

978.716 D3b

LOCATION: Scan Bliss, Sharon

COUNTER: 1

MEDIA: BOOK

DRAWER: SHEET: YEAR: DATE ENTERED: 9/22/2002

TITLE: 1847 North Fork of Platte River ferrymen

CONTENTS: Biographical sketches of Mormon ferrymen, called by Brigham Young to assist the pioneers in crossing the North Fork of the Platte River -- 125 west of Fort Laramie: Thomas Grover, John S. Higbee, Wm. Empey, Appleton M. Harmon, Edmund Elsworth, Luke Johnson, Francis Pomery, James Davenport, and Benjamin F. Stewart.

FORMAT:

SUBJECTS: Mormons - Biographies. Mormons - History - Migration

PUBLICATION: [S. I. : S. Bliss, 2002?]

PHYSICAL: 8 leaves : ill., ports.

STMT. RESP.: Sharon Bliss

LANGUAGE:

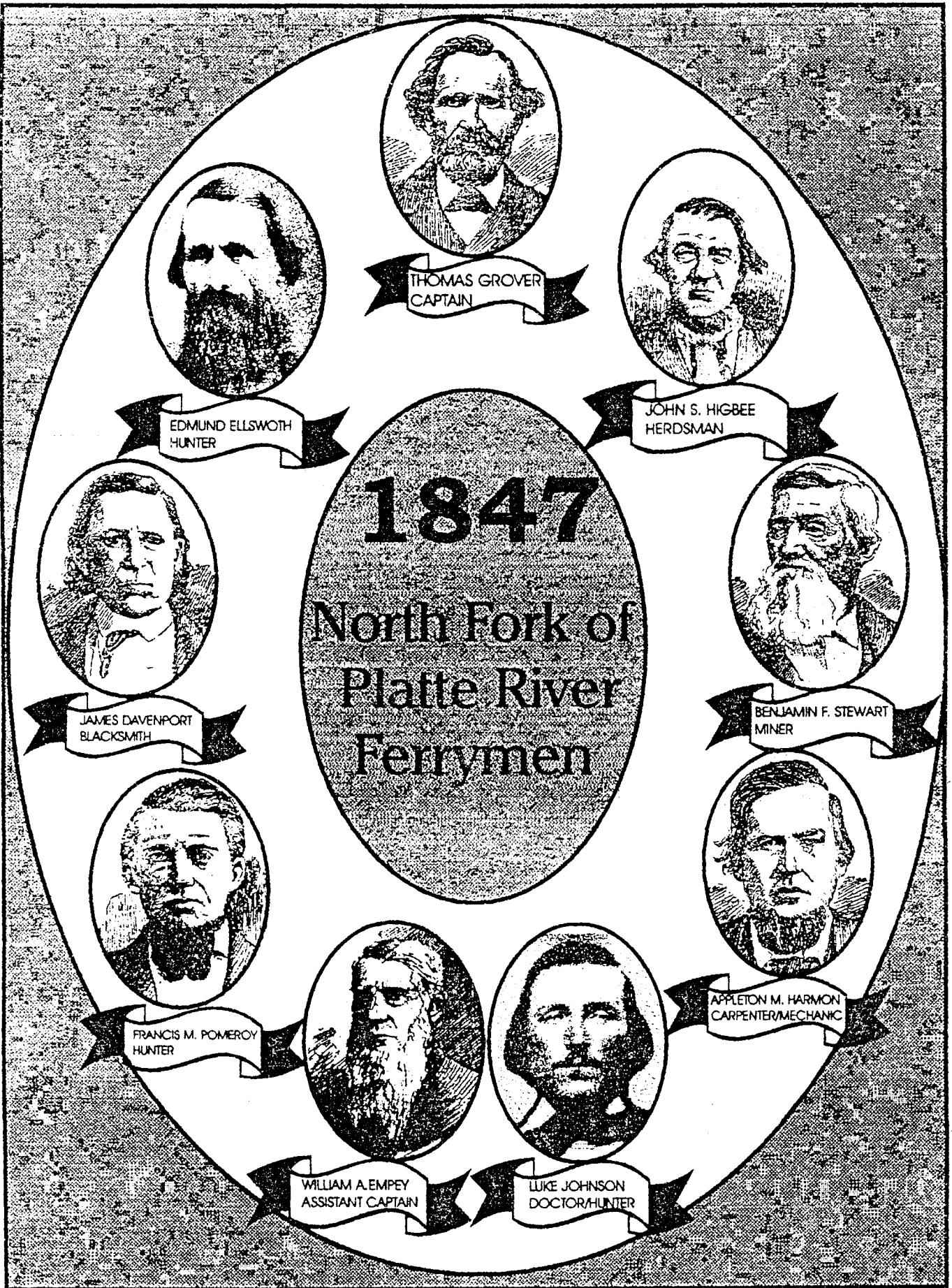
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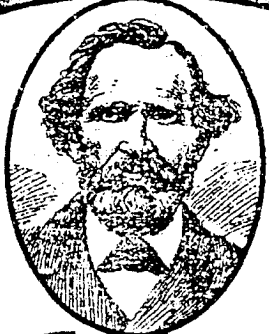
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Dear Brother -  
 I'd like to present this article I've written regarding the ferrymen of 1847 - Ivo, Elsworth & Pomery died in the Newa area. My 66 father was James Davenport. I'm a snowbird & can be reached at 890-2942 if you need further info - Sharon Bliss



