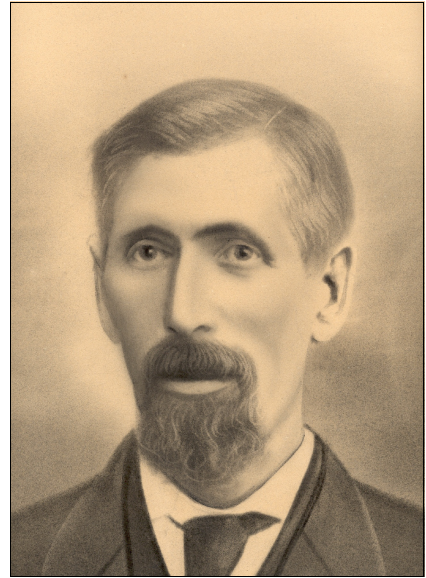


Chapter 5

John Richard Owen and Mary Leigh Walters¹

John Richard Owen was born at Braich-y-celin, Towyn, Merionethshire, Wales, on 10 October 1831 and christened 4 November 1831. He was the third child and second son of John Owen and Elizabeth Richard. Family information, disputed by some, shows that his father was born in Hopesay, Shropshire, England, about 1800. His mother was born in Towyn in 1803, the daughter of Evan Richard and Margaret Thomas. John and Elizabeth were married 9 January 1827 in Towyn and became the parents of four children. Richard was born at Trefrifawr (his maternal grandparent's farm) Towyn, and christened 20 May 1827; Elizabeth was born at Braich-y-celin, Towyn, and christened on 15 February 1829; John was born in 1831; and Evan was born at Tyno Farm, Towyn, on 15 September 1833. They were all christened in St. Cadfans Church in Towyn.



John R. Owen

Towyn, in earlier days and today spelled Tywyn, gets its name



St. Cadfans Church - Towyn

from the Welsh *Tywod*, meaning sand. It is located on the northwest coast of Wales on a sandy area of Cardigan Bay between the Dyfi (Dovey) and the Dysynni rivers. Its economy relied primarily on agriculture until the railroad was built in the 1860s when it became a popular tourist attraction as well, noted for its beach, trout and salmon fishing, and rural beauty. People enjoyed walking and hiking in the Dysynni Valley.

The family was struck with tragedy when the mother, Elizabeth, died

¹Written by Blaine H. Hall, a great grandson, based on original research in a variety of sources in a number of repositories. The name is correctly spelled Owen, but John and others often wrote it Owens.

on 18 August 1833, when her youngest child was only three years of age. The father died only three years later, leaving their four young children orphans. Both parents were buried in St. Cadfan's churchyard. Elizabeth's inscription appears on the headstone of her parents, but there is no marker for John Owen.

At the death of their father, John was a little less than eight years old, and Evan was just six. I have found no record of Richard in the 1841 Census, but he may have been taken in by other family members or, at age twelve, was old enough to be sent out to work or to become an apprentice. The 1841 Census shows Elizabeth, age ten, living in Aberdovey with her grandmother, Margaret Richards, and her Uncle Thomas, age eighteen. John and Evan were taken in and raised by a childless couple, Thomas and Catherine Edwards Hughes. How this was arranged I have been unable to determine, but Thomas and



Towyn Street and St. Cadfans Church



Catherine Edwards Hughes

Catherine had only been married three years when the Owen children were orphaned. They were devout converts to the LDS Church either before or after taking the two Owen children, but it was undoubtedly through their influence that the two boys were baptized. John was baptized 20 October 1844 by Abel Evans in Machynlleth, Montgomeryshire, Wales.

Thomas Hughes was a currier, a tanner of leather. Several years later, in early 1847 they took in two additional orphaned children, twins Mary and David Lloyd. David died, but Thomas and Catherine with Mary Lloyd, age 4, sailed to America on the *James Corner*, which arrived in New Orleans from Liverpool on 5 November 1851. Also appearing on the passenger list, but not grouped with the Hughes family, was John Owen, age 19. His occupation, too, is currier, a trade he had obviously learned from his foster father. So far as I can determine this

was not an LDS. chartered ship.

