

# The Biographies of Joseph Gurnsey Brown and Harriet Maria Young Brown

## JOSEPH GURNSEY BROWN

---



Joseph Gurnsey Brown, eldest son of Ebenezer and Ann Weaver Brown, was born November 8, 1824, at Dryden, Tompkins County, New York. His father's family became members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints soon after it was organized. While here in Illinois in 1842 (June) Ebenezer's wife died leaving three sons and one daughter. A baby sister, Ann, was also laid away at Quincy, Illinois. Later Joseph Gurnsey's father Ebenezer, married a widow, Phebe Draper Palmer, who had a large family. They were forced to endure the persecutions of the early saints and were driven from Nauvoo. Ebenezer joined the Mormon Battalion on June 26, 1846.

Meantime, Gurnsey at age 22, together with his 19 year old sister, Harriet, and her husband Oliver Stratton, brought the family (Gurnsey's brothers, Norman 15, John Weaver 9, and Phebe's children) across the plains.

They met their father in Salt Lake in 1849. The cattle herd they had brought across the plains were taken south of Salt Lake for feed.

Ebenezer and his family took up land south of Salt Lake City on what was called Willow Creek They built the first house in Draper in 1850.

On December 31, 1851, Gurnsey married 16 year old Harriet Maria Young, the only daughter of Lorenzo Dow and Persis Goodall Young. About five years later, in 1856, Gurnsey along with others was asked to take provisions and meet the belated handcart companies of English saints who were struggling to reach the Valley before winter. These rescuers themselves had nothing easy. A forced drive of 300 to 400

miles across wintry mountains. They crowded their teams day after day looking ahead for the vanguard of walkers but the mountain valleys reached on, snowy and empty, past Echo Canyon on until they saw the shining Uintah Mountains, and then the Wyoming plains. At Fort Bridger a new storm stopped them. That night of October 20th, Capt Willie and one companion, frostbitten, exhausted and riding two worn out animals, appeared out of the blizzard at fort Bridger. They told the men from Utah, storm or not, if they did not come at once there was no use to come at all.

They broke camp at once and started again. They did not stop again until they reached the Willie Company. The night before the rescuers reached them, nine more had died. The rest had not eaten for 48 hours.

Among those Gurnsey brought back to the Valley were two young ladies, Esther Brown and Elizabeth White. Brigham Young had asked the settlers to open their homes and care for these Saints. So to his home he brought Esther. His wife, Harriet took her in with her warm friendly way, caring for her until she again blossomed out in all her loveliness. On January 18, 1857, Gurnsey married Esther Brown. On March 22, 1857, Joseph Gurnsey took his third wife, Lovina Manhard.

Gurnsey was called on a mission to England in 1864 where he served for nearly three years without purse or script, leaving three wives with children. Soon after his return, President Brigham Young called Gurnsey and his family to assist with the colonization of Moapa Valley, Nevada, known as the "Muddy Mission". In the fall of 1867 Gurnsey and Harriet and their eight children ranging in age from 14 years to 8 months, made the journey to help settle the town of St. Joseph. Here they lost their baby daughter, Juliet, May 20, 1868.

This area was at that time a part of the territory of Deseret as mapped out by the early church leaders and was a part of Kane County, later Rio Virgin Co. A warehouse had been built on the Colorado River at a point known as Call's Landing. It was intended that the church would bring converts from Europe by steamships through the Gulf of Mexico and up the Colorado River and unload them at this point to continue the journey overland. The towns on the Muddy would serve as way stations where emigrants could rest and procure provisions for the rest of the journey.

The Muddy Mission proved to be unsuccessful, so far as colonization of that area at that time was concerned, and due to excessive taxes, extreme heat, shortage of water and other problems, the saints were released from the mission and were free to return to their former homes if they wished to. However, President Young strongly urged them to remain in the southern Utah area and help re-settle the townsites that had been abandoned during the Indian troubles in the 1860's. Gurnsey brought Lovina and her children, John, Delia and Will, to St. Joseph in the fall of 1870 while Esther and her children remained in Draper.

Lovina's son John gives an interesting account of their experiences while in St.

Joseph. He said when they arrived Aunt Harriet and her seven children were living in a two-room adobe house with a dirt floor and a flag roof. The roof was made from cattails, ten to twelve feet tall, cut down in the swamps, tied in bundles about six inches in diameter and tied to the stringers and weighted down, making a water-tight roof. They had a chicken coop made of mesquite roots dug from the farm land. They used these roots for fuel also, as there was no timber closer than seventy miles and no willows for thirty miles. Flour was hauled from Draper; but the “muddy” soil was rich and the climate so mild that good gardens could be grown; sweet potatoes as large as small pumpkins and his father said in jest that the watermelons grew so fast they wore the vines out dragging them along.