**1847**  
North Fork of  
Platte River  
Ferryman



THOMAS GROVER  
CAPTAIN



JOHN S. HIGBEE  
HERDSMAN



EDMUND ELLSWOTH  
HUNTER



BENJAMIN F. STEWART  
MINER



JAMES DAVENPORT  
BLACKSMITH



APPLETON M. HARMON  
CARPENTER/MECHANIC



FRANCIS M. POMEROY  
HUNTER



WILLIAM A. EMPY  
ASSISTANT CAPTAIN



LUKE JOHNSON  
DOCTOR/HUNTER

## THE PLATTE RIVER FERRYMEN OF 1847

Nine men were detailed by Brigham Young from his Pioneer party to remain at the upper crossing of the North Platte and operate a ferry for the benefit of the Saints and the convenience of the Oregon and California immigration during the spring runoff of 1847. There had been ferries to serve overland travelers before this time across the Missouri and the Kaw Rivers, but the Mormon ferry at the upper crossing of the Platte marked the beginning of commercial ferry operations in the Rocky Mountains, and for six years played a prominent role in the westward movement.

By June 12, 1847, the wagon train had arrived at the upper crossing of the North Platte, later to be known as Fort Casper. The river was very swollen from the spring run off. Rafts were built to convey the empty wagons across. The wagon's contents were carried over on the "Revenue Cutter", a leather boat carried on a wagon bed, which also served as butcher wagon and pulpit. High winds and dangerously high water, 150 yards wide and 10-15 feet deep in the channel, made the crossing difficult. Only 23 wagons were crossed after a hard day. Tired of the slow progress, Brigham Young commissioned the construction of a larger ferry boat. Men were sent downstream to locate two large cottonwood trees to serve as a base. These were 23' long and were hollowed out like canoes. Cross timbers, or gunwales, were obtained from the mountains, and slabbing for the floor, from smaller cottonwoods upriver. This work was completed in about three days. The ferry was provided with three large oars, one on each side and one as a rudder for control. The Diary of Jesse W. Crosby, who was enroute to the English mission also adds that the boats were "managed by means of large ropes stretched across the stream, then with pulley blocks working on the before named rope, then Guy ropes attached to each end of the boat, and to the two blocks with pulleys, then drop one end of the boat so that the force of the current pressing against it will push the boat across, then reverse the process and the boat will recross and make in about five minutes." The ferry is accurately depicted by Harold I. Hopkinson's painting "Crossing the Platte". Other small wagon trains en-route to Oregon and California, contracted with the ferrymen to carry them across as well.

The following information is found in several diaries as well as the History of the Church. "NORTH FORK OF THE PLATTE RIVER, UPPER FERRY, June 18, 1847, 125 miles west of Fort Laramie or St. John.

Instructions to: Thomas Grover, John S. Higbee, Wm. Empey, Appleton M. Harmon, Edmund Elsworth, Luke Johnson, Francis Pomery, James Davenport, Benjamin F. Stewart. Brethren, as you are about to stop at this place for a little season, for the purpose of passing emigrants over the river and assisting the Saints, we have thought fit to appoint Thomas Grover Superintendent of the Ferry, and of your company. If you approve, we want you to agree that you will follow his council

implicit and without gainsaying and we desire that you should be agreed in all your operations, acting in concert, keeping together continually and not scattering to hunt.

At your leisure, put yourselves up a comfortable room that will afford yourselves and horses protection against the Indians should a war party pass this way.

