

Autobiography of Joseph Warren Wadsworth

Source: Wadsworth, Joseph Warren.

Abiah Wadsworth: His Wives and Family, 1810-1979. 1979. 42-50.

I, Joseph Warren Wadsworth, was born in the state of Maine, Waldo County, town of Lincolnville, on December 16, 1831. My father's name was Abiah Wadsworth and my mother's name was Eliza Ann Hardy. My parents joined the L.D.S. Church in the state of Maine in 1839 and were baptized by William Hyde. They left the state of Maine with several families for Illinois in the year of 1841.

I was baptized in the year of 1845 by my Uncle Joe Hardy at Nauvoo. At that time, my father traded a horse for a few bolts of cloth which he turned over to the church for tithing to pay on the temple which was being finished at Nauvoo at that time. In the spring of 1846, Brigham Young called for help to take the first company to the far west and my father turned over his only horse, wagon and double harness to them, which left us with only three cows and a few sheep.

We were then moved across the river to a little town called Montrose. My father then went back across the river to guard the temple which was threatened by the mob.

My uncle Louis Hardy had moved to a little town called Salem, about 40 miles from Nauvoo and then came back for us. He sent me over to Nauvoo to tell my father that he had come to move us away. We lived in Salem one year and made enough to take us to Council Bluffs, Iowa. This was in the year of 1847. From 1847 to 1849 everything was quiet and peaceful. In 1849 George A. Smith called for help to take him to the Great Salt Lake Valley. My father, with several others, fitted him with a yoke of cattle. We lived in peace at Council Bluffs until 1851 when we left for the valley of the Great Salt Lake.

We left on the 10th day of May in Captain Day's company of 50. We had cattle, one span of ponies and three wagons, and four cows. My two yoke of oxen and two cows and I drove three yoke of cattle. My mother drove the ponies. We all felt fine and had a fine trip with accidents or sickness on the trip across the plains. We stayed in Salt Lake one night. On the 18th we started to East Weber and arrived there on the 19th. After we had been there a few days, the call came for all L.D.S. to pay their tithing and start in anew. My father turned over one yoke of cattle and a good rifle to pay up his tithing.

In the spring of 1852, my father went to conference and while there, Brigham Young called for volunteers to meet the immigrants coming in the next fall. My father volunteered to go with a wagon and span of horses. When the time came, father could not leave, so I had to go.

I started for Salt Lake along in the last part of August with three yoke of cattle and a good wagon. I reported to Bishop Hunter at the tithing yard. On the way to Salt Lake, I had picked up three yoke of cattle that had been volunteered. One yoke by a man named Cherry, one by Ziras Kilburn, and one yoke by a man whose name I have forgotten. While I was driving around picking up my supplies, I was using my whip pretty freely. Bishop Hunter was standing on the platform watching me and when I drove up to the platform to get my flour, he made a remark about me being an ox driver and said he had a yoke of cattle of his own that he wanted me to take. I refused as I thought I had about all I could handle, but he would not listen to me and insisted on my taking his along. This made me seven yoke to look after. The orders were for each man to take care of the cattle he was driving and not get them mixed with the other cattle. I then left for the meeting place which was

between the Big and Little Mountain laying directly east of Salt Lake City. Arriving there, we waited for the rest of the volunteers until Monday morning. In the party there were about five wagons and sixty yoke of cattle under the leadership of Captain Fuller.

We met the first party on Monday on the East Canyon stream. They were in good shape and they did not need any help. We did not meet any more until we arrived at Quaking Asp Ridge, where we met another company of fifty who went on through without any assistance. We then met companies every little ways all in good condition. When we got to Big Bend on the Sweet Water, Captain Fuller came to Dad Blodgett and asked him if he and Joe Wadsworth could take sixteen yoke of cattle and go and meet the last company. Dad Blodgett did not want to go and told the Captain that he didn't think Joe would go. The Captain asked him if he would go if I would and he said yea. He then came to me and asked me if I would go if Dad Blodgett would go and I, thinking Dad Blodgett wouldn't go, answered yes. It so happened that he and I had to go. I was then a boy of 21 years of age and Blodgett was a man of 60 years past and a cripple at that.

