



## Ann Evans Francis (1833-1874): Biography

**Note:** After assembling all available information on Ann Evans Francis, this biography was written in March and April 2008, by W. Bart Christenson, Jr., Provo, Utah. A bibliography of sources appears at the end. Particular recognition is given for the help of Shannon Howells of Salt Lake City, Utah ([shanret@yahoo.com](mailto:shanret@yahoo.com), descending through Thomas Francis Howells, oldest son of Thomas Howells and Ann Evans Francis), who for many years has been collecting information and artifacts pertaining to the Howells and Francis lines.

Concerning lands of the world where the fledging Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints took deep root during the mid-nineteenth century and from whence thousands eventually came to help build the New Zion in the tops of the Rocky Mountains, little Wales is notable. Indeed, it is estimated that approximately twenty percent of the population of Utah is of Welsh descent.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, having once converted to the Church and immigrated to America, scores of intrepid Welshmen returned to their native shores to further proclaim restored Gospel truths to their countrymen, often suffering sore persecution. One of the most successful of these devoted ambassadors was *Dan Jones*.<sup>2</sup>

In 1849, at the conclusion of his very successful first mission to Wales, he shepherded a group of 249 Welsh Saints across the Atlantic Ocean from Liverpool, England, to New Orleans, Louisiana, aboard the sailing ship, *Buena Vista*. Among this group were some of our own forefathers, *Benjamin and Margaret Evans Francis* and their four living children. According to the ship's passenger list, the family consisted of *Benjamin Francis, blacksmith, age 46; Margaret Francis, age 48; Dan Francis, age 12; Margaret Francis, age 9; Benjamin Francis, age 7; and Ann [Evans] Francis, age 16*, the subject of this biography.<sup>3</sup>

From a family record kept by her mother, we read that *Ann Evans Francis, the daughter of Benjamin and Margaret Francis was born in Newcwrt, in the Parish of Llanwenog, Cardiganshire, South Wales, on May 26th, 1833*.<sup>4</sup> This birth date is supported by the 1841 Wales Census for Llanwenog Parish, where she is listed as being seven years old.<sup>5</sup>

Little is known about *Ann*'s early life in Wales. However, from the family record kept by her mother, we learn that she was the third of eight children, three girls and five boys. An older sister, *Nancy Evans Francis*, was born 29 May 1829, but died only 14 months later, on 29 July 1830. An older brother, *David Evans Francis*, born 27 August 1830, died at age ten, on 10 October 1846, after being dragged  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile following a throw from the back of a "wild pony" he was riding. Then, following *Ann*'s birth came five younger siblings: *Daniel Evans Francis*, born 4 February 1835, who died at 14 months, on 4 May 1836; a second *Daniel Evans Francis*, born 3 February 1837; *Margaret Evans Francis*, born 26 August 1839; *Benjamin Evans Francis*, born 25 October 1841; and *Francis Evans Francis*, who was born and died on the same day, 10 October 1844.<sup>6</sup>

Again from this same family record book, we learn that *Ann*, age 14, and her parents were baptized into the Church by *Thomas Jeremy*, in Llanwenog, on 19 December 1847. Her confirmation, along with the baptisms and confirmations of her younger siblings came a few days later.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, as indicated above, 14 months later, in February 1849, the family prepared to immigrate to Zion with *Dan Jones* and his company of 249 Welsh Saints.

*In 1849, the ship 'Troubadour' departed from Swansea [Wales] to Liverpool [England]. Some 249 passengers then sailed on 25 February 1849 on the 'Buena Vista' from Liverpool. [They reached their] port of arrival, New Orleans [Louisiana], on 10 April 1849 [after 44 days on the water]. Also aboard the Buena Vista with the Francis family during the lengthy passage were Thomas Jeremy and his family [age 34, farmer], most likely the same man who had baptized them in Llanwenog, plus the Treharne family.*<sup>8</sup>

*Thomas Jeremy*, in a subsequent letter to friends in Wales (Welsh Saints maintained close ties), as is reported in *The Life Story of Jane Treharne Ashton*, wrote the following:

*I recommend all those that will follow us to Zion to bring oatmeal with them. They will find this the best food when they are seasick. The best way for those that follow us to Zion to keep their health is to keep on deck as much as possible. This will be an advice that will benefit them at our expense.*<sup>9</sup>

Additionally, *Sarah Evans Jeremy*, *Thomas*'s wife, recorded her memories of the sea voyage and ensuing river travel. Extracts are found in this same life story, as follows:

*After seven weeks aboard the 'Buena Vista,' they ran out of oatmeal, bread, and water, and had to eat hardtack and drink water full of slime called 'ropey water'. Their hearts were filled with joy as they saw the buildings of New Orleans outlined against the sky and two tug boats came and towed the big steamer into the harbor.*