When the settlers were released from their missions, the Browns along with other Muddyites, started for Long Valley. Gurnsey left Lovina in the town of Washington, Washington County, and he and Harriet and their family moved on. Along the way they met Harriet’s brother, John R. Young. He persuaded Gurnsey to go to Kanab, and they arrived there in 1871 and lived in a tent bought from Johnson’s Army. Lovina and family were brought out later in the spring.

In Kanab the Browns secured two lots by squatting on them and they cultivated another 30 acres of land and built a two-room house with a room for each wife. Getting goods into the Kanab area was very difficult because of geographical difficulties and consequently most of the food and dry goods had to be produced by themselves. Sugar was almost unknown to them for several years; but good molasses was made from sugar cane that grew well here. Gurnsey set up the first sorgum mill in the northeast part of town. He planted orchards with all kinds of fruit trees, vines, berries, and shrubbery, etc. The first year he lived in Kanab he planted one acre of alfalfa and it made pig and chicken feed. He also raised garden vegetables of all kinds and raised potatoes in the Kanab Canyon and at what he called Cottonwood Canyon, a nice little tract of land about twelve miles west of Kanab. He had a few acres of meadow land in the Kanab Canyon he could mow several tons of wild hay and the country was just a mat of all kinds of wild grasses and herbs, so much so it was not necessary to have but a few-tons of hay.

It was necessary to built not only dams and canals, but roads and trails in order to get in and out of the country. The people would arrange what they called road gangs and ditch gangs and go out and build roads leading to Long Valley where hundreds of people who left the Muddy Mission had settled. The only grist mill was at Glendale, some twenty-seven miles over a set of rolling hills and washes, with sand so deep for a distance of thirteen miles that it would take four horses of good quality to move one ton of anything as the wagon wheels would sink into the sand from four to eight inches.

He managed to get along well for several years. President Brigham Young paid us a visit and he told the people to come out of the Kanab Canyon and farm the Valley just south of the town. It was a large fertile valley of very choice land. He told us to open

the canyon and turn out cattle in it and let them tramp the water out of the meadows and swamps. He predicted that in a short time we would have a flood that would come down the canyon and wash it down to bedrock. We would build a canal around the town and have water to irrigate the town and to reservoir the water. We would be able to irrigate all the land in the valley and raise plenty of everything we would need in the shape of vegetables and cereals and hay.

It was a fact, for the flood came and washed out the sand and swamps and cleaned the canyon out so that the water increased in quantity sufficient to successfully irrigate some 1600 acres of land. Afterwards we had another large flood which tore out sand and rocks and mud down to a lower bedrock and increased the water still more. We have taken up all the land available and have plenty of spring water to irrigate all the land. It will produce good crops of hay and some hardy vegetables such as corn and potatoes. We feel that Brigham was a true prophet and saved us from having to move away from the place.

The Browns belonged to the United Order in Kanab as long as it lasted. While in Kanab each of the two wives added three more children to the family. Esther passed away April 21, 1881.

In the 1880's during the raid in which the government officials were confiscating church cattle and other property, Gurnsey was appointed to take over the church cattle and sheep at Pipe Springs and run them as his own. So Harriet and the children lived at Pipe Springs for several years and Lovina remained in Kanab. The Indians were hostile at this time and even though they lived in the fort, at Pipe Springs, they were in constant danger.

In 1894 Gurnsey bought a large red brick home in the northeast part of town. It had been built by Frank Rider and owned for a few years by Henry Bowman. The Brown's ran a hotel in the home with Harriet and the girls providing meals and taking care of the rooms and the men folk taking care of the teams in the large barn and corral on the lot.

During all the years from 1870, Joseph Gurnsey Brown was a strong factor in leading out with the people and assisting in the general development of the whole country. He held responsible positions, being rather a religious man, not too much so as to hamper or hinder him from leading out in any honorable thing to be done. He was one of the very hardy, and what is called the rough-and-ready hut not the boisterous type. He was a level-headed, good, honest man; a man who did everything possible to assist his neighbor, either in or out of trouble, and to pay his honest obligations. He was an American and believed in giving his undivided support to his country and the President of the United States, whether or not he belonged to his party.

Joseph Gurnsey served in the Bishopric of the ward for several years and was always found willing to serve when the call came from the authorities. He also served well in

civic positions as well, and in matters pertaining to colonization.

Joseph Gurnsey Brown died of pneumonia, January 17, 1907, at Kanab, Kane County, Utah, at the age of 83.

## **HARRIET MARIA YOUNG BROWN**

---



Harriet Maria Young was born in Kirtland, Ohio July 21, 1834, the fourth child Lorenzo Dow and Persis Goodall Young, both of New York State. Lorenzo was the youngest brother of Brigham Young.

