

The Holden family also crossed the plains. They wanted to be sealed forever as a family according to the teachings of the church and that had to be done in an authorized place. So on November first in 1855 Mary Talley Holden was sealed to Joshua for time and for all eternity at the Endowment House. Dorothy, his present wife, acted as proxy for Mary, whom Joshua had laid to rest in some forgotten grave a thousand weary miles away.

The Holden family then made their way south and lived in Nephi, Juab County, in the Utah Territory. In the 1860 census Joshua is listed there as a cooper (barrel maker) aged 60, with wife Dorothy, aged 50, and two children, Martha, aged 13 and John, aged 10. They had finally found the freedom from persecution that they were seeking along with the rest of the Latter-day Saints. But this new land also had challenges and hard times. Only a few year passed before Joshua was called home to the giver of life. Joshua Holden died on April 7, 1862 at Nephi, Utah of inflammation of the lungs.

James Harvey Heath left a sketch of his life. I have edited it slightly and corrected the spellings to those

used today to make it more readable.

I was born the twenty-sixth of March in 1814 in Washington Parish, the state of Louisiana. Daniel Taylor baptized me on or about the fifteenth of June in 1839 in Mississippi after I heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, and I landed in Nauvoo on the twenty-fifth day of March in 1840.

On the third of April I was ordained an elder under the hands of Dr. Willard Richards and George D. Smith. One month later, on the ninth of May, I was sent to Augusta in Lee County in the Territory of Iowa, but moved back to Nauvoo in 1843.

In September of 1843 I had a great trial. I lost my wife and four children in the plague that hit the saints.

In October I was blessed by Hyrum Smith and set apart for a mission to my native land. There I traveled through the southern part of the state, through Louisiana, and carried Joseph Smith's views on the policy of the government. It was very well received.

Following my mission I married Huldah Mariah Holden and endured the trials of crossing the plains. In April of 1846 we crossed the Mississippi River in Father Holden's wagon and moved into Bonaparte, remaining there for awhile. I worked here long enough to earn some corn meal to sustain us.

We sent the team back for Willie Holden. After the team returned, Father Holden and I moved on to a place not very far from Bunniton, Davis County. We remained here until the next spring. I worked and earned a cow and a yoke of steers. Here our son Jacob was born.

In the spring we moved on to Winter Quarters and on the sixth of August we sowed some buckwheat, potatoes and corn, and also cut some hay. Then we moved on to Council Bluffs and stayed there a year or

more.

I next moved north to the Boyer River where my wife Mariah was taken very ill. We surely thought she would die. I went for old Billy Young to come and administer to her and he said if that medicine didn't help her nothing would. He said if I would administer to her each day and have faith she would get well. I administered to her the next day and she said, "Thank God, I am healed." She said she felt the healing influence penetrate her whole system.

The next move we made was from Boyer to Terryville and from there to Honey Creek. There we stayed until spring and then we went back to Council Bluffs. At this time nearly everyone was ill, so we went on to Kaneshville.

I went to work in a shop and was cheated out of my pay, so my wife went to a place I had built and stayed there while I went down to Saint Joseph. I found work there and earned some food and clothing. This was in the fall.

Then we went on to Terryville and crossed the river, stayed two days, and then went on to Six-Mile Grove. The Indians came and made Elder Hyde take off his shirt and give it to them. They told another man to take his off also, but he went to his box to get them one. They took all he had in his box and made him give them the one he had on also. He had to borrow one from another man. In this place we were organized into companies to go to Utah.

The next night when we camped we could hardly sleep for the bleating of the buffalos, and the next day they were so thick we could hardly get through them. One of the brothers had a dog along. It got after some of the buffalos and made them jump over a mans wagon-tongue, between his horses and wagon, pulling

his lines out of his hands. It really made for confusion until we could straighten things out again and get them back to normal.

After this we tried to cross the Big Horn River and nearly got drowned. The next day one of the brothers and I went out to get some fresh meat. We killed two buffalo so we had some very nice meat for awhile.

We next camped at Laramie-Uva-Sunrise. The bears were very plentiful here. Some of the boys went out berry picking. They saw one of the bears and got so frightened they ran off leaving the berries and their coats. The bears ate everything, even the coats.

Each day we traveled further west. Our next camp was at Independence Rock. The next day we camped at Sweet Water, and the next camp was at Pacific Springs. The next day we crossed the Green River and spent the day there. We went down to see some fellows who were buying all the lame cattle they could get as they got them cheaper this way. The next day we drove to Fort Bridger. The next day we got to Soda Springs. The next day we camped at a place where Morrow was killed. The next day we went to Tar Springs where we got tar to grease our wagons. Our next stop was Echo Canyon. From there on to Weber where John Dee Lee met us with some food. The next day we crossed Little Mountain and made camp. We crossed Big Mountain the next day, and the next day we landed in the Salt Lake Valley.