In St. Louis, Thomas operated a store until his death in 1854. Sometime after her husband's death, Catherine married William Fayle and took in two more orphaned children, Sarah and Evan Lewis in 1856.² The Fayles came to Utah in 1861 and settled in Wellsville. They died there and are buried in the Wellsville Cemetery.

Mary Leigh Walters was born on 10 July 1828, at Llanedy, Carmarthenshire, Wales, the daughter of Walter Walters, born 3 March 1795 at Llandybie, Carmarthenshire, Wales, and Sarah Rees Leigh born at Llangennech, Carmarthenshire, Wales, on 24 November 1806. They were married on 21 January 1828 at Llanedy and became the parents of eight children: Mary; Ann, born on 27 July 1830 and Sarah, born on 20 April 1833 at Llanedy; William, born on 22 March 1835, Margaret on 10 May 1837, Hannah on 6 April 1841, Daniel on 15 February 1843, and Elizabeth on 6 April 1846, all at Llanelly. These two towns were only a few miles apart, but Mary spent most of her growing up years in Llanelly.



Mary Walters Owen

Pigot's Company Trade Directory describes the place in 1835:

This town and its neighborhood has long been celebrated for its bituminous or binding coal [bituminous], stone-coal [anthracite], culm [anthracite coal dust] and fire-clay of which great quantities are shipped to various distant parts; and the abundance and excellence of these minerals has induced wealthy and spirited individuals to establish copper, iron, lead and firebrick works, upon most extensive scales; the copper smelting works of the Nevell and Copper Company as well as those of Messrs Glascott, employ a great number of hands. The several important establishments are the source from which the present flourishing trade of the port is derived; to accommodate which, four commodious docks have been made, furnished with convenient loading stages.

Her father, Walter Walters, was listed as a laborer in the 1851 census so he would have had little difficulty in finding good employment in one of the collieries or other industrial and manufacturing works. This was probably why he moved his family from Llanedy.

²These orphaned children lived in Wellsville and married into polygamy. Their stories in *Windows of Wellsville* gave important information about John and Evan Owen.

Mary's first step in preparation for an eternal association with John Owen was her baptism into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1849 by Elder John Williams. She apparently was the only member of her family to join. Her daughter, Martha Owen Hall, recorded her conversion story.

[After her baptism] the elders had her travel with them to help them sing as she was a fine singer. The elders would tell the saints at the conferences to be good to Mary Walters, for she had no home since she joined the Mormon Church. Her father, being so prejudiced against the Latter-day Saints, had turned her away from home. A lady friend, a neighbor of hers, was turned away from her home also. The two chummed together, slept out night after night in the hedge fence or anywhere they could be protected from the weather. When her father would go to his work in the morning, she would go home and get something to eat, as her mother was not quite as prejudiced as her father.

Mary's sister Ann had been very sick for six months and was not expected to survive. Mary asked her mother if she could have the elders come to administer to her. Her mother replied: "Oh, Mary, if you do your father will be so angry I don't know what he would do, as you know how he feels toward the Mormon elders now. But I am perfectly willing." Martha continues the story:

Brothers William Leigh and Walter Ridge administered to her. She sat up in bed, and they administered to her a second time and told her to dress herself, which she did. They administered to her a third time and promised her that she would walk and get strong. They asked her if she would like to walk with them to her uncle's and have dinner with them, as they were invited there for dinner. It was a distance of about two miles. She walked with them and her sister Mary to her uncles'. She felt good and enjoyed her dinner.

When her father came home at noon, he went to the bed as usual, which had curtains around it and pushed them back and said, "Ann." But no Ann was there. He said, "This is some of Mary's work. It was bad here last night, but it will be worse tonight." When he came home from work that night, Ann was singing and rocking by the grate. He was overcome to see her so well, because he knew it was through the administration of the Latter-day Saint elders that she was made whole. He sat back in his chair so overjoyed that he did not speak for some time. Raising his head, he said to his wife, "Sarah, we will all go and be baptized tomorrow," which they did. Mary was the means of bringing the whole family into the Church, and she was welcomed back into their home.