From her diary we learn that her parents were among the first to join the Restored Church and gather to Kirtland, Ohio, which was then the Headquarters of the Church. From Kirtland they moved to Missouri (Far West) and were driven from there to Illinois. "I saw the Prophet many times and remember sitting on his knee more than once as a child ... he loved children. When we lived with them in one room in Missouri, I saw him ruffle brother John's hair and give him some glorious promises. They were all fulfilled."

On October 1, 1838, Maria's father was arrested with 29 others and all were sentenced to death for their part in the Battle of Crooked River. Only because their guards softened toward them were they able to escape at night.

The family moved to Quincy, Illinois, then to a place near Carthage and finally, in the fall of 1843 to Nauvoo.

"Mother and we younger children were in Nauvoo when the Prophet and Hyrum were killed in Carthage Jail by the mob. I can still sense and feel the spirit of sadness that was over the whole place at that time. I wanted to take my brother John and go to the Mansion House, about a mile away, to see them while they lay in state, but mother was not able to go and would not let us out of her sight because of the threats of the mobs."



Harriet crossed the plains in the first emigration company on the Emigration Fund Plan with Bishop Hunter in charge. "Mother, Aunt Fanny, Nancy Green, a cousin, and myself came with the Richards family. We started July 5th . . . and arrived in Salt Lake Valley the 28th of September 1850 with no trouble to speak of enroute."

"When I first saw the Valley it looked grand to me because I saw the whole valley with majestic mountains rising all around and the blue lake in the distance and I knew that here was home and rest."

"When the University of Deseret (called the Parent School) met for its second term in the Council House, I started to School, but after a couple of months, I stopped and went to work for Aunt Fannie Young to help her and learn dressmaking. While there I met Joseph Gurnsey Brown, and we were married on the last day of the year, Dec. 31, 1851 by (President) Brigham Young at the home of Feramorz Little."

Harriet was just seventeen, a small beautiful girl with her hair in ringlets. In Draper, her first child, Homer Achilles, was born on October 25, 1853, followed December 23, 1855 by Persis Ann.

In 1856 Gurnsey was asked along with others to meet the belated handcart and wagon companies of English Saints struggling to get to the Valley before winter. As he neared the company he picked up two English girls walking ahead, Lizzie White and Esther Brown. Since they had no relatives in America he took them to his home in Draper for the winter. On January 18, 1857 he made Esther his second wife. On March 22, 1857 Harriet's husband married a third wife, Lovina Manhard.

Harriet was among others celebrating the 24th of July in the Big Cottonwood Canyon in 1857 when word was brought that Johnson's Army was coming. "My what excitement this caused. President Young quieted the people down and told them to go to camp and get ready to start back to the City early next morning. He said he intended to be the last to leave in order to see that all were safely on their way."

Joseph Gurnsey served a mission (2 1/2-3 years without purse or script) in England, leaving his wives and a dozen children in the Lord's hands. When he came home in 1867 Brigham Young asked him to take Harriet and go to the "Muddy Mission" promising that Harriet's health would improve. The "Muddy," a desolate area west of Washington County at the mouth of the Muddy River was a test of endurance and strength. It was so hot, Harriet said, that the milk soured before the cream could rise.

In May of 1870 baby Juliette died. In the fall Gurnsey brought Lovina down to the Muddy; Esther remained in Draper. In 1871 they were released from the "Muddy Mission" when a survey disclosed the Muddy, an area now known as Moapa Valley, to be in Nevada, and Nevada taxes were impossible to pay.

They were persuaded by Harriet's brother, John R. Young, to settle in Kanab where

they arrived in February 1871. Lovina and her children joined them and the two families lived in a tent until a two-room adobe house could be built, with one room for each wife. Later another house was built for Lovina. Harriet gave \$300, which she had been willed, to Gurnsey to buy windows and hardware for Lovina's home.

In Kanab Harriet had three more children. She raised ten of her eleven children to adults, but buried four of her five sons in early manhood. When Esther died in Draper in 1881 her oldest married daughter, Lettie (Celestia) cared for her baby sister, Harriet Luetta, until she was 14 years old when she joined the other three children, Isaac O., James Arthur, and Rose Anna. Harriet loved and cared for them as for her own.

Sorrow came to Gurnsey and Harriet on March 30, 1886. Their oldest son, Homer Achilles, still unmarried, died of pneumonia at the age of 33. The second son, Joseph Gurnsey Jr., died of consumption July 23, 1887, leaving his wife Clara Little, and two children, Joseph Gurnsey III and Curtie. Clara later married his brother, Ebenezer. On February 13, 1893 another son, Lorenzo Young, died after a long illness. He left a wife, Elizabeth Haycock, and four children. Harriet related that after her third son, Lorenzo, died a cloud hung over her and she was constantly apprehensive. Less than a month later her youngest son, Feramorz Little, only 21, was fatally injured during a horse race. She said, "Well it has happened, now I can rest."