We went on from Salt Lake to Farmington and then to Kaysville. At Kaysville they gave us some beets that had been raised on salty ground and they were so salty we could hardly eat them. We went from there to Fort Gugar's Ranch where we remained during the winter.

The next spring we went up on the Weber River and took up a farm and remained there nine or ten

years.

In the year of 1862 we started for Dixie, Washington County, Utah with the saints that were called there to settle up southern Utah. I farmed at Kay's Creek and sold my city property to one John Bybee for five hundred dollars. I never received a dollar for it although he later sold it for two thousand dollars.

We had a very hard trip. The Indians stole our horses and delayed us about two weeks, but we were lucky and got them all back but one. We arrived the first of December in 1862.

My ninth child was born soon after we arrived and was a daughter. I rented a house and got settled for the winter. I got a field of cotton to glean after it had been picked. Along with my children who were big enough, we worked about a month to glean the field. At night we picked the seeds out, then we carded it and spun it into cloth which provided us all with clothing. We dyed it with greese wood and dock root.

We lived in Dixie about eight years and had very hard times all the time. I had a farm up in the Pine Valley Mountains, but lived in town on a city lot I owned. Then in 1871 we moved to Pine Valley. I worked running a saw mill and a grist mill.

President Brigham Young called many families to the Dixie Cotton Mission in southern Utah to strengthen the small communities of Santa Clara and Washington, and to settle the larger town of St. George. When possible, those who were called were those who understood the culture of cotton raising. Aunt Vera says that her Great-grandfather Heath was called to run a grist mill in that area of Utah.

Even though the Heath family was getting along quite well in South Weber, when the call came for them



The James Harvey Heath Family

Back row: Mariah Lucinda, Harriet, Dorthy, Huldah
Semantha and Mary Louisa

Front row: James Harvey Sr., James Harvey, Jr., Tressie
Jane, and Huldah Mariah Holden

to go to the Dixie Mission, they obeyed, regardless of the untold sacrifices it meant, and journeyed south to Washington to make their home. So, in the early 1860's the Harvey Heath family, with their seven living children, and what belongings that they had, moved.

They found this an extremely difficult place to make a living. The heat was almost unbearable, the soil was poor and the water insufficient for good crops. The Rio Virgin River to the south of the town of Washington was unpredictable. Summer floods often washed out their dams and ditches, and their crops dried up. The

malaria bearing mosquitos bred abundantly in the swamps and the people suffered from chills and fever.

Through all the difficulties of the times, Huldah did not shirk her duty and privilege of motherhood. She gave birth to Harriet on December 18, 1862 and to Huldah Semantha on January 8, 1865, both in Washington.

Quite a few of the families from Washington moved to the north to a little community called Pine Valley, still in Washington County. This town was nestled in a small valley at the foot of a range of mountains by the same name. This was an ideal place for cattle and other livestock because lush grass covered the hills and meadows.

Owing to the tall and abundant growth of pine trees and the need for lumber for building in the nearby settlements, sawmills and shingle mills did a prosperous business around Pine Valley. According to one description of this area, the first saw mill was built in March of 1856 by Jehu Blackburn. When the Silver Reef mine was in operation, lots of lumber was sold there. At the height of the mill business in Pine Valley there were seven mills operating simultaneously in the valley. The one mill that remains today is the one built and operated by the Burgess family. This mill, set up in 1863 by the three Burgess brothers, Harrison, William Jr., Melanchton and their father, William Sr., was located under the steep bank north of Birch Flat at the junction of the road to the lake and the main highway. It was about a mile and a half above the Riddle Mill.³

The Heath and Holden menfolk worked at the saw mills. Huldah enjoyed living in Pine Valley, even though it was mighty cold and uncomfortable during the long winters, but the people were friendly and kind.

Among the people who had moved into Pine Valley and surrounding communities were the Burgesses, Mangums, Barlows, Thorntons, Nickersons, Chidesters and others. It was among these people that the Heath children found their companions. Jacob married Mabel Russell, William married Clarissa Faughsbeck, Tressie Jane married Wilmer Burgess, Mary Louisa married James Burgess, James Harvey Heath Jr. married Ellen Thornton, Mariah Lucinda married Joseph E. Mangum, Dorothy married Ozewell Barlow, Harriet married Frank Nickerson and Huldah Semantha married John Chidester.

When the giant timbers needed for the St. George Temple were found to be on the Trumble Mountains south of St. George, the mill business in Pine Valley declined. The range for cattle became crowded also. Many of the settlers, particularly young married couples, began to look toward greener pastures. Whenever a new area was opened up for colonization, people from the older settlements moved to the new place.⁴

William Meeks, a young man from Pine Valley, and others, during a Navajo chase to Green River, passed through what was termed as Rabbit Valley, where there was an abundance of grass for cattle. Bill made glowing reports of this valley and about 1880 the first general exodus took place from Pine Valley when about twenty-five families moved to Rabbit Valley, Wayne County. Some of this group went on to Thurber, which was later renamed Bicknell in honor of Captain Bicknell of the old California Trail. Others went to Loa and some over into Emery County.

