

William Unthank, a long time resident of Cedar City, was born July 18, 1829 at Whitehaven, Cumberland, England, a son of James and Martha Scott Unthank. His father was a sailor by trade. Other members of his family were also sea men.

The records of William Unthank were burned and very little is known of his early biography. The facts and incidents given here have been gleaned from contacting the children of the above, and from a few old letters and temple records of William Unthank.

He heard the gospel in England during his early manhood and was the only one of his family at that time that accepted the teachings of the Elders. His father and family were very bitter towards the Mormons.

After being disowned by his family and friends he worked his way on a boat to Australia, where he was baptised into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints, by Elder Lewis Wright Chaffin August 21, 1853.

He met his first wife, Mary Ann Barnes in Australia, but they were not married until after they came to San Bernardino, California.

On May 29, 1855, they left Sidney, Australia, on the vessel, "Gimney Ford", bound for Zion and America. They landed at San Pedro, California, after 105 days on the ocean with a number of very narrow escapes. On one occasion their lives were threatened by a terrible storm, which tossed them about on the angry ocean, and broke the center mast which was caught on a coral reef. Another time a barrel of tar caught fire and grandfather seeing it first called for help, a lady by the name of "Mary Joyce" heard his cry and together they tugged it over board before the ship caught fire.

William learned to be a tailor, by trade in England and practiced it also in Australia, but after coming to San Bernardino he learned surveying and helped survey the roads in the San Bernardino Mountains and perhaps other roads.



hide, hide the big men come to take you to big, big pen", referring to the officers and the penitentiary. She would not be satisfied until he hid in the willows. He gave her a lap full of potatoes and hid until she had gone out of sight, then went on watering.

From his personal records which were not destroyed I find that she has been generous in contributing to the building of the temple in St. George and other Church and Civic buildings.

William was the father of ten children of his own and adopted two children of his wife Margaret.

He lived in Cedar City until his death, April 28, 1904. He was 75 years old.

A few years ago several letters of great importance concerning grandfathers parents and family have come into my possession, which throws a different light entirely upon the attitude of his family towards the church.

Following is a letter to grandfather, written by his brother James.

Wollongong, Australia  
Jany, 14, 1858

Dear brother and sister,

We received your kind letter and was glad to hear of your good fortune in securing a wife and good employment. We likewise wrote a letter in reply but we are uncertain whether you will get it or not as we directed it wrong.

Australia for some time back has been in a most wretched state. Employers are turning insolvent and there is nothing but starvation looking in the face of the working man. It was a good job for you that you left it when you did for you left just in the right time.

We have had no word from home (England) since you left Sydney. But Uncle Robert Wilson came to Wollongong and brings a terrible account of the poverty of Melbourne. There are thousands both in Sydney and Melbourne out of employment. Uncle is about to engage with Mr. Brown of Dakto for 6



After three years as San Bernardino they came on to Utah with a company of saints.

While on their way to Cedar they were told about the Mountain Meadow Massacre and decided to camp before they reached the place. But due to snow on the ground they could not determine the exact place and made camp for the night. On dipping up water for the camp they discovered long hair in the stream and decided to move on six miles where they melted snow for the camp.

They reached Cedar in 1858 and settled first in the "Old Fort". William was a very active young man and took part in the pioneering and settling of Cedar City. He sang the songs of Zion in the first choir of Cedar City, and was active in dramatics as well as a member of the first band.

William and Mary Ann had no children but she was very helpful as a mid wife to the early settlers.

After thirteen years in Cedar City, William married in polygamy-- Margaret Elliker and Ellen Pucell, which were sealed by the same ceremony at the Endowment House in Salt Lake City.

Margaret was a widow with several children, while Ellen, or "Nellie" as she was called, was a girl with a serious handicap. She had suffered the misfortune of having her feet frozen while crossing the plains and had had them taken off at the tender age of 10 years. She was an orphan having lost both parents on the plains coming to Utah.

William reared a family by both women. He and Mary Ann reared a boy and a girl of Nellies.

After the Manifesto he was hunted by the U.S. Officers for polygamy and taken to the Penitentiary in Salt Lake City where he served six months. He learned to make beautiful table covers and dollies of wool, using his knife as his only tool.

After coming to Cedar City William became a farmer. He was a real friend to the Indians and they showed their appreciation many times. One day he was watering his field and an old squaw named Sally, came to him



months at the rate of 40 pounds per year and a ration. So you can judge the state of labor from that. If he is successful he intends to pay you a visit at the end of six months as you say Engineers are scarce in San Bernardino. The township of Wollongong is improving very fast in buildings, and likewise the coal mines are improving. There is a new company opened a mine in Balmain all Mr. Manning's steamers have to come to Wollongong to get supplied with coal.

Brother Edward is still in Illawarra, but not before the mast, he has been rated to Second Steward, he is expecting either a son or daughter every day.

The Planet Steamer is sold to a New Zealand Company and father got the offer to go with her at 20 pounds per month and found. He had the agreement and everything drawn out, but for the want of health he was obliged to abandon the idea, had his health been good it would just have set us on our feet to come to San Bernardino, as we are all desirous of coming. The Planet sailed for Port Cooper at Christmas not under steam but schooner rigged.

Father was very much surprised that you did not mention any of the company that went with you. He thinks that you have not found things according to your expectations and that you have left the Church altogether. If you have not wrote before you get this letter, write and let us know all particulars about the company that went with you.

We have had one of the American Elders here last Saturday night and he started on Sunday morning to go to Yorkie Jacks and intended to proceed to Kiama and Shoalhaven. He also gave us an accounting of the last company that went out arriving all safe. Peter Sloan is working on the Wharf Coaling the steamers, he and Mrs. Sloan sends their best love to you and your wife. Mr. Haworth intends to close the Lanyard and I must get the discharge so you must look out for me a job by the time we come over. I think I must turn Engineer too, as it is a good business in America.

Martha is in Sydney at present attending on Hannah, and Mother is



getting very bad health now but she thinks she would be better if she could only get to America.

Dear brother and sister, I must now conclude my letter as all my subjects are run out. Therefore we all join in sending kind love to you and your good wife, wishing you every comfort that is possible. Your Wollongong friends all send their love to you. So no more at present from your Brother and well wishes.

James Unthank.

Another letter in part from my grandfather's sister Hannah says:

March 5, 1877  
Sydney, Australia

Dear Brother:

It is true that father and mother were both baptised but as I told you before the long silence has disinheartened them so that they turned back to their own Bibles again. Dear brother I am most happy to tell you that your father and mother were good living people, and I believe they were quite prepared to meet their maker. Dear Brother, I wouldnt be at all afraid myself to come to you if it was in my power, for I know that you would not deceave us for your letter is true proof that all is well. Edward sends his kind love to you all and says that we may all meet yet. Is it at all possible for you to take a trip to Sydney?

So now I must conclude, with kind love to your wife and all the family, not forgetting yourself.

Your affectionate sister,

Hannah

From the above letter it proves that William's parents and family did not stay prejudice towards him or towards the church. From his temple records his father, mother and brother James died in Australia before 1863.

From the letters it shows that the whole family followed him to Australia and intended coming to America.

I've never found the names of the men his sisters married.