Determined to come to Zion, Mary left Liverpool on 2 February 1851 on the ship *Ellen Maria*, which arrived in New Orleans on 6 April. Her girl friend, who had the fare for

both of them, was coming to Zion with her, but when her friend failed to show up, she determined to come to Zion and stayed on board. To pay her passage she washed for the sailors and elders. Up the river from New Orleans in St. Louis, she found a good home and worked hard. There she married George Gaskett, a sailor, and had two children, George and Sarah Ann. While her husband was at sea, her parents and most of the family arrived about 10 April 1854 to take her with them to Utah. They stayed at her home in French Village, Illinois, a town across the river from St. Louis. Mary had given birth to Sarah Ann just a week before



Ellen Maria



St. Louis Riverfront - 1853

they arrived. Sorrowfully, about ten days after their arrival her little boy George died. They were camped on the Missouri River waiting for her husband to return so they could start across the plains, when they received the sad news that he had drowned at sea. This was a great shock to her, being left with a babe three-months old whom her husband had never seen. St. Louis, Missouri, even though it was in a state that had driven out the Mormons in 1838, played a pivotal role in the lives of Mormon immigrants from the Eastern U.S. and Europe. It is here that the threads of the life tapestry of John Owen and Mary Walters began to be woven. The city in 1850 had a population of 82,744, a portion of these Latter-day Saints. The newspaper *Missouri Republican* on 8 May 1851 ran an article which stated:

Although we have no Mormon Church [building] in St. Louis, and though these people have no other class or permanent possession of permanent interest, yet their numerical strength here is greater than may be imagined. Our city is the greatest recruiting point for Mormon emigrants from England and the Eastern States, and the former especially, whose funds generally become exhausted by the time they reach it, generally stop here for several months, and not infrequently remain among us for a year or two pending the resumption of their journey to Salt Lake. . . . There are at this time in St. Louis about three thousand English Mormons, nearly all of whom are masters of some trade.

In this city, the Church emigration agent met groups of Mormon immigrants as they

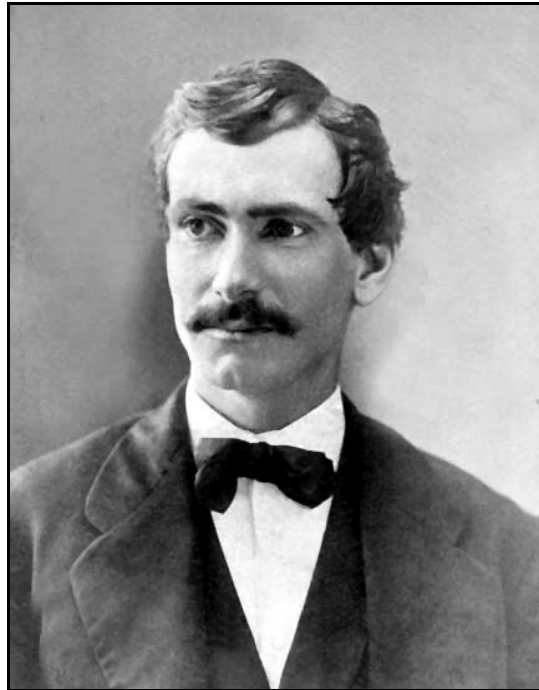
came up the river and helped them arrange lodging and transportation to pursue their journey to Zion. He also helped them find employment if their finances required their staying there to earn enough money to continue their journey west. By 1854 when the Walters family arrived, the Church had created a stake in the city.

John Owen arrived in St. Louis with the Hughes family in November 1851. By this time, Mary Walters was also there, though neither knew of the other. In April 1852, John's two brothers arrived in New Orleans on the ship *Ellen Maria*, the same ship that had brought Mary there a year earlier, in a Church-sponsored immigration company. Also with Richard was Sophia Thomas, probably his fiancé, and Evan, the younger brother, whose occupation was listed as miner who had come from Dowlais, Wales. This was a mining district near Merthyr Tidfyl, Glamorganshire, Wales. It appears the three brothers had been living and working separately in Wales.

