

LIFE OF JOEL HILLS JOHNSON

A sketch of the life of Joel Hills Johnson, son of Ezekiel Johnson, who was born at Uxbridge, Massachusetts, January 12, 1776. My mother's name was Julia Hills, born at Upton Massachusetts, January 12, 1801 and I was born at Grafton, Massachusetts, March 23, 1802.

When a small child, my parents emigrated to the state of Vermont, where they lived about nine years and in 1813 they let me go with my uncle Joel Hills for whom I was named to New Port in Kentucky on the opposite side of the Ohio River from Cincinnati, Ohio, both small towns at that time.

In the spring of 1815 father came and took me to Pomfret, Chautauqua County, New York, where I lived with him until I was twenty one years of age, March 25, 1823. I had little or no opportunity for an education, but was very religious from a small child, not daring to transgress the will of my parents or do the least thing I thought to be wrong, and always attended religious meetings and studied my books by firelight after I had done my work. I bought a sawmill and lot of land and built a house and had my sister keep house for me, until the 2nd day of November, 1826, when I married Anna P. Johnson, daughter of Timothy Johnson, squire. She was born August 7, 1800. In the year of 1829 I invented and patented the shingle cutter, or the machine now used to make shingles throughtout the United States and Canada. The patent is dated 8 December 1829 and signed by Andrew Johnson, President and Martin Van Buren, Vice President of the United States.

In the fall of 1830 I moved my family to the town of Amherst, Lorain County, Ohio. I there first became acquainted with the Book of Mormon and the Elders of the Church of Jesusu Christ of Latter Day Saints and was baptized into the church on the 1st of June, 1831 and was ordained an Elder on the 20th of September following and was appointed to preside over the Amherst Branch of the church numbering 100 members. I attended the first October Conference of the church. It was held in Orange Townsite, Ohio in October 1831. It was here that I first beheld the face of the Prophet Joseph and heard the words of life from his mouth which filled my heart with joy and thanks to God.

In January of 1832 I went on a mission to the state of New York, preaching the Gospel and visiting my father's family in Pomfret. They willingly heard and believed and my mother and some others were baptized. On my return home, I baptized many in and about Amherst and ordained several Elders and Priests.

In July 1833 Prsident Smith advised me to move to Kirtland and buy out certain obnoxious individuals, which I did. I was there when the foundation of the Temple was laid and built a sawmill for its benefit.

On August 26 I went on a short mission throughout the southeast part of Ohio, preached in many cities and baptized several and returned home. I labored, preaching in all the towns all about Kirtland, baptized many and ordained Elders and Priests. I received a blessing under the hands of the First Presidency for my labors in preaching and assisting in building the Lord's House. I was present at the calling and ordination of the first twelve

apostles, also at the calling and ordination of the different quorums of the church. I attended the dedication of the Lord's House, on the 27th of March 1836 and all the meetings and councils that followed, saw and heard the power of God manifested as mentioned in the life of Joseph Smith, and was chosen a member of the quorum of Seventies, so went on several missions. In the fall of 1852 I was selected to assist George A. Smith in forming a settlement at a Little Salt Lake (Parowan). I sent with him my two eldest sons with two teams loaded with provisions, seed, farming tools, iron sawmills, et cetera and in the spring I went down with stock and several more teams laden with necessaries for a new settlement. At the organization of the City of Parowan, Iron County, Court of High Council, I was elected one of the City Council Selectmen and one of the High Council and on the 19th of November, 1851 I was sent by George A. Smith to the springs twelve miles south of Parowan to make a fort and myself a farm and herd the stock for Parowan and Cedar City. The name is still called Fort Johnson.

In the fall of 1855 I attended a second Judicial District Court held in Fillmore, Utah as petit juror. December the 10th the Legislative Assembly convened in the State House at Fillmore and I was selected Chaplin of the House which office I filled.

In the spring of 1857 I was called on a mission to the states and started on the 6th of April arriving at Florence on the Missouri River on the 13th of June and returned to Salt Lake again on the 5th of October 1860. On the 11th of June I went to President Brigham Young's office and had Miss Margaret Threlkeld, an English woman, sealed to me by the President. I arrived at my home in Iron County the 20th of October having been absent over three years. My labors were mostly preaching the Gospel in Iowa and Nebraska.

In the fall of 1861 I moved my families down the Virgin River. I was then sent by President Erastus Snow up North Creek six miles to build a sawmill which I accomplished and planted out large orchards and vineyards and made many improvements. In July 1866 I sold out and moved back to Virgin City and the 1st of March 1868 I moved to Bellevue, my present place of residence.

After I was baptized in 1831 I never lived long in one place while in the states on account of mob violence and since I have been in Utah I have made my home in 11 new places. I was never called on a mission in regards to my faith or the glorious hope that is within me or the mission of Joseph Smith or the true principles of life and salvation through the fullness of the Gospel in the last days that I excused myself. I was with Joseph Smith when the Word of Wisdom was given and have strictly harkened to its precepts from that day to the present by not using tobacco, strong drinks, tea or coffee and but very little flesh. I have written nearly 1000 hymns and songs now in manuscript entitled "Zion's Songster" or the "Songs of Joel" a few of which have been published in the Church Works.

In this short sketch of my life I have mentioned but a few of my labors and travels in the kingdom. My testimony for the last forty-eight years has been and still is that I know that God lives for I have felt his hand and heard his voice and I also know that the dispensation of the fulness of the Gospel brought forth through

Joseph Smith is the word of God for his voice declared it unto me as it did to the Saints on the Day of Pentecost for my mouth was opened and my tongue was loosed. I could pray and preach day and night and I had the gift of tongues. I could remember everything I had read in the Bible or other books, thus fulfilling the words of Christ, speaking of the Comforter, that it shall bring things to or living human being on the earth, Truth, Eternal Truth, even so AMEN.

(Signed) Joel H. Johnson. High Priest and Patriarch in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the only living and true church of God on the face of the earth.

(Grandfather Johnson moved from Bellevue to Johnson, Kane County, Utah in October, 1880. After he moved to Johnson he gave all his children and grandchildren a patriarchal blessing and promised all of them that the words he pronounced upon their heads would all come true inasmuch as they obeyed the Word of Wisdom.)

Joel Hills Johnson died 24 September 1882 at Johnson, Kane County, Utah.