

## WILLIAM PERKINS & JANE MATHEWS

In 1807 Sketty, situated to the WSW of Swansea, was a cluster of farms bordering on the suburbs of this industrial port. Today it forms part of Swansea proper. It was here on 16 February 1807 that William, son of Thomas Pergrin and Ann Evans, was born.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas and Ann were not married, however, and it was apparently decided by them that Thomas would take care of the child. Ann later married John Jenkins and had one child. They lived and died at Caerbricks in Swansea. The year following William's birth, Thomas married Ann Mathews, daughter of Joseph Mathews and Margaret Beddow.<sup>2</sup> This marriage proved to be a happy one. Ann accepted the child of her husband as though he were her own and loved him as her own throughout her life.

The Pergrin family belonged to the Independent Church at Swansea, but no record has been preserved of them there. We, therefore, have to rely on our family records for most of our information about them during this period of their lives.

In his daily activities, William was a collier, or a coal miner. The colliery of Treboeth to the north of Swansea provided him with his living. Here he worked with many boys and men from the Mathews family that also lived in Treboeth. Through them he became acquainted with Jane Mathews and in those brief hours in the evenings after work was done they began courting. Jane was the daughter of Thomas Mathews and Mary Davis. She was born 28 May 1814 at Treboeth.<sup>3</sup> They were married at Llangyfelach on 6 July 1833. She was 19 and he 25.<sup>4</sup>

The first ten years of their married life were uneventful. William spent his days in the coal mines and Jane at home tending to their ever-increasing family. Their home was on Penllwin Robert Street in St. John's parish in the confines of the Treboeth colliery. Their parents all lived within the same area also.

The first children were all born at their home on Penllwin Robert with the possible exception of the eldest who may have been born at Llangyfelach.<sup>5</sup> Their names and births are as follows.

Thomas	b. 19 May 1834
John	b. 4 Sep 1835
Mary	b. 29 Jul 1837
William	b. 23 Nov 1838 d. 14 Feb 1839
Joseph Mathews	b. 20 May 1840

According to our family records, little William, who died at age two and one-half months, died at Berid at Minglebach near Llangyfelach.

The first census of any genealogical value in Wales was that taken on the night of 7 June 1841. The information recorded includes the names of every person in each house the night the census was taken, together with the names of those persons who were engaged in their regular labor during the night and would return home the next morning. In this census it was the rule to record the ages of persons fifteen years or younger correctly, but for persons fifteen years of age and older, the last term of five years in which their age fell was to be recorded.<sup>6</sup>

Our Pergrin family was living on Penllwin Robert Street in Treboeth or as the area is described generally in the census "All the houses from Penllwin March farm on the north to the Pottery Mill on the south, from Penllwin Brook on the west to the road leading from Swansea to the Plough and Harrow on the east."

The family is given as follows:<sup>7</sup>

William Pergrin	age 30	Collier	born in Glam.
Jane	" 25	"	"
Thomas	" 7	"	"
John	" 6	"	"
Mary	" 4	"	"
Joseph	" 12 mo.	"	"

The next year another girl was born to William and Jane. They named her Ann. She was born 14 May 1842 at the home on Penllwin Robert Street.<sup>8</sup>

At about this time Mormon Elders came into the area, and began preaching a new and controversial doctrine. They caused much confusion among the established churches, and persecution rapidly followed the believers.

Our ancestor, Benjamin Perkins, was born during this critical period in the lives of our forefathers. He was born 14 January 1844 according to his own word "in a little town named Schoot, about two miles east of Swansea." It is the author's opinion, however, that the family remained at Penllwin Robert during this time.

William and Jane were baptized and confirmed by Elder Abel Evans into the Mormon Church and became members of the Treboeth Branch on 23 October 1844.<sup>9</sup> Thomas and John, the two older children did not accept this new doctrine at the time, but were baptized in 1847 and 1848 respectively. The

other children were too young to be baptized with their parents. William's father was baptized at the same time as his son, and his step-mother one month later. Jane's mother was baptized the following year. Her father did not accept the gospel.

From the time of their acceptance of this new faith, the Pergrin family had a very hard time. The influence of his over-pious Methodist associates was brought to bear so forcibly upon him that he was forced to surrender his position at the colliery. After several years of meager existence, consisting of much destitution and suffering, the family was forced to enter a national poor house.

On 15 August 1845 Jane gave birth to her eighth child, named David. Our family records, handed down from these forebearers, show that he was born at Llangyfelach and died two years later, on 15 September 1847, at Pant Ridyfew.

In the poor house, the family was separated, the children being placed in one area, and the parents in another. Their habitations were big flag-floored rooms where everyone was bunched together. There was no heat, and the food just sufficient to maintain health. Not even the beauties of the outside world were allowed to cheer their dismal existence, the only natural light they received being that which came from peep holes high up on the walls. The children went hungry day after day; the younger ones cried for their parents, but the heartless and prejudiced generation shut its ears and the inmates suffered.