Richard remained in St. Louis, married Sophia, and had a family of five children before he died of smallpox in April 1863. Only one of his children, Mary Ann, was alive in 1881, the others having died as children or young adults. Mary Ann married a widower with six children, Henry Thompson, in 1885, and he and Mary Ann had two sons, Richard LeRoy and Charles Owen. None of Richard's family were affiliated with the Church, although they knew Church members there, certainly the Hughes family. Richard LeRoy, who moved to Salt Lake City in 1915, married a Catholic, Agnes K. Ryan in the Cathedral of the Madeleine of which they were members. They had only one son, Joseph Charles, who also married a Catholic girl from Park City. He and his wife Margaret Clark are buried next to his parents in the Mt. Calvary Catholic Cemetery in Salt Lake City. They had no children. Charles Owen Thompson never married and died in St. Louis in 1969, bringing to an end Richard Owen's branch of the Owen family. Through my research for this history, I have been able to find the information needed and have completed the temple work for both the Owen and Thompson families.

The three reunited Owen brothers likely got jobs before John and Evan resumed their journey west in the summer of 1853. John was twenty and Evan eighteen and old enough to be on their own independent of their foster parents. Ten immigrant companies, including one made up of St. Louis Saints, were sent to Utah that summer, the last arriving about September 23. John and Evan must have arrived in September of that year.

They didn't remain in Salt Lake City long. On 8 October, Brigham Young called



Richard Owen

Isaac C. Haight, who had been the leader of the company of Saints aboard ship when Evan and Richard came to America and who also had been in charge of outfitting all the wagon companies that left for Utah that summer, was called by Brigham Young to move to Iron County and take charge of the iron works that had been started in 1852. Before he left, he also enlisted other immigrants to go south with him to bolster the work force at the iron works. Haight's journal records that the company from Salt Lake arrived in Parowan on November 3 and in Cedar City on November 5. He noted that the people there had just moved out of the old fort and were camped in wagons and tents until they had rebuilt their homes in the new one.³ John and Evan arrived in Cedar City in the Haight Company.

The iron works had been set up on the banks of Little Muddy Creek (now Coal



Coal Creek and Mouth of Coal Creek Canyon

Creek), on the present site of Cedar City near the mouth of Coal Creek Canyon. There they had water power from the creek, wood from the extensive cedar forests [actually Utah Juniper, *Juniperus Osteosperma*] in the area, and coal, rock, lumber, and pine from the canyon. The iron ore deposits were across the valley to the west at Iron Springs on Iron Mountain. The site selected for the iron works was at what is now 400 North and 100 East on the banks of the creek. A monument in a small park marks the spot. The first group of settlers

came from Parowan on 11 November 1851.

Starting an iron works far removed from civilization was a daunting task, but before John and Evan arrived in the fall of 1853, the original thirty-five iron workers had made good progress:

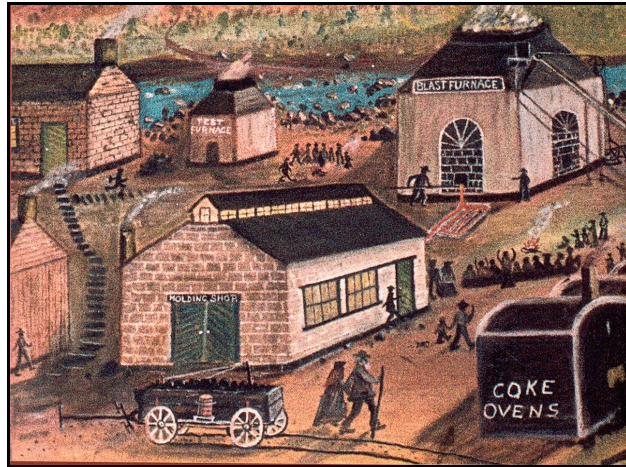
They built roads to the coal and to the iron mines, built a small furnace, a blacksmith's shop, pattern shop, molding shop, coke ovens, an office, a canal with flume and waterwheel, opened three coal mines, hauled 100 loads of coal to the works, burned a large supply of charcoal, hauled a large amount of iron ore and crushed it with sledge hammers, built a small fort with houses for their families and cared for their fields and livestock.⁴

This artist's depiction shows what the mill site may have looked like when completed.