We then started out with 16 yoke of cattle to meet the last company. We met them at Devil Lake on the Sweet Water. If it had not been for help, they would never have reached the Great Salt Lake. We took their cattle off and put our cattle on as we would not have the poor and fat cattle mixed. When we met them, they were about discouraged, but their spirits rose when they saw us coming. We stayed over night and got an early start on our way back. On the second or third day on our way home, a big snow storm came up. It was so severe that we pulled in the willows to camp for the night. On getting up in the morning, imagine our surprise to find all our cattle gone. They had broken away in the night and went south with the storm. Blodgett and I and several others started out to find the cattle. Blodgett and I stayed together, and the others separated going in all directions. Blodgett and I stayed together until noon and then we separated. He finally found the trail where the cattle crossed the creek and found the cattle several miles south on good feed. The cattle were driven back and watched until the next morning as it was too late to travel any that day. Everything went all right with us but the weather was freezing cold.

We caught the Sugar Train that was one day ahead of us. They had a hard time as 40 head of their cattle had frozen the night before. They had to leave 10 wagons and had to go back for them the next spring. We left them and came on through, arriving in Salt Lake without further trouble in the first part of November. After returning the cattle to their owners in good shape, I returned to my father's home in East Weber.

Father then sold his farm to Mr. Higley and I built a house on another farm. We worked on the farm the next year, but was then driven by the Indians into the fort which the settlers had built for protection. In the fall of 1853, he sold his farm to a man named Neil Neilson and bought Uncle Joe Hardy's place. In the spring of 1854 we planted the farm in wheat, but did not raise much of a crop.

In the spring of 1855, I married Abigail Higley.

[The following is an excerpt from a history of Abigail Higley Wadsworth written by Martha Ann Hardy Wadsworth.]

“Abigail Higley was born in Port Leden, New York, on October 6, 1838. She was the daughter of Myron Spencer and Priscilla Ebberson Higley. She spent her childhood and early girlhood with her parents in Canada and New York. She first heard the

Gospel preached while living in her native home of Port Leden, by Elder Hyde and another Elder. They joined the saints in Nauvoo, crossed the plains, and arrived in Salt Lake early in 1852.

“After staying in Salt Lake City only long enough to become rested, Brigham Young told her father, Myron Higley, to take his family and move on with a colony of saints to settle a small place called East Weber (Uintah) in Weber Canyon. After working their weary way along the mountain side for three days, they reached their destination.

“Here again they endured great hardships. The weather was extremely cold, as it was early spring. They had to live in dugouts made in the hillside and in covered wagons, which furnished very poor shelter, since the covers were so badly worn and torn after their long trip across the plains. Then, too, they were threatened with Indians and were often afraid to go to bed at night for fear of an attack. Food supplies became very low and hard to obtain and they were often hungry and cold.

“Soon after reaching East Weber, Abigail met and married Joseph Warren Wadsworth, March 12, 1855. They were married by his father who was a bishop of East Weber at that time.”

We built a house and tried to raise a crop but this being grasshopper year our crop did not amount to much. Living was high and Brigham Young sent out missionaries to find out how much bread-stuff was in the different settlements. They found out that there was not enough to go through the winter, but we managed by scheming and saving to get along.

During the winter we had turned out cattle on the Salt Lake Range. My father lost several cows and I lost one; in fact, the only one I owned. I put in the biggest part of the winter hunting cattle and had to break my own path in snow up to my waist. I would go from 20 to 30 miles a day. My wife's brother was staying with us that winter and he had a cow on the range. He got word that his cow had a calf and he had better go and get it. He did not like the idea of going and told me if I would get the cow, he would trade it to me most any way I wanted to trade. I went and got the cow, but the calf was frozen to death. The cow was a fine animal and the milk she gave was the biggest part of our living for the winter of 1855 and 1856. I put my crop in and tended it, which was composed mostly of corn. I raised a fair crop and then went to work in the canyon hauling wood until November.