[Then, on the river boat taking them further north, up the Mississippi River], *out of the 249 passengers aboard the 'Highland Mar,' one-third were stricken with the cholera while en-route from New Orleans to Council Bluffs [Pottawattamie County, Iowa, the eastern staging area for Saints migrating to Utah]. Men and women were lying on the deck, unable to help themselves and no one able to do anything for them. Their tongues and mouths were parched with thirst, and they felt as if they were being consumed with fire... Coffins were made of rough boards and*

*they were buried among the big timbers on the banks of the Missouri River [once the river boat left the Mississippi River and entered upon the Missouri River near St. Louis, to ply its way further west towards Iowa]. The cholera raged from New Orleans to Council Bluffs.*<sup>10</sup>

Historically, cholera appears to have been *originally endemic to the Indian subcontinent, with the Ganges River likely serving as a contamination reservoir*. Evidently, the disease then spread via land and sea trade routes to Russia, Western Europe, and thereafter to North America. The years 1829–1851 encompassed the *Second Cholera pandemic* in which Western Europe and North America suffered greatly. In fact, in 1849, at the time the Welsh immigrants arrived in New Orleans on the *Buena Vista*, the pandemic was spreading throughout the Mississippi River system. During that particular year, cholera took the lives of over 4,500 in St. Louis (10% of the city's population) and 3,000 in New Orleans. The disease then spread along the California and Oregon Trail as thousands were making their way further west, at the time of the Mormon Migration and California Gold Rush.<sup>11</sup>

*Widespread fear and panic would often result from any rumors that cholera was suspected to be in a given area. What caused the disease and what caused it to spread was unknown at the time... The most prevalent theory of the time held that the illness was caused and spread by vapors... During this epidemic the eating of potatoes and other vegetables also had come under suspicion...*

*The mortality for untreated cholera is around 50 percent... The disease is spread by fecal contamination... But in 1849, none of this was known.*

*It would be five more years before the spread of cholera by water supplies contaminated by sewage would be demonstrated [in 1854]... It would then be only another three years before Louis Pasteur would introduce the germ theory of disease in 1857... It wasn't until 1883, though, that the German physician, Robert Koch, discovered the 'Vibrio cholerae bacterium,' and it wasn't until well into the twentieth century that effective treatment with intravenous fluids was developed.*<sup>12</sup>

The toll that this horrific disease took on the Welsh Saints and particularly on our own forebears in the *Buena Vista Company* is related by *Dan Jones* in a letter written from St. Louis, on 30 April/1 May 1849, to *William Phillips* in Wales:

*May 1st—[Here, in St. Louis], we hired a steamer [the Mary] and moved to it yesterday to carry us to Council Bluffs, 900 miles up the Missouri River, for 16s. 8c each, half price for children between 4 and 14; and younger than that no charge; we can have a hundred pounds of luggage without paying, and we pay 2s. per hundred for the rest. We shall start from here tomorrow. We purchased our food here to get us to the valley. Also our stoves, iron to make wagons, clothes, arms, goods, etc., etc. To this point our journey has been as expensive as I noted in the Prophet [magazine]; and as far as I can tell the costs will be hardly any different from what I noted there. The deadly cholera is killing hosts here now. One dear and faithful elder died this morning, namely Benjamin Francis, leaving great sorrow behind him. It would be difficult to find anyone more faithful than he was during his life, and he died happy. His wife and family will come along with us... [Unfortunately, three other family members died afterwards, as well.]*<sup>13</sup>

In the aforementioned small bound family journal, *Margaret Evans Francis* dutifully recorded the deaths of her dear husband, as well as, shortly thereafter, three of her children:

*Benjamin Francis Senior died on Tuesday the 1st of May 1849 [age 47] at Saint Louis and was buried at Saint Louis on the same day. [To date, search for the gravesite has been unsuccessful.]*

*Daniel Evans Francis the son of Benjamin and Margaret Francis died on the 'Steamer Mary' on the 6th of May 1849 [age 12].*

*Margaret Evans Francis daughter of Benjamin and Margaret Francis died on the Missouri River on the 'Steamboat Mary' on the 7th day of May 1849 [age 9].*

*Benjamin Evans Francis Junior son of Benjamin and Margaret Francis died on the Missouri River on the 'Steamboat Mary' on the 8th of May 1849 [age 7].*<sup>14</sup>

We know that *Ann* and *Margaret*, now the sole remaining members of the *Francis* family, continued on with the *Buena Vista Company* and made their way to Council Bluffs, Iowa, in mid 1849. We also know that they remained there until June of 1852, presumably gathering resources for the trek westward. They are listed in the 1850 United States Federal Census for Pottawattamie County, Iowa, taken on 24 May 1850, where they are shown to be 17 and 50 years of age, respectively.<sup>15</sup>

As is recorded on the Church History Library and Archives website, which documents Mormon Pioneer overland travel during the time frame 1847-1868, we learn that they then departed Council Bluffs between 22-28 June 1852 in the *William Morgan Company*, composed of 50 wagons and 88 persons. The pioneers who made this 1,130 mile, three month long journey to the Salt Lake Valley were divided into five groups of ten wagons each. They were predominantly Welsh Saints, plus some English and French, as well.