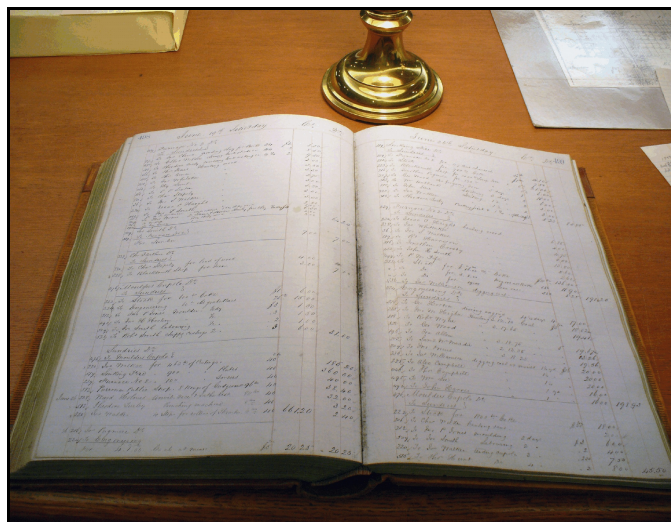
³ Isaac Haight Journal for 1853.

⁴ 1874—an Eventful Year,” *Our Pioneer Heritage*. Comp. Kate B. Carter. “20 Vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1975), Vol. 18, p. 12.

The earliest written record of John's presence in Cedar City is an entry in the county records. On 22 December 1853 John Owen paid the fees for Lot 8, Block 15 in Plat A and filed the papers on 21 February 1854.⁵ A portion of Plat A had been walled to make a fort, but John's lot was outside the walls. He and Evan would have resided in the fort at least for awhile. Plat A was condemned by Brigham Young because it was on the flood plain, so Plat B was created, south and east. John didn't purchase a lot there until 31 March 1856, when a lot was transferred to him from Job Rowland for \$10.⁶ Whether he ever built a house on this lot is unknown, although he may have done so because that year he married Mary Walters.



Drawing of Deseret Iron Works



Deseret Iron Company Account Book

For a much more complete history of the Iron Mission, readers are referred to the work, *A Trial Furnace: Southern Utah's Iron Mission* by Morris and Kathryn Shirts published in 2001, a must read for a full understanding of the lives of these early iron missionaries. The best record of John's work for the company are the Deseret Iron Work account books, where he was credited for work done and charged for what he withdrew. Cash was rarely used.

The first entry crediting him for work was made on 6 May for \$95.00 for five months work at \$19.00 per month and \$32.00 for one month's work at \$32.00 per month. The higher paid work would have been for something other than common labor.⁷ Since this entry was for six months work already performed, it confirms his arrival in Cedar City in November 1853.

⁵ Iron County Records Office, Deed Book A, p. 89.

⁶ Iron County Records Office, Deed Book B, p. 73.

⁷ Deseret Iron Company Untitled Account Book. (LDS Church Archives : "Cedar City General Store Account Book.")

John and Evan Owen did most of their work for the company as teamsters, hauling coal from the canyon mines at \$5.00 per ton, wood from closer by for \$1.00 per load, and rock from more accessible canyon locations for \$4.00 per ton. Charges at the store show that John received a yoke of oxen on 10 May 1854 for \$85.00, three yoke of cattle and a wagon for \$400.00 on 6 July 1854, and a wagon on 28 October 1856 for \$80.00. One of the busiest years for the teamsters was 1854, when they were rebuilding and preparing for operation of what came to be called the Noble Furnace, for its grand appearance and size. Altogether, the eleven teamsters, including John and Evan Owen, hauled 560 tons of rock and 115 tons of coal to the iron works. The coal was processed into coke in anticipation of large runs when the furnace was finished. The first furnace load was finally begun on 1 January 1855.



