

A sketch of the Life of Lewis Rice Chaffin

Utah Pioneer of 1852

Prepared by his daughter, Laura E. Allen

November, 1934.

Lewis Rice Chaffin was born December 3, 1806 at Princeton, Mass. and died March 5, 1891 at Cedar City, Utah. He was the son of Leonard and Elizabeth Rice Chaffin.

He settled early at La Harp, Ill. The town was named Franklin when he went there but another town in the state claimed priority to the name it was necessary to change it.

The name LaHarp was suggested by Lewis and adopted by the town. He was one of the first merchants there, the first postmaster and the first justice of Peace. He showed push and energy while there.

ON December 3, 1837 he married Mrs. Sarah W. Cossett. Mayfield, the daughter of Epaphroditus and Laura Hull Cossett, and the widow of William O. Mayfield. She had one son, William Oscar Mayfield, whom Mr. Chaffin adopted. Like her husband she was strong nerved and courageous. She proved a loving mother and devoted wife throughout the forty three years they lived together. They joined the "Mormon" Church soon after its organization and remained true and faithful to the gospel the remainder of his life.

He was a fairly wealthy man in La Harp. He owned five city lots, a good home, a farm and a grist mill. He hired a miller to grind in the day time and he went nights to grind flour for the "Mormons". One night a mob came to

the mill pointed guns at him and taking an oath one said, "If you grind a grain of flour for the "Mormons", we will blow your brains out!" He replied, "Let me grind my own toll." They answered, "You have a damned lot to grind." but they left him.

Later all the saints were called into Nauvoo so they could protect themselves from the mobs. They left all they had except bedding and clothing at La Harp. Mr. Chaffin took his turn guarding the city until midnight each night. Once while he was on guard a "Mobocrat" told his wife that they were going to drive the "Mormons" out that night. When he learned of this he gave the alarm and the Saints held the mob off and were saved. They were finally driven out and the Chaffin's had a young baby at the time. Sister rode in an open wagon across the ice on the Missouri River with it. THEY went back to St. Louis where three of the Chaffin brothers and three sisters lived.

These brothers and sisters were all wealthy. They gave Lewis and his two oldest boys positions in their stores. They stayed there only until they got an outfit to come to Salt Lake Valley. When his brothers saw they could not persuade him to leave the Church they helped him to get a good outfit. They came to Utah in 1852. In later years the brother John, gave each of the children five hundred dollars, Oscar Mayfield recieved his first. This took four thousand dollars.

In 1856 Brother Chaffin filled a mission to Austrailia. He was gone about four years. He passed thorough many trials

while there as did his family at home. At one time he was suffering from hunger so keenly that he knelt by the roadside and asked the Lord to open the way. After he had risen and walked a few steps he found a nice clean loaf of bread lying by the road.

In December of 1861 he took three children and his wife to St. George to settle. They with the rest of the company spent the first winter in tents. With spring they moved to the city lots and began to build homes and tilling the soil. The Pioneers did a great deal of expererenting in this mild climate. Lewis's brothers sent him a molasses mill which proved useful in the early manufacture of molasses. He brought some molasses home one day saying, "Now we can have some cake," His wife asked, "Shall I shorten it with ashes?"

About 1863 William Jennings wrote to him saying that he would give him eleven hundred dollars for his business place on main street of Salt Lake. He wrote to Jennings saying that when he doubled it he could have it. The next mail brought him the twenty-two hundred dollars. Even before this he had been a man of good means since coming to Utah. At the time Johnson's army came to Utah in 1857 flour was selling at twenty five per hundred and everything else on par. He owned two grist mills and one cotton gin.

Apostle Erastas Snow told him they needed a grist mill at Cedar City so he took his family and tented rooms there. When the mill was well under way he left his son, Henry, to

take charge and took his son George, and daughter, Laura, to cook for them while he started another mill at St. Joseph on the Muddy. He also had a cotton gin there. He had a large nice room built. the twon was a fort. The houses were all covered with rushes and the culinary water was hauled for two miles, such were the comforts. Laura left to return to Cedar City in May. In July the Fort caught fire. Brother Chaffin and George were left with what clothers they wore, a linnen duster, an almanac, the running gears of a wagon and a span of horses. When they came to St. George, Apostle Erastus Snow said, "Brother Chaffin you have lost about all you have, I would advise you to settle at Cedar City where you have a grist mill."

At Cedar City he served as justice of the peace, notary public and held many positions of trust. He always was active in the Church. sister Chaffin and he were present at the Dedication of the St. George Temple and they took great interest in laboring for their kindred dead. The Rice history on his mother's side goes back 248 years. He died in 1891 in full faith of the glorious resurrection.