The Heath and related families went to Thurber. It wasn't easy for Huldah at her age to make such a move to pioneer a new country, but naturally she wanted to

be with her children and grandchildren so she was willing to go along. Her life in Thurber was not so different from what she had experienced in other new places. It was awhile before they could get a suitable place to live, however, and the going was rough.

Lenora Tullis and her husband, Thomas, of Pinto, described their move to Wayne County when they were urged to move by Bishop George Coleman, an old friend. This description of the trip and the conditions of living in the early days of Thurber is the same as that experienced when the Heath family made the trip.

It took fifteen days to make the trip over boulders, into holes, down gulleys and holding the wagons onto lizard trails over the hills; finally establishing themselves at Thurber. And oh, how the wind blew. When the family wash was hung out to dry, the shifting sand covered the clothes on the line with just the clothes pegs sticking out. Some days, one could see the trunks of the orchard trees, and the next day they would be buried until they looked like a row of brush on the sparkling sands.

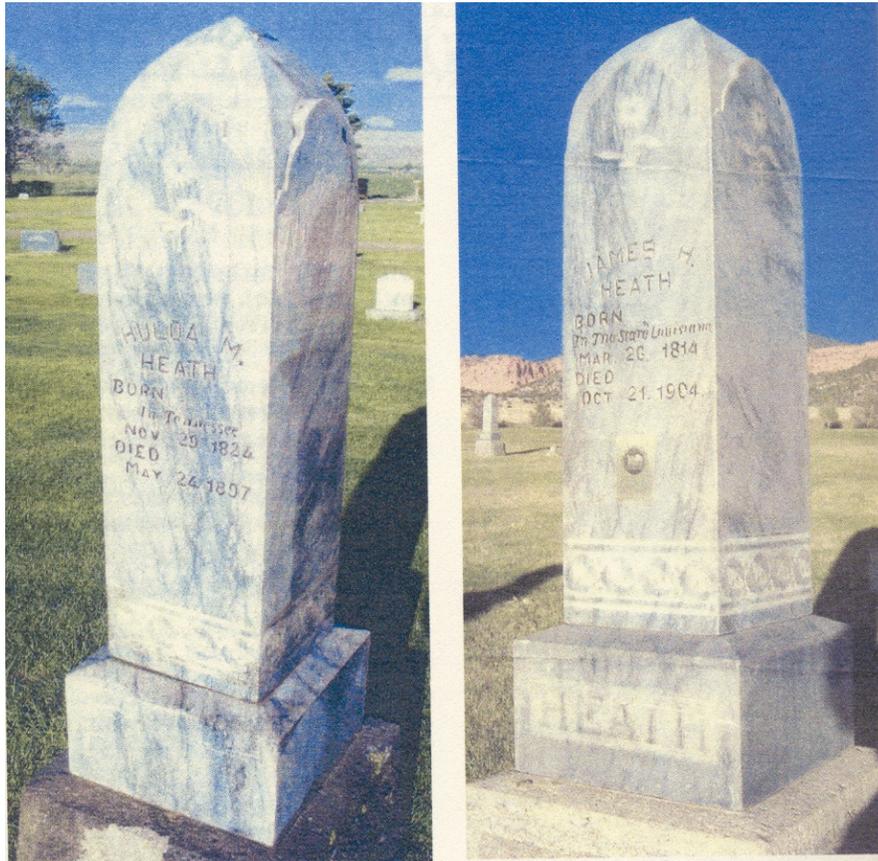
Aunt Vera visited the town of Thurber a few years ago. She said that the wind was terrible and she wondered how her folks ever endured it.

Be that as it may, no better people ever lived than those of the little communities of Wayne County, and the Heath family loved them.

Huldah Heath was always a faithful Latter-day Saint and had a strong testimony of the gospel. She taught her children the value of work and to live close to the church. It is said that she was a strict disciplinarian. She was called to share her husband with two other women when plural marriage was being practiced by those designated by the prophet. This pioneer wife, noble mother and grandmother, died

at the age of seventy-two at her home in Bicknell on May 24, 1897.

James Harvey Heath lived on until October 24, 1904, when he died in Bicknell at the age of ninety years.



1. Rulon N. Smithson, *To The Memory of Joshua Holden, Utah Pioneer*, (Provo, Utah: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 7 April 1962), p. 1.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
3. *Under Dixie Sun*, (Panguitch, Utah: Garfield County News, 1950), p. 187.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 191.