Maple Creek Canyon

The first coal mine from which John hauled the coal was about six miles up Coal Creek Canyon high up in Maple Canyon, the north fork of Coal Creek. The road to this mine was steep and would have likely required double teaming. Each trip would have taken a yoke of oxen a full day. Later, the Walker and Lunt mines were opened lower in Maple Canyon.

But they probably hauled most of their coal from a seam of higher quality coal up the right hand fork.. The rock and limestone quarries were closer and not so difficult to get to. The freight wagons were typical pioneer wagons used for crossing the plains, but without the canvas covers and with higher sides. They would also have had to have had brakes to safely negotiate the mountainous terrain. It was undoubtedly dangerous work.



Iron Mission Freight Wagon

A tally of the entries from the company account books from May 1854 to 26 June 1858 shows that John hauled 219 tons of coal, 164 tons of rock, and 14 tons of wood, for

a total of 295 tons, for which he was credited \$1,316.32. He also hauled some adobe bricks,

lumber, mill parts, etc. for various prices. In addition, he and Evan worked for Isaac C. Haight - the company president, stake president, and city mayor – in 1855 putting up fences around his city lot at \$4.50 per rod, making ditches and laying out trees, earning \$190.00 A balance sheet for the company books on 17 September 1854 showed that John had a credit balance of \$240.70½.

Life in Cedar City was difficult with few amenities to make life comfortable. The people are often described as impoverished, lacking sufficient food and clothing at times, particularly during the years of 1855 and 56 when drought and grasshoppers

took a heavy toll on their crops by making it impossible to irrigate their large fields. What water came down the creek was used to irrigate their smaller garden plots in the city itself. Mere survival also took many of them away from the iron works to perform other labors on the ditches, the fencing, fort building, and home building. Some of the settlers also became discouraged and left for other locations further decreasing the manpower to perform the iron making mission.

The iron workers were able to get some foodstuffs and other supplies from the company store/tithing office when it was available. The account books show that on 12 April 1854 John Owen had \$1.00 charged against his account for one bushel of potatoes, on 14 April, 25 cents for 15 eggs, and on 1 May \$2.10 for 30 pounds of flour. He also received 196 pounds of flour, six pounds of butter, and eight yards of domestic cloth in 1854. Most of the store stock was produced locally, but John did receive \$17.75 worth of goods shipped by the company from Salt Lake in December 1855. Since each settler was given a garden plot in or near the fort in addition to larger farming plots further out, John and Evan probably grew much of what they ate. But in 1856, the year of the bad drought, the account book shows that John had only received two bushels of turnips and ten pounds of pork from the store and in 1857 three quarts of molasses and several bushels of wheat. They also had some animals that could have provided meat because they were charged on the books for herding fees.

It appears that for about two and a half years, John and Evan lived together. But some time in 1856, John married Mary Walters. Records show that on 9 September 1856, John Owen was sealed to Mary Leigh Walters in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City.

Mary, according to her daughter Martha Owen Hall, and her baby Sarah Ann arrived in Utah on 30 September 1854 and settled with her father's family in Brigham City. He built a cabin out of woven willows daubed with mud. The door was a quilt and the window a piece of white cloth. Her younger brother Daniel Leigh Walters' history describes how as a



Right Fork of Coal Creek Canyon

ten-year-old boy in the spring of 1855 he drove five yoke of oxen to plow a field in Brigham City to put in a crop. The crop looked good until some time in August when the grasshoppers came and ate up the crops and every blade of grass. He goes on to describe the harsh conditions and their destitute state that winter:

The year of 1855 and 6 was the hardest in the history of this country since it was settled by white people. And how we lived through that winter would be hard to tell and hard to believe. We had to eat bran bread and anything we could get. The cattle was so poor that in instances they would freeze to death standing. We had no team. We had to carry wood on our backs, the wood that we burned that winter. I was the only boy. My brother William had stayed in the old country and the hard work fell to the girls as I was only eleven years old at that time. Along toward spring when the hills began to get bare in places we would sharpen a stick and go out on the bare spots and dig sea goes for breakfast and also dinner and then go to bed hungry.⁸