But, first of all, see that your boats are properly secured by fastening raw hides over the tops of the canoes or some better process. Complete the landings, and be careful of lives and property of all you labor for, remembering that you are responsible for all accidents through your carelessness or negligence and that you retain not that which belongs to the traveler.

For one family wagon, you will charge \$1.50, payment in flour and provisions at stated prices or \$3.00 in cash. You had better take young stock at a fair valuation instead of cash and a team if you should want the same to remove.

Should general emigration cease before our brethren arrive, cache your effects and return to Laramie and wait their arrival, and come on with them to the place of location. We promise you that the superintendent of the ferry shall never lack wisdom or knowledge to devise (advise) and council you in righteousness and for your best good, if you will always be agreed and in all humility. Watch and pray without ceasing.

When our emigration companies arrive, if the river is not fordable, ferry them and let them who are able, pay a reasonable sum. The council of their camp will decide who are able to pay.

Let a strict account be kept of every man's labor, also of all wagons and teams ferried and of all receipts and expenditures, allowing each man according to his labor and justice, and if anyone feels aggrieved let him not murmur, but be patient until you come up and let the council decide. The way not to be aggrieved is for every man to love his brother as himself.

By order and in behalf of the council we remain your brethren in Christ.

Brigham Young, President

We the subscribers whose names are inserted in the foregoing instructions fully concur therein and cheerfully agree that we will implicitly follow the counsel therein contained and that of our superintendent according to the best of our ability, relying on our Heavenly Father continually for his assistance. In testimony whereof we have hereunto set our hands at the time and place above specified.

Thomas Grover  
Appleton M. Harmon  
John S. Higbee  
Francis M. Pomery  
Wm. Empey"

Edmund Ellsworth  
James Davenport  
Benjamin F. Stewart  
Luke Johnson

The ferry was to be maintained for two purposes: to assist the main body of Mormons who were yet to follow and to earn needed provisions from other emigrants who needed this service. The cost was \$1.50 per wagon to ferry across the North Fork of the Platte River. Doctoring, blacksmithing, and ox and horse shoeing were also provided for a fee.

Ten men are mentioned as staying at the ferry in many histories, however only nine names are listed. Eric Glines may have been the tenth man. He apparently couldn't make up his mind whether to stay with the group at the ferry. The Day to Day History of the Church mentions; "Saturday, June 26th: While the camp was nooning Eric Glines, who, in disobedience to council had remained with his brethren at the ferry Wednesday morning previous, came in....It appears that he had repented of his disobedience and concluded to obey council. He set out to overtake his brethren."

These nine ferrymen were a unique blend of ordinary men who rose to the challenges presented to them. They were hand picked by Brigham Young for their spirituality, integrity, strong character, problem solving, leadership, and professional skills.

#### Thomas Grover - A professional ferryman, Captain

Thomas was born 22 July 1807, in Whitehall, Washington, New York, the son of Thomas and Polly Spaulding. His father died when he was an infant leaving his mother to rear and provide for a large family. When Thomas was twelve years old he worked as a cabin boy on the Erie Canal. Twelve years later he became the captain of a boat. He heard and accepted the teachings of the Mormon Elders while living in Freedom, New York. He was among the first to declare himself in readiness to start for the mountains. He left Nauvoo 9 February 1847, and on arrival at Winter Quarters was selected as one of the first company of pioneers, being a member of the Second Ten. When the Platte river was finally crossed, he was asked to remain there as Captain of the group. He was selected because of his wide experience with boats. His family arrived in the Salt Lake Valley 3 October 1847. He lived in Salt Lake, Centerville, then moved to Farmington, Utah, where he was one of its first settlers. He died there 20 February 1886 at the age of 79.

William A. Empey - Assistant Captain

William was born 4 July 1808, in Ossnabrook township, Stormont, Canada, the son of Adam Empey and Margaret Steenbergh. It is not known just when William became a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints known as Mormons, but it was at some time prior to the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith. When Brigham Young set out from Winter Quarters in 1847, William was enlisted as a member of the Fifth company of Ten. He had a reputation as a sober, conscientious, dependable person. The journals of William Empey and Appleton Harmon gives an accurate picture of the operations of the Mormon ferry during its first year. In mid-August of 1847, William stayed on at the ferry with four others until the arrival of the family immigration. His journal leads one to think he had expected his family with the Second Company. If so, he was disappointed, and journeyed back to Winter Quarters. In February of 1850, the legislature of the State of Deseret granted a franchise for a ferry across the Bear River. He was active at this business during the spring and summer of 1850. The first legislature of the Territory of Utah, meeting during the winter of 1851-52, granted to him, Joseph Young, John Young, and David Fullmer the ferry rights to the Bear River above its mouth to the Great Salt Lake. In 1862 he was called to strengthen the "Cotton Mission," and the remainder of his life was spent in Utah's Dixie country. He died at St. George, Utah, August 19, 1890, at the age of 82.