About this time the call came for volunteers to meet the Hand Cart Companies. I was in the third call which was composed of myself and a man named Dave Osborn. We went as far as Fort Bridger where we met the last company coming in. We turned around and came back with them. This was the saddest sight I have ever seen. The biggest part of them were given out and nearly frozen to death; some with their feet frozen, some with their hands frozen. It was a sight that would make one's heart ache just to look at them. The next morning after leaving Fort Bridger I was called on to help bury children that had died during the night. We were camped in a big cedar grove and buried the children on the side of the mountain.

Everything went along all right as there was plenty of fuel and provisions, until we came to East Canyon stream. There I was called on again to bury two more children. We had a hard time for the

Canyon was full of snow and it was all we could do to get through. The authorities had sent out wagons and men from Salt Lake to put up tents, clear the snow from the ground, and to set the fires so they could start them as soon as we came in sight. They did and it was a welcome sight to see them. I returned home in East Weber.

My father and I had done about forty days hauling material from the canyon near Salt Lake for the temple and the tabernacle and doing other work also. Father did some carpenter work and I did mostly team work.

I married Lydia Stoddard (Lydia was born 11 March 1836 at Peoria, Illinois, to Amos and Leah Sickes Stoddard), March 5, 1857. We lived in Mountain Green, Morgan County for a number of years. Times were hard and money was scarce. Our farm and cows made our living. In the winter I logged in the hills to get a little money for clothing and shoes for my family. I hauled the logs down to the mouth of Weber Canyon and sold them there.

I helped to guard at Echo Canyon when Johnston's Army came. On one of my trips away from home, I became worried and felt like something had happened at home. I told the men something was the matter and I must go home. When I arrived they said our baby had died and were sure thankful I had come home.

The railroad was built while we lived in Mountain Green just a half mile south of our house. That was a great sight when we saw the first train come through. I will never forget the first train my team ever saw. I was going through Weber Canyon, the engineer blew the whistle, my team scared. He saw them, and I guess he thought he would have a little fun so he just kept on blowing the whistle. My team started to run, they drug me over the rocks and I was hurt pretty bad, but hung on to them as long as I could. A neighbor of mine, Heber Robinson, came along and helped me home.

We lived close to the Indian reservation and they would come to our home and want something to eat. We always fed them when they asked for it. We had some trouble with them, too. We had to lock our horses in the stables to keep them from taking them, but they got a span of good horses of mine and Eli Spaulding's. Eli came up to our house one morning at five o'clock and woke me up. He said, "Joe, the Indians have stolen your team and mine." I got right up and we tried to trail them with a lantern but couldn't find them.

The Indians became very mean so some men and myself went to see if we could make peace with them. We traveled through a big, dry grass patch to get to their camp. We thought we had made peace with them, but when we were on our way home, we got about in the middle of the dry grass and the Indians set fire to it. It sure did burn. We saw it coming so we started a fire in the grass where we were and burnt a place big enough to all stand in while it went past us, then we were able to go on. The Indians whooped when they saw the fire coming so near us.

Another incident which I saw was the Indians all gathering on the Weber River bank just a short distance from our home. It was in high water time. I knew they were going to try and cross the river, but it was so high I knew they couldn't do it. One of our neighbors came to our place. I said, "The Indians are going to try and cross the river. Let's you and I go down and see them." We went down. When we got there, they were strapping one of the squaws on a pony. They were going to have her go ahead of them across the river. If she could cross, they would follow. She was crying and so scared. When they had her strapped on the pony, they led him to the edge of the river bank. He

didn't want to go in the water, so they just pushed him and the squaw into the river. They started going downstream in the rough water and drowning. When the Indians saw the squaw was going to be drowned, they jumped in the water and cut her loose from the pony. I never saw leather cut faster. They got her out but the pony drowned.

I kept a good span of horses besides my ox team. My horses were good travelers and were used to traveling through Weber Canyon as I hauled logs through there so much. When there was sickness in our little community and someone needed a doctor, they usually came after me to drive down to Ogden as the team was so used to going through the canyon. I have driven some nights when it was so dark I couldn't see the road and so many rocks and big boulders in the road, I just let the team take their own heads for it, and didn't try to guide them, for they knew the road so well. Some nights it made me quite nervous. The doctor we would get was Doctor MacIntire, who was a good doctor.