Sometime in 1856 while possibly still living in Brigham City, Mary, according to Martha Owen Hall, met a man named Morris who asked her if she would like a good husband. She responded, "Has he any flour?" Brother Morris answered, "Yes, and plenty of money." Who that Mr. Morris was, I don't know, but working with John in the Iron Mission was John Morris, Sr., and four of his sons, John, Hugh, Elias, and Richard, the latter a counselor in the Cedar City Stake presidency. A couple of them worked with John Owen as teamsters as well as working as masons in building, repairing, and maintaining the iron works buildings and furnaces.

During 1856 little work was done at the iron works, except for a short run with the trial furnace. The account book shows only four credits to John that year for income, two for hauling six tons of coal on June 24 and three tons of rock on August 23 and two for transfers from William Thomas on February 11 and Isaac Haight on August 2. However, he made twenty withdrawals during the year recorded every month except May and July. There are no entries between April 12 and June 24, except for a withdrawal of \$1.00 on June 2 for a subscription taken automatically for each worker. So there was time for John to have traveled to Brigham City to meet Mary during that spring. It is also possible that Mary came to Cedar City with Mr. Morris to meet John or even that she had come on her own to visit her Uncle Samuel Leigh and his family, who was also an iron worker at Cedar City. She could have met Mr. Morris and John Owen there and nine days after meeting him was married to him in Cedar City.

This latter possibility seems more likely based on information from Martha Hall, who said that her mother married John Owen only nine days after they met. Since their first child, John, was born 28 February 1857, the 9 September 1856 sealing in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City would have made him born three months prematurely. It is highly

⁸ *History of Daniel Leigh Walters*, p. 13. [Original in Special Collections, USU Library, Logan, Utah.]



Endowment House - Salt Lake City

unlikely that a baby that premature could have survived under the harsh pioneer conditions of the day. A more likely scenario is that John and Mary were married civilly in Cedar City before their sealing. A nine-month pregnancy, would require a marriage in late May or early June 1856. This was not unusual in those years when travel,

especially from the remote settlements, made a trip to the Endowment House sometimes impossible. Had they married civilly in Brigham City, why would they have passed through Salt Lake City and the Endowment House on their way south without being sealed sooner after their marriage? We can probably never know anything for certain about their meeting and marriage except that they were sealed on 9 September 1856.

It is likely John took his new bride to live in the fort rather than on his city lot, which was outside the fort wall. The household consisted of John, Mary, Sarah Ann, and probably Evan

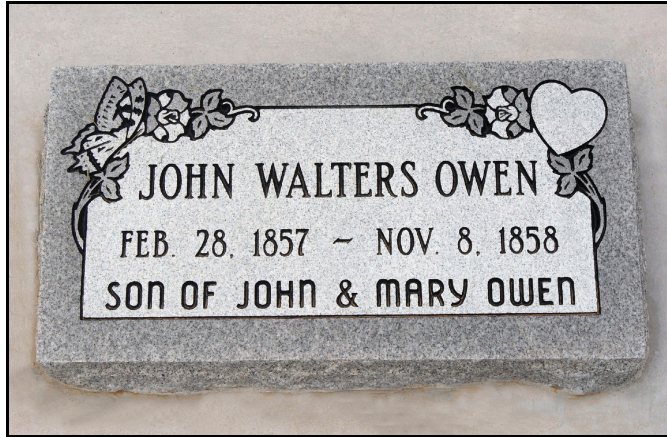
Owen since there is no reference to his being given a lot separate from his brother. On 28 February their first child was born and lived only until 8 November 1858, one day after Mary gave birth to their second child, Mary Jane Walters Owen. John Walters Owen was buried in the Cedar City Cemetery in plot A-US-11-52 a couple of rows west of the restored red rock wall.⁹ The site remained unmarked for nearly 150 years until I purchased a marker in March 2008. I felt the marker would provide a physical reminder of this pioneer family's sojourn and sacrifices in settling this area and in faithfully serving in the ill-fated Iron Mission.