#### **James Davenport - Blacksmith**

James was among the men in the original company trained in blacksmithing. He was born 1 May 1802, at Danville, Caledonia, Vermont, the son of Squire Davenport and Susanna Kittridge. Shortly after the Mormon Church was organized, James and his family were baptized in 1835. He followed the Saints to Missouri and Illinois and was ordained a Seventy in the Nauvoo, Illinois area. After the exodus from Nauvoo, he was called to go with the first company as a member of the Eleventh Ten, rendering service as a blacksmith along the way. When the ferry at the upper crossing of the Platte River was disbanded, he journeyed back to Winter Quarters for his family. It was almost three years before he was financially able to bring his family to Utah. He made many trips back and forth between the "States" and the West, assisting new converts to Utah. After a short stay in Salt Lake, Grantsville, and Wellsville, he moved his family to Richmond, Utah. He died there on 23 July 1885, at the age of 83.

#### **Edmund Ellsworth - Hunter**

Edmund was born 1 July 1819, in Paris, Oneida, New York,

the son of Jonathan Ellsworth and Sarah Gally. He was baptized a member of the Church 20 February 1840. He was ordained a Seventy, 8 March 1843, by Joseph Young. After the martyrdom of the Prophet Joseph Smith, and exodus from Nauvoo by the Saints, Edmund was called by Brigham Young to join the original group as a member of the Fourth Ten. After staying at the upper crossing of the Platte River until the river was fordable, he met up with the wagon train that carried his family. His writings mention, "Truly my soul was filled with joy at meeting my wife and two little ones in company with the Saints moving to Salt Lake." Edmund accompanied the Saints into the Salt Lake valley, arriving on the 12th of October 1847. He filled a mission to England in 1854-1856. On returning home was instructed by Brigham Young to take charge of the first handcart company to cross the plains. The journey was made successfully. In 1880 he moved his family to Arizona where he died 29 December 1893, in Mesa, Arizona at the age of 73.

#### **Appleton Harmon - Carpenter/Mechanic**

Appleton, a skilled machinist of the pioneer camp was born in Conneaut, Erie, Pennsylvania, 29 May 1820, the son of Jesse P. Harmon and Anna Barnes. Reference is made to the famous odometer by which the pioneers computed distances. It was invented by William Clayton, but Appleton was the one who constructed the iron and wheel work and attached it on to the wagon wheel. He wrote a history while at the ferry as well as detailed drawings of his inventions. He was Captain of the Tenth Ten. Appleton was a large and powerful man by stature. He was involved with the Platte ferry for several years. He was later called to settle Dixie, or Southern Utah, and he built the woolen mills at Washington, Utah. He died 27 February, 1877, at Holden, Millard, Utah at the age of 56.

#### **John S. Higbee - Herdsman**

John was born 7 March 1804, in Tate township, Clermont, Ohio, the son of Isaac Higbee and Sophia Somers. Shortly after his birth his parents moved to New Jersey, where he grew to manhood. In February of 1832, he and his family joined the Church. A short time later he sold his farm and moved his family to Missouri. Trouble arose between the Saints and the settlers of that county and they were driven out. They wandered with the Saints until they reached the Nauvoo area. His family lived there for eight years. As the Saints were leaving Nauvoo, John writes; "We locked our homes and left with what little we could take along." He was Captain of the Eleventh Ten. He acted as hunter for game, stood guard, and split rails for farmers in North Iowa to get horse feed and other

necessities. He remained at the north fork of the Platte River until the 20th of August when his family arrived. They traveled on and arrived in the Salt Lake valley, 26 September 1847. In the spring of 1849, he went with 30 other men to the Little Provo in Utah county. A branch of the Church was organized with John as president. In the fall of that year his brother Isaac was called to take charge at Provo, and John was called on a mission to Great Britain, leaving Salt Lake in October of 1849. He was appointed president of the Newcastle Conference and served until January 5, 1852. He was then appointed to preside over 333 Saints on board the ship Kennebec which sailed from Liverpool, 10 January 1852. In February, 1865 he moved his family to Toquerville, Utah. He died 1 November 1877, at his home in Toquerville, Washington, Utah at the age of 73.