We do not have exact details as to *Ann's* and *Margaret's* activities during the journey, but there are several letters and journal entries from fellow travelers included on the website, which give us good insight into what transpired. For example, there were four deaths during the trip (two from cholera, one from cancer, and one accident.) There were several babies born. The weather was temperate and quite mild throughout the entire trip: they had no snow. They encountered thousands of bison, killing five of them for meat. *Their meat tastes like Welsh beef*, wrote one of the journalists.

*William Morgan*, the Company leader had an interesting experience. While scouting the trail ahead, he unexpectedly met two Sioux Indian chiefs in full dress, who greeted him: *How do... Mormon good!* They insisted that he come to their village and smoke a peace pipe, which he wisely did. Thereafter, the pioneers swapped various items with the tribal members: sugar, cakes, etc. His final impression of Plains Indians after meeting hundreds more along the way was that they were *friendly and completely harmless*.

Yet, perhaps the most memorable event of the entire, physically demanding trip for these Saints was being greeted forty miles outside the Salt Lake Valley by numerous Welsh friends, including *Dan Jones*, already established in the valley, that came out to greet them with wagon loads of fresh fruit and produce: watermelons, mush melons, potatoes, pickle cucumbers, grapes, etc. They joyfully visited far into the night, singing and communing one with another. It was an endearing gesture of true brotherhood.

The *William Morgan Wagon Company* finally entered the Salt Lake Valley, arriving 25-30 September 1852, some ninety days after departing Council Bluffs, Iowa.<sup>16</sup>

It seems that a traditional place of residence for newly arriving Welsh Saints to the valley was on the west side of Salt Lake City. So it was with *Ann* and her mother. For we learn in *Margaret's 1886 obituary in the Deseret News Weekly* newspaper that she was a longtime resident of the Sixteenth Ward, located at 131 North 500 West.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, we also know from *Thomas Howells'* journal that *Ann* eventually became a resident of the neighboring Fifteenth Ward, located at 907 West First South, after becoming his wife one year later, in 1853.

Said *Thomas*:

*I began to think that it was not good to be alone; consequently I began to look out amongst the young women for one that would suit my taste. I met with Ann Francis, who came from Cardiganshire, South Wales. I married her on the 12th day of October 1853 [he was 22 years old, and she was 20]. We went through the House of the Lord [Endowment House] August 21 [31], 1855, where we had our endowments and my wife was sealed unto me for time and eternity.*<sup>18</sup>

*Ann Francis* eventually bore *Thomas* 13 children (*Thomas F.*, 19 Aug 1854; *Margaret F.*, 6 Jan 1856; *Eleanor F.* 15 Sep 1857; *Ann Elizabeth F.*, 8 Dec 1858; *Judah F.*, 24 Apr 1860; *Amelia F.*, 9 May 1862; *Benjamin F.*, 9 Apr 1864; *John F.*, 19 Jan 1866; *David F.*, 22 Mar 1867; *Daniel F.*, 22 Oct 1868; *Margaret F.*, 13 Oct 1870; *Loyal F.*, 9 Dec 1872; *Mary F.*, 16 Mar 1874.) Nine survived into adulthood.<sup>19</sup>

Supporting both *Ann's* marriage to *Thomas* and their residence in the Salt Lake Fifteenth Ward are a number of documents, including the following: LDS Church Temple Index Card to the Endowment House Temple Records<sup>20</sup>; LDS Church Record of Birth, Salt Lake Fifteenth Ward<sup>21</sup>; 1860 United States Census...Utah territory<sup>22</sup>; and the 1870 United States Census...Utah Territory.<sup>23</sup>

Regrettably, however, details about *Ann* herself are sketchy at best. For example, we know nothing in depth about her personality, personal habits, ability to speak English, daily activities, general health, and so forth. Nonetheless, there are a few revealing facts concerning her which are available:

We know for instance, from her son *John F.*, that she was very intent about her children becoming educated. Years later, he wrote the following to his own son, *Edmund*:

*My mother was alive then, and as far as I can learn from women who knew her well, she, like your own mother, would sacrifice most anything to have her children schooled.*<sup>24</sup>