In 1894 Gurnsey bought Harriet a large red brick home built by John Rider. The thing Harriet said that, attracted her most about the house was the large deep basement with rock walls, white-washed interior, and dirt floors that could be wet down each morning making a cold place to keep milk and butter and other foods.

Persis Ann and her children came to live in the home to care for Joseph Gurnsey and Harriet in their old age. Gurnsey died January 7, 1907 and Persis Ann, after a short siege of pneumonia was buried June 12, 1919. Then Harriet's daughter, Angeline, passed away May 24, 1924. This was another hard blow. Her two grandsons, Gurnsey Spencer and Homer Spencer and their wives were still in the home. Harriet moved her things into a large east bedroom where she spent her time sewing, reading, and visiting with friends and relatives, coming out for meals and to visit with her grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Harriet lived a very busy life. Even in her last years he made her own dresses and ironed them herself. She hemmed Temple veils, made quilts, some when she was 90 and 91 years old. She loved to read and wrote many letters. At age 83 Harriet read Redpath's History of the World, volume by volume, and enjoyed it all.

There was in her life a perfect blending of all the graces and virtues. Complete honesty and sincerity, coupled with a charming manner - a good companion for a quiet chat; the life of the party in a social gathering; a gracious manner that made people love to do things for her and with her; pride, which kept her always well

dressed, perfectly groomed, and as she would tell you in confidence, kept her from putting on weight. She was a small woman with a head of beautiful wavy hair.

There was a great love between Harriet and Joseph Gurnsey. Joseph E. Robinson, her son-in-law, wrote, "How Grandmother loved Grandfather Brown. To her he was the Beau Brummell among men. One day she came to the store and asked, "Joseph have you any good men's shirts?" I thought to tease her and said, "You mean men's good shirts, don't you, Mother?" I'll never forget how she replied. "No! I mean GOOD MEN'S shirts, for I want one for Gurnsey and he is the best man I know."

Harriet said in closing her record, "I have had the honor of knowing all the Presidents of the Church from Joseph Smith to Heber J. Grant, and many other leading men and women, and now that I have lived to a good old age and feel that my work is about done, I look back and think that I would not care to live it over for I might not do so well as I have done."

This account was abridged by Ruth Robinson from the writings of Seymour McAllister, Clara M. Shields, and Clara E. Spencer: Joseph E. Robinson; Bessie Spencer Bateman: Sandra Robinson Day

## CHAPTER ONE

### JOSEPH GURNSEY BROWN

#### (1) Children of FIRST WIFE, HARRIET MARIA YOUNG

1. Joseph Gurnsey BROWN (Ebenezer), son of Ebenezer BROWN and Ann WEAVER, born Nov 1824 Dryden, NY, died 7 Jan 1907 Kanab, Utah.

Married (1) 31 Dec 1851 Harriet Maria YOUNG, daughter of Lorenzo Dow YOUNG and Persis GOODALL, born 21 July 1834 Kirtland, Ohio, died 16 Feb 1928 Kanab, Utah.

Married (2) Jan 1857 Esther BROWN, daughter of James BROWN and Esther MOORE, born 1 Nov 1832 Jurby, Isle of Man, England, died 21 Apr 1881 Draper, Utah.

Married (3) 23 Mar 1857 Lovina MANHARD, daughter of William MANHARD and Jane Noran CHORD, born 14 Jan 1838 North Crosby Twp, Leeds, Upper Canada, died 19 July 1918 Kanab, Utah

Children by first wife, Harriet Marie YOUNG:



1. Homer Achilles BROWN, born 25 Oct 1853 Salt Lake City, Utah died 30 Mar 1886.

2. Persis Ann BROWN born 23 Dec 1855 Draper, Utah, died 12 June 1919 Kanab, Utah. Married 22 Mar 1875 Salt Lake City, Utah  
Howard Orson SPENCER, son Orson SPENCER and  
Catherine CURTIS, born 16 June 1838 Middlefield, Mass, died 4 Mar 1918 Orderville, Utah. He married (1) 17 Apr 1860 Louisa Lucy  
Catherine CROSS: married (2) 22 Mar 1875 Persis Ann BROWN; married  
(3) 1 Feb 1877 Asenath Emmeline CARLING

3. Joseph Gurnsey BROWN, Jr. born 17 Apr 1857 Draper, Utah, died 23 July 1887 Kanab, Utah, married 10 Jan 1884 Kanab, Utah Clara Ann  
LITTLE, daughter of George Edwin LITTLE and Martha TAYLOR, born 9  
Apr 1864 Salt Lake City, Utah. She married (2) 17 Oct 1888 Ebenezer  
BROWN, a brother of Joseph Gurnsey BROWN

4. Lucy Elizabeth BROWN born 12 Apr 1859 Draper, Utah, died 28 Apr 21 (continued information is missing)