#### Luke S. Johnson - Doctor/Hunter

Luke was born 3 November 1807, in Pomfret, Windsor, Vermont. He was baptized into the Church by Joseph Smith, 10 May 1831. He served several missions in Ohio, Virginia, Kentucky, New York and Canada where he preached the gospel, baptized members, organized branches of the church, and held conferences. On the 17th of February, 1834 he was ordained one of the Twelve Apostles by Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and Martin Harris. He was a member of Zion's Camp to Missouri. He was chosen an apostle and ordained 15 February 1835 under the hands of Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris at Kirtland Ohio. On 3 September 1837, at a Conference at Kirtland, he was disfellowshipped with his brother Lyman and John Boyton. He was cut off from the Church 13 April 1838. After studying medicine in Virginia, he returned to Kirtland as a physician. In 1846, he was rebaptized in Nauvoo, then became one of the 143 pioneers of Brigham Young's group. He was Captain of the Fourth Ten. He was in charge of the Revenue Cutter a boat used for ferrying, fishing, gathering river wood, etc. After arrival in the Salt Lake Valley, the Johnson family lived in West Jordan for awhile, then moved to a cabin built by John Bennion in Rush Valley. In 1856, a settlement was formed two miles west of the present St. John Ward. Luke was the first bishop of Clover Creek. He died while on a business trip to Salt Lake 9 December 1861, at the home of his brother-in-law, Orson Hyde at the age of 54.

#### Francis M. Pomeroy - Hunter

Francis was born 22 February 1822, at Somers, Tolland, Connecticut, the son of Martin Pomeroy and Sybil Hunt. As a youth he was hired out to his Uncle as a farm hand. When he was 15, he determined to leave the harsh treatment from his Uncle and strike out for himself. He



soon found himself at the seaport of New London. He hired out on a whaling vessel. Six years later the ship was dashed against the rocks during a storm off the coast of Peru, but Francis managed to swim ashore. He was found by the son of a Castillian family. During the two years he lived with this kind family he learned to read and write the Spanish language. Finally Francis left his friends and made his way to the United States where he met the Mormon Elders. After thorough investigation he became a member. He settled in the Nauvoo area in 1844. As the Saints left Nauvoo in 1846, the Pomeroy family went with them. When the original pioneer group was selected Francis was a member of the Tenth Ten. Francis was a large man of tireless energy and a broad knowledge of the out doors. He was an expert swimmer as well as an efficient oarsman. While living in Salt Lake City he acted as Spanish interpreter for Brigham Young. When a delegation was sent from Mexico City by President Benito Juarez to confer with Brigham Young he not only acted as interpreter, but also provided housing for the delegation while they were in the city. In the early Utah days, he was engaged in the lumber trade, and was among the first to erect a sawmill where Park City now stands, and one at Paris, Idaho. Francis wished to move his family to a warmer climate. He moved to Arizona in 1877. He was instrumental in helping bring water through the Montezuma canal. He became a trustee of the township and Justice of the Peace, where he was a friend of the white man, indian, and mexican. He died 29 October 1882, in Mesa, Arizona at the age of 60.

#### Benjamin F. Stewart - Scout

Benjamin was born 22 October 1817, the son of Philander Barrett Stewart and Sarah Scott, on the banks of the Ohio river, Jackson township, Monroe, Ohio. When he was six years old his father was accidentally drowned in the Ohio River and soon after financial reverses made it necessary for his mother to take her children to Illinois where she hoped they could make a living. Benjamin met the Elders of the Mormon church in the Van Buren, Iowa area, however it was three years before he was comfortable enough with the doctrine to be baptized. In Winter Quarters, he was a selected to accompany the pioneer group as a member of Seventh Ten under James Case. This commission he filled faithfully. He also was a member of the exploration expedition headed by Parley P. Pratt for the purpose of extending pioneer settlements into southern Utah. Later he moved his family to the Payson area when he built and operated a sawmill and a nail factory near the town. After a mission to Iowa and Illinois, he moved his family to a settlement north of Payson where he acted as presiding Elder. The town was named Benjamin, in his

honor. He was well known and highly esteemed by his neighbors. On 22 June, 1885 he was struck by lightning at Benjamin and instantly killed. He was 68 years of age.