It is apparent, too, that she must have been resourceful, provident, and hardworking, since, evidently, near single handedly during *Thomas'* mission to Wales, in 1870-1871, she was able to provide for herself (already four months pregnant at the time of his departure) and children, manage the family farm, and govern her large brood. (Nevertheless, she undoubtedly received

helpful assistance from her mother and step-father, plus concerned neighbors, as well. <sup>25</sup>) Five entries from Thomas' missionary journal are informative here:

2 August 1870, at Merthyr Tydfil: *In the evening, [I received] a letter from my family, which cheered my heart very much to hear from my mountain home and from my dear wife. [She] has [striven] very hard to assist the partner of her life in rearing their children, who [are] the hope of our glory in the Kingdom of God.*

17 November 1870, near Taunton: *I received a letter from home this morning announcing an increase in my family, a daughter born since I left home [Margaret Francis Howells, born 13 October 1870, in Salt Lake City], which news gave me joy and satisfaction. May the Lord bless her and her mother is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.*

28 December 1870, near Taunton: *This morning, I received a letter from home which brought news that my wife was sick and had been for 6 weeks, but was a little better when the letter was written.*

31 December 1870: *I feel grateful unto my God for His protecting care which He has exercised over me through the last year, hoping that I will merit His approbation through the new year—also for my wife and children that He will protect them from harm, seen and unseen, and preserve their lives until I shall [return] unto them.*

18 May 1871, Bristol: *This morning, I received a letter from home, which brought the good tidings that they were all well.* <sup>26</sup>

To conclude, one could assume that, as a teenager, departing the land of ones nativity for the Gospel's sake and then experiencing the additional trauma of losing ones father and siblings to infectious disease while undertaking the arduous, multi-year journey to Zion, might be more than enough to discourage or embitter a less valiant soul. But, to the contrary, such experiences seemed only to steel *Ann's* determination to remain true.

Indeed, with such thoughts in mind, as I have viewed the sole surviving photograph of her, while trying to appreciate who and what she really was, I sense a determined person... a person who was quiet but resolute... a true pioneer forged in the "furnace of affliction" who was fully equal to the many trials and challenges that came her way.

It will be a privilege to get to know her and the rest of the family in the eternities to come...

Finally, after only two decades of married life, she passed away in Salt Lake City at the comparatively young age of 41, on 30 May 1874. Her death certificate lists the cause of death as *consumption*, another name for tuberculosis in her day. <sup>27</sup> We have no other details. She is buried next to her husband in the Salt Lake City Cemetery.

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3. <http://home.clara.net/tirbach/HelpPageBuenaVista.html>. Buena Vista and Hartley passenger lists. In 1849 the ship 'Troubadour' departed from Swansea to Liverpool; some 249 passengers then sailed on 25 Feb 1849 on the 'Buena Vista' from Liverpool; port of arrival, New Orleans, on 10 of April 1849. Passenger list: #165 Benjn. Francis, 46, Blacksmith; #166 Margaret Francis, 48; #167 Ann Francis, 16; #168 Dan Francis, 12; #169 Margaret Francis, 9; #170 Benjn. Francis, 7.
4. Taken from a small bound book of family dates and data compiled and entered at the time of occurrence by Margaret Evans Francis, which is currently in the possession of Shannon Howells, Salt Lake City, Utah. The book is about 4 x 6 x 1 inches in size and was seen and handled by the compiler of this biography.
5. <http://ancestry.com>. 1841 Wales Census: Source Citation: Class: HO107; Piece 1375; Book: 31; Civil Parish: Llanwenog; County: Cardiganshire; Enumeration District: 3; Folio: 37; Page: 1; Line: 1; GSU roll: 464304.
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20. LDS Church Temple Index Card to the Endowment House Temple Records, for Ann Evans Francis: No. 165, Book B, page 8. See documents.
21. LDS Church Record of Birth, Salt Lake Fifteenth Ward Record of Members (through 1904): #026,675 (GS #6502, pt. 61). See documents.
22. 1860 United States Census: "15th Ward, Great Salt Lake City, Great Salt Lake County, Utah Territory, page No. 146; taken 7 July 1860." See documents.
23. 1870 United States Census: "15th Ward, Great Salt Lake City, Great Salt Lake County, Utah Territory, page No. 19; taken 19 July 1870." See documents.
24. *John Francis Howells (1866-1944): Autobiographical Sketch*, on this website.
25. *Funeral Service/Moyle*, found under *John Francis Howells (1866-1944), JFH Additional Family History*, on this website.
26. *Thomas Howells (1831-1883) Missionary Journal*, found under *TPH Additional Family History*, on this website.
27. Certificate of Death; 1874; State of Utah; Registered Number 6324-159; State Board of Health, Salt Lake City, Utah; death dated 30 May 1874, buried Salt Lake City Cemetery, Plat F/Block 3/Lot 1. Certified copy in possession of W. Bart. Christenson, Jr., Provo, Utah. See documents.

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