During a periodic inspection of the institution made by officials of the state, the real reasons for the Pergrin family being in the poor house were brought to light. William made it clear to those officials that all his family wished to do was work and be allowed the same opportunities that others had. So, once again to the coal mines they went, even down to and including little Ben.

The family finally got reestablished and the initial persecution of the Saints subsided, making life a little less of a struggle. Meanwhile, a little girl named Elizabeth had been born on 13 January 1847 at Llangyfelach.<sup>10</sup>

The following year, on 30 December 1848 William baptized his son Joseph Mathews Perkins, who was confirmed on 4 January 1849 by Joseph Mathews, Elder of the Treboeth Branch.<sup>11</sup>

Ruth Perkins, 10th child of William and Jane, was born 7 May 1849 at Llangyfelach and was blessed later that year, on 1 November, by Elder Thomas Pugh. Hyrum, the 11th child, was born 18 February 1851 at Birch Grove, a small grouping of houses belonging to the jurisdiction of the hamlet of

Llansamlet. Hyrum was blessed on 10 March by Elder Joseph Mathews.<sup>12</sup>

The 1851 Census was taken on the night of 30 March 1851. The enumerators were to obtain the name, marital status, actual age, occupation and birthplace of each person in every household, and to state the relationship of each person to the head of the house. Thus, we find our Perkins family in the following entry.

The area in which they were living is described in the census as "All that part of the Hamlet of Llansamlet Higher which lies to the North of the old turnpike road from Lon Las Bridge to the Star Public House and from thence East and North of the Road by the Church to Glaesh Bridge to Letty Mean by Glanbrane to Gelly deg and from thence back to Lon Las Bridge."

It should be noted that this entry certainly agrees with all of the foregoing information included as family tradition. It should also be pointed out that even though William's father's family had already changed their surname from Pergrin to Perkins, William had not yet done so.

The family is given as follows:<sup>13</sup>

William	Pergreen	Head	md	age 45	Collier b.	Swansea
Jane	"	wife	md	39		Llangefelach
Thomas	"	son	unmd	17		"
John	"	son	unmd	16		St. John
Mary	"	dau		13		"
Joseph	"	son	unmd	11		"
Ann	"	dau		9		"
Benjamin	"	son		8		Llangefelach
Elizabeth	"	dau		5		"
Ruth	"	dau		3		"
Hiram	"	son		1 mo.		Lansamlet

The remainder of the children were born at the home in Birch Grove in the hamlet of Llansamlet as follows:<sup>14</sup>

Naomi	born	31 July	1852
Martha	born	26 Feb	1854
Daniel	born	30 Apr	1857

Besides these 14 children, William and Jane also adopted Daniel Morgan who was born 15 March 1866 at Capcoch in Llansamlet.<sup>15</sup> Daniel was the son of Daniel Morgan and Ann Perkins.<sup>16</sup>

During the year 1865 a cholera epidemic struck the area. Ruth, age 16, fell sick and came very near dying. Her associates were dying all around her within a few minutes after an attack of the dreaded disease. She, and the rest of the family, escaped only through the power of faith and a

special priesthood blessing under the hands of David Rhees, one of the three noted preachers who had become converted to Mormonism prior to that time.

On 21 June 1867, William and Jane along with many friends and relatives went to the harbour to see some of their children off for America. Those that went were Mary, Joseph, Ann, Ben, Ruth and Naomi. All of these children made it to Utah except Ann, who refused to join the Mormons. She remained in St. Louis, Missouri where she married John Hughes Taylor. Nothing was heard of her until about 30 years later, when she learned of the family settling at Monticello, and she and her husband, after all those years, came to pay a surprise visit to the family who had all the time held the belief that she had been drowned in the Johnston flood.<sup>17</sup>

As soon as those who came first were able to save enough money, they sent it back to Wales so that the rest of the family might be able to come. The Perkins family together with others of the Saints were placed in a company under the direction of Captain Elias Morris of Salt Lake City. "They left Liverpool on the steamship *Minnesota* on the 2nd instant [June], under the charge of Elder Elias Morris, late president of the Welsh district."<sup>18</sup> The company arrived in Ogden, Utah on 23 June 1869 on the first passenger train to travel the new Transcontinental Railroad, thus opening a new era in immigration to Utah.<sup>19</sup>

The family moved to Salt Lake City where they remained until October. They lived in the 16th Ward during this time. William and Jane were sealed in the Endowment House on 4 October, 1869.<sup>20</sup>

After attending the General Conference of the Church, the family began their journey to southern Utah, or Deseret as this area was known at the time. They accompanied Bishop Lunt and had a very enjoyable time, singing and serenading each little town they stopped at along the way. The family consisted of Father William, Mother Jane, Thomas, Elizabeth, Ben, Naomi, Hyrum, Martha, Daniel, Daniel Morgan and Ben's wife Mary Ann Williams.<sup>21</sup>

Life was short-lived for our Welsh forebearers. They had accompanied their children on their epic journey rather than having led them. They settled in Cedar City, built a home and attended to their duties, but never learned English and did not become active in church or community affairs to the point of leaving any history.

