

MORMON FIRSTS IN FRANCE

by Ronald D. Dennis



William Howells



Ann Howells

First missionary: William Howells, a lay Baptist minister in Aberdare, Glamorganshire, Wales, before his conversion to Mormonism. He was baptized by Captain Dan Jones at Merthyr Tydfil on 2 Nov 1847 and called to serve a mission to France on 13 Aug 1848. He arrived at LeHavre on 9 July 1849 on his first of four missionary journeys to France. In June 1850 he accompanied Elder John Taylor and several others to France as they began their missions. He was released from his mission on 25 Sep 1850 and given permission to emigrate. He sailed with his family on the *Olympus* in 1851; during the crossing he assisted in the conversion of fifty others on the ship. He died 21 Nov 1851 at Council Bluffs, age 35.

First female missionary: Ann Howells, 9-year-old daughter of William Howells. He took her with him on his second visit to France assuming that she would learn French more rapidly than he and be of assistance to him. They were together for three months in St. Malo, St. Servan, and Dinan. Many years later she would serve a mission to Hawaii. Ann Howells Jones Burt died at Brigham City, 6 Dec 1916.

First tract: *L'Evangile*, published in 1849 at Merthyr Tydfil by John Davis. (Facsimiles of this 2-page tract are available at the Mormon History Association Conference in Denmark; may also be obtained by emailing ronald_dennis@byu.edu.)

First person in France to believe the gospel: Monsieur Piclard, a Protestant minister in LeHavre who believed the gospel after questioning William Howells for eleven hours through an interpreter. He went to London to meet Elder John Taylor and followed him to Boulogne-sur-mer. He spent a lot of time with the newly arrived missionaries in France, but there is no evidence that he was ever baptized.

First convert: Augustus Saint d'Anna, baptized at LeHavre by William Howells on 30 July 1849. He promised to meet Elder Howells in St. Malo by the end of August, but there is no further mention of him in Howells's letters. All of these letters are now available on the Web:

humanities.byu.edu/welshmormonhistory/home.html

First meeting house: Ebenezer Chapel at St. Servan. An account of the first meetings held there on 23 Sep 1849 is in the November issue of the 1849 *Udgorn Seion* (Zion's Trumpet), the Welsh Mormon periodical. (A facsimile translation of the 1849 volume will be off the press by the end of the year.)

First convert to emigrate: Anne Browse, baptized 30 Sep 1849 by William Howells at St. Servan. She married Elder Henry Evans from Wales on the Isle of Jersey on 24 July 1851. Their names are on the shipping list of the *Ellen Maria* that left Liverpool on 10 Feb 1852 (Henry Evans, age 30, minister, Anne Evans, age 38). Henry's name appears in a letter of William Morgan, dated 22 June 1852, as being a captain of ten in the Welsh company. No further mention has been found of Henry or Anne.