

Autobiography of Samuel Woods House

Born: June 15th, 1830, son of James House and Harriet Woods, in the town of Maidenhead, Berkshire, England.

My mother had 9 children: 5 boys, 4 girls; myself being the 5th child. My oldest brother dying when a baby left me the oldest boy living. The names were William, Harriet, Ann, Emma, Samuel Woods, James, Ellen, Edward John, and Ebenezer.

My father belonged to the Independent Society and was very strict to his religion and with his children in training them as he thought of the way they should go.

My father was a merchant tailor and a member of the Merchant Tailors Association.

My brother William died when a baby. My sister Ann died at 10 years old and Ellen when a baby.

I went to school till I was 12 years and 6 months. When my father moved to London where he remained about 2 months. When he sailed for New York in February 18, 1842, arriving April 1, 1842. My oldest sister died on the voyage and was buried at Statten Island, New York. We went up the North River 75 miles, to Milton, New York, my father working at his trade. Myself and brothers tending a small piece of land.

My father joined the Methodist Society; but not liking them, he left them and joined the Presbyterian. This being a Quakers district we often went to their meetings, both Orthodox and Hicksites.

In April 1st, 1845, we moved over the river to Channing Vile, Dutches, New York. My father again starting in his business taking my oldest brother James to help him. Here I worked at the Calico Print Works.

My father joined the Episcopal Church, myself and brothers going to the Sunday School. My sister Emma learnt the dress making in the fall of 1846. I got my left hand in the printing machine and terribly tore it. It looked so bad that the doctors wanted to amputate it; but I would not consent, so they left it on. I was 6 months getting well. Then I resumed my former occupation where I remained till November 1st, 1848. My father returning to England on account of my mother's ill health.

On arriving in her native land my mother's health returned. We returned to our old home, but railways had so changed things that my father concluded to try Stratfieldsay in Hampshire. Here I went to work for a Mr. Matthews, a farmer, helping his son in a grist mill, filling my time up in the garden.

In the winter of 1850 I went to London to work for the firm of Messrs J. & J. Goddard, 68 Clottenham, Court Road (ironmongers and piano Forte finishers to learn to make Piano Forte strings). Father shortly after followed me up to London and started business at Hackney.

I remained at my place 3 years, when I left intending to emigrate to Australia, but my mother pled so hard I gave up going. Times being very dull I had some trouble in obtaining employ, but finally succeeded in doing so in a wool warehouse at the London Docks; at times when they needed extra

help, scarcely making enough to pay my way. Here I met with all kinds of characters and religions and heard them arguing which set me thinking and reading. Up to this time I had never troubled myself about religion, only going to their meetings because my father taught me to.

Now I heard infidels argue that there was no such thing as a God. But I could not believe that. So I began questioning my father, wishing to know how it was. There were so many forms of religion, and which was the right one. His answer was they were all right, but had different manners of worshipping. I told him my Bible only gave an account of one way and I did not see any use of having so many ways. I could gain no other information than that they were all right and (he) wanted me to go to the Bishop of the Church of England and be confirmed this; I declined doing till my mind was more satisfied.

At this time I obtained employment for a McKelsey, Braid and Trimming Manufacturer to take care of a horse, drive a traveler into the city to solicit orders, and deliver the goods he sold. McKelsey had about 200 men, boys, and girls working for him.

Here I saw the first Mormon elder; the boys called him Brother Ames. He was continually arguing about religion, but it was sometime before my turn came, as we were not thrown together very much. But finally my turn came. A Methodist class leader invited several of the big boys to attend his class, myself amongst the number.

This coming to the ears of the Elder Ames, he invited us to his meetings. This made the class leader angry, which led to a discussion on the principles of their respective religions. Myself being present on that occasion, I saw that the Mormon had the best of the argument. Then the Methodist said his Bible was not like other Bibles and left.

Then Brother Ames commenced with me and preached to me and bore testimony that the gospel he taught was true. I tried to overthrow him in his arguments, but I could not; he would confound me in every point. He then lent me the Voice of Warning which I read, also other works of the Church. I compared them with my Bible and found them correct. I gave them to my father to read, but he became angry with me and told me they were the works of the devil, and told me to give them back and not read any more of them, but it was too late.