The canyon was dangerous to drive through and it was customary for women and children to walk around the devil's gate as the road was so dangerous. My wife, Abigail, and I were going down to Ogden one day with a grist to the mill. It was a cold day and lots of snow. We had a sleigh. I told her she had better ride as I had always driven around there all right. We had our baby William with us. As we were going around the dugway, our sleigh tipped over and rolled down to the river, which had ice on it, and the baby's dress caught on the sleigh runner and saved him from going under the ice.

Another time, my oldest boy Joseph (we called him Johnny) and I were driving through the canyon in a sleigh. The team got scared and started backing. I jumped out, grabbed them by the bits. Johnny had the lines. They backed until the sleigh balanced over the edge of the river and I expected to see the team go back into the river on top of the boy, but we managed to get out all right.

We became tired of living in Mountain Green as the winters were so hard, so I sold my place and came to Hooper about 1878. I bought a place from Whet Wilson, moved my families down and lived on that place for many years. I had 40 acres of good land which I farmed. In the spring of 1886, I was sent to the state penitentiary to serve six months for polygamy. They asked me what I did for a living and I told them I was a farmer. After being there one night, they wanted me to farm ten acres of garden stuff which was used in the kitchen of the "pen". After that I never had to go inside the prison only to answer roll call as I was a trustee and was allowed to sleep outside in another building where I also had my meals. I returned home in five months (was given a month for good behavior). I returned home in October and found everything going fine. I sold the place to Eli Spaulding and bought another small place in East Hooper. I have lived in Hooper ever since I left Mountain Green.

I am the father of twenty-four children; thirteen boys and eleven girls. My first wife, Abigail Higley Wadsworth, was the mother of thirteen children, seven boys and six girls. Two pairs of twins. The children are: Joseph Warren, Olive Abigail, William Myron, Edwin Alonzo, (Mary Rosetta, Hyrum Spencer, twins), Annie Prissilla Simpson, Samuel W., (Orson, Orlin, twins), Clara Ellen, Alice W. Simpson, Elnora W. Cunningham. Mary Rosetta's name is Garner now. Abigail Higley Wadsworth was born in New York in the town of Leads and County of Leads, October 6, 1838. A daughter of Myron Spencer Higley and Prissilla Ebberson Higley.

My second wife, Lydia Stoddard Wadsworth, was the mother of eleven children: five girls and six boys. They are: Elizabeth Elmira, W. Garner, Frank Abiah, Eli Amos, George Martin, Eliza Jane W.

Manning, Elsa Pamela W. Parker, Henry, Lucinda Adeline, Laura Josephine McKibben, Charles, Archie Warren.

Joseph Warren Wadsworth died June 24, 1925, in Hooper, Weber County, Utah.
Abigail Higley Wadsworth died March 4, 1928, in Hooper, Weber County, Utah.
Lydia Stoddard Wadsworth died December 19, 1887, in Ogden, Weber County, Utah.

Elnora Arave Cox wrote this of the Joseph Warren family:

“I, Elnora Arave Cox, am going to tell you I was born and raised near this family and I never in my life saw a more devoted family for two families raised under the same roof. Each wife had four rooms - no conveniences whatever. Every child as far as I could tell was just as considerate of each other as if all had the same mother. There were 25 children - one wife had 12 and the other 13. They lost, I think, three babies, outside of that they were all reared together. One wife had two pairs of twins. I want to say that some of the half brothers and sisters thought more of one another than they did of their brothers and sisters right up until they passed from this earth. Those two women waited upon each other just like two sisters. When the manifesto came and a man could only live with one wife, those two women cried as their hearts would break because they had to part. I know because I saw it with my own eyes. They were my own Aunts and I heard Aunt Abbie say, “Oh, I know it will kill Liddie” and it did. She lived only a very few months, and dropped dead at her work. I just know that she grieved herself ‘till she could stand it no longer.”