William was of a very retiring nature, but an energetic and industrious, though frail man, as well as being faithful and humble. He died in Cedar City on 4 January 1876 having assured his exaltation and that of those of his children

who had obeyed his counsel. He was buried in the Cedar City cemetery to the north of town. His tombstone inscription reads:

*William Perkins, born 16 February 1807 South Wales, son of Thomas Perkins, husband of Jane Mathews; died 4 January 1876.*<sup>22</sup>

Jane lived three years longer, but the death of her husband had been very hard on her. She was an extremely energetic, strong person. She had served the purposes of her creation well, having raised a large and obedient family and had seen them reach their mature years and off on their own. She died 18 March 1879 in Cedar City and was laid to rest beside her husband. Her tombstone inscription reads:

*Jane Mathews born 27 May 1814 Llangefelich, [sic] South Wales, daughter of Thomas Mathews and Mary Davis; wife of William Perkins; died 15 March 1879.*<sup>23</sup>

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>The birth date of William Perkins is different in some of the sources checked from the one that has been used in this history:

- a) Self Endowment TIB Card (Endowment House No. 14134, Book F, Living, p. 33) - 6 Feb 1807
- b) *My Ancestor's History* by Evan Williams, gives 16 Feb 1807 [manuscript]
- c) Cedar City, Utah LDS Ward Records (GS Ser. No. 025,845, 1875-1883) - 16 Feb 1807
- d) Treboeth, Wales LDS Branch Records (GS Ser.No. 104,172, p. 1) - 16 Feb 1813
- e) Tombstone inscription - 16 Feb 1807.

<sup>2</sup>Muriel Shupe, *Ann Mathews, Handcart Pioneer* [manuscript] p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>The birth date of Jane Mathews is different in some of the sources checked from the one that has been used in this history:

- a) Treboeth, Wales LDS Branch Records (GS Ser. No. 104,172) Record of Members 1844-1880, p. 1, No. 4 - 28 May 1814
- b) Self Endowment TIB Card (Endowment House No. 3488, Book G, Living, p. 115) - 28 May 1815
- c) Cedar City, Utah LDS Ward Records (GS Ser. No. 025,845) Early - 1907, No. 1147 - 27 May 1814

- <sup>4</sup>Correspondence to Gladys P. Lyman 17 Sep 1959 from the Genealogical Society
- <sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*; family records brought from Wales by William Perkins
- <sup>6</sup>David E. Gardner & Frank Smith, *Genealogical Research in England and Wales*, pp. 85-86.
- <sup>7</sup>1841 National Census of Great Britain (GS Ser. No. 464,332) p. 5 of St. John's Parish under the description given in the history.
- <sup>8</sup>Family records
- <sup>9</sup>Treboeth LDS Branch Records, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4.
- <sup>10</sup>Family records
- <sup>11</sup>Treboeth LDS Branch Records, *op. cit.*, p. 5, No. 60.
- <sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 17, Nos. 2 & 3.
- <sup>13</sup>1851 National Census of Great Britain (GS Ser. No. 104,212) p. 23 House No. 73 in Birch Grove, Llansamlet Higher, Hamlet in Llansamlet Parish.
- <sup>14</sup>Family records
- <sup>15</sup>Self Endowment TIB Card (St George, No. 2636, Book C, pp. 402-403).
- <sup>16</sup>Cedar City, Utah LDS Ward Records (GS Ser. No. 025,845), No. 1155.
- <sup>17</sup>Bessie M. Sherwood, *Life Sketch of Mary Jane Wilson* [manuscript], Monticello, Utah, p. 3.
- <sup>18</sup>*Deseret News*, Wednesday, June 30, 1869.
- <sup>19</sup>Ruth Perkins Bailey, *Ruth Perkins Bailey* [manuscript], 1956 p. 1.
- <sup>20</sup>TIB Cards of William Perkins and Jane Mathews.
- <sup>21</sup>Cedar City, Utah LDS Ward Records.
- <sup>22</sup>Bernella E.S. Gardner, compiler, *Cedar City Cemetery Record* [manuscript], Cedar City, Utah, 1937, p. 47.
- <sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 46; Cedar City, Utah LDS Ward Records (GS Ser. No. 025,845) Early - 1907, No. 1147.