I had read and was convinced. I sometimes went home with Brother Ames of an evening. One evening when I went Elder Edward Stevenson was there. He had just returned from Gibraltar, where he had been on a mission. He had been nearly starved and imprisoned for the Gospel sake. He also bore testimony to me and told me that if I would be baptized I should know for myself if what he said was true or not. I was baptized on the following Saturday, 5 August 1854 by Elder Edward Ames and joined the Whitechapel Branch of the London Conference; was confirmed the next day by Elder James Marsden.

I remained in this branch a few months, when I was removed to the Hackney Branch to assist the elders there as they were building up a new branch and needed help.

I was ordained a priest under the hands of President Vaughn and was made clerk of the Branch.

It was there I met with Sister Mary Ann Farnes, daughter of John and Ann Isacke Farnes, and made her my wife.

Here I had my first experience in preaching and teaching and gained considerable knowledge in regards to Church government.

On February 18th, 1856, we sailed for New York on the vessel Caravan and had a very rough time. When off of the banks of Newfoundland during a very severe storm my wife was delivered of a girl in latitude 28 longitude 48.

We named her Ellen Caravan House. We arrived in New York March 29th without money or friends except the Latter-day Saints.

My wife so weak she could not walk without help.

On April 1st Apostle John Taylor sent drays (a strong, low cart, without fixed sides, for carrying heavy loads) and took the saints to Williamsburg and put us into houses. Whilst arranging our things for the night, about 11 o'clock a brother came to the door and asked if there was anybody that wanted work. I said I did. He said he would call for me at 6 o'clock in the morning, which he did.

I worked 5 weeks in Hudson St., New York, making lard oil at one dollar per day. I removed over to 32nd St., New York, to be nearer my work. When I was thrown out of work for want of lard. I obtained work at a Piano Forte Manufactory to run a circular saw at \$1.25 per day; worked there about 3 months. When trade became slack and I had to go.

I then obtained work as a helper to hang iron rolling shutters and finisher of building at \$1.25 per day. This lasted till January. During the winter I did anything I could get to do to earn a living. At the latter part of February I got work as helper in an iron railing shop at 75 cents per day.

During this time I acted as clerk to the teachers, also as clerk to the priests quorum, president to the teachers quorum, and teacher to a ward having a district four by six miles to visit.

Having given satisfaction to my employers in the shutter business, they gave me a recommend to go to Chicago as a shutter hanger. On arriving at Chicago, I went to work for Mr. N. S. Banton at \$1.62 1/2 per day, at which place I remained till May 1859.

During my stay in Chicago I gathered together scattering saints and we organized a branch of the Church. Was ordained an elder by Elder Sulavan (Sullivan) and set apart to preside over the branch.

During the winter of 1858 the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad was completed so I wrote to President Coward at St. Louis about it. He appointed a Brother Beckwith and myself to visit the company and find out their lowest fare, which commenced negotiations for our emigration to travel that way. B. H. L. Elridge (Eldredge) coming to Chicago on wagon business was unable to complete the business.

In the spring of 1859 we started for Utah. I went to the railroad company and they gave me first class passage at emigration fare, also free passage for all our baggage from Chicago to Omaha. On the way up the Missouri River my wife struck her head against crank of the shaft of the steamboat and cut an artery as we met a small company of saints at St. Joseph.

We had company on the boat which was of great help to her as they took care of her; also the boat hands were very kind to her. We found quite a number of the saints at Florence preparing to start onto the plains, also Bishop Frederick Kesler fitting up wagons for the Church freight. I went to work to help him, my wife cooking for him, until we got fitted, loaded, and started about 300 wagons.

Then we started with the last train of freight on the 1st of June in his company; Brother Horton Haight as captain, having 80 wagons in our company and 525 head of cattle. Myself and wife walking all the way, arriving in Salt Lake City September 1st, 1859.

Removed to Grantsville the same month of September 1859...

The foregoing history was written in longhand by Samuel Woods House. This valuable autobiography was graciously made available by Mary T. Anderson (wife of Ivan Anderson) of Hawthorne, Nevada.

Compiled by
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