Typical Cedar Fort Cabin

Few records exist of John's Church activities in Cedar City. But he was obviously a

⁹ Cedar City Cemetery, Sexton Records.



John Walters Owen Headstone - Cedar City

faithful member. Despite the rigors and difficulties in that pioneering effort to create an iron industry in Utah that resulted in failure, he endured in faith to the end when others became discouraged, disaffected and left. The company account books show that he also paid tithing to the tithing office account; he made the journey to Salt Lake City to be sealed in the Endowment House; he, along with others, took wagons from Cedar City north to bring the poor saints south during the Move

South ordered by Brigham Young at the approach of Johnston's army in 1858. The "Cedar Stake Journal,": commencing December 19, 1856, with Isaac C. Haight, President, and George K. Bowring, Clerk, has two references to John Owen. The first entry records:

Jan 4th 1857. At 11 o'clock a m Meeting Opened by singing, Prayer by Elder Saml D. White. Singing. Elder Peter M Fife Spoke of his belief in the reformation and of his desire to do right. Elder Jno Owens, Elder John H Willis and Elder Richard Palmer all spoke upon the same points. Elder Jonathan Pugmire Told some of his experience and read a portion out of the book of Mormon page 222 and made remarks upon the same. Elias Morris Spoke upon the principle of faithfulness and perseverance in our holy religion. Singing. Benediction by Elder James Whitaker. Geo. Bowering Clk.

At the close of a fast meeting on Thursday, 29 January 1857, Bishop Klingensmith "bore testimony to the truth of what had been said. And he said he wanted some one to take some wheat, corn &c to Bro N[athaniel V.] Jones at the Lead Mines. John Owens said he would take it." This would be no small undertaking. The lead mines were over 150 miles across the desert along the Old Spanish Trail 30 miles southwest of Las Vegas.

On 10 October 1857 with Johnston's Army approaching Utah, most able-bodied men were mustered into the Utah Territorial Militia (Nauvoo Legion). John Owen was listed as a private in the Fourth Platoon, Company D, Cedar City, 4th Battalion, Fort Harmony 10th Regiment. Evan Owen was in Company G.¹⁰ They were in Cedar City during the controversial Mountain Meadows Massacre of an Arkansas wagon train in which "over half of the Deseret Iron Company cadre were involved, including the leaders."¹¹ There is no record that the Owen brothers participated.

The spring of 1858 Brigham Young ordered all the settlers north of Utah County to

¹⁰ *A Trial Furnace*, pp. 495-96.

¹¹ *Utah History Encyclopedia* (Salt Lake City: U of U Press), p. 276.

abandon their homes and move south, John and about 25 other wagons went from Iron County to help transport south the poor saints who had no teams. With his help, the Walters



Cedar City Town Bell

family traveled about 300 miles in two weeks to Cedar City and spent about a year with John and Mary. During that summer, Daniel says he worked with John and Evan hauling coal for the iron works.¹²

For a number of reasons, the demoralizing and departure of many iron workers being only one, on 8 October 1858, Brigham Young wrote to President. Haight instructing him to close the iron works. The closure must have been a great disappointment to all those who had sacrificed so much for the cause, In the final analysis about \$150,000 had been spent on the iron

works, producing only 25 tons of pig iron¹³. From this they had molded, among other things, blast pipes, machine parts, tools, horseshoes, pots, flatirons, skillets, grates, andirons, stoves, nails and some bells for schools and churches, though not enough to make the enterprise viable commercially. The iron could only be used for casting because it was too hard and brittle to be malleable enough for wrought iron work or even for finishing the castings properly.

With the iron works closed, the Owen and Walters families remained in a much reduced Cedar City over the winter as did several others who moved to Wellsville with them. The population had been about 928 at its height, but by the mill's closure, only 376 remained.¹⁴ Daniel Walters notes in his history:

So we sold what we had and [went] back to Cache Valley. At that time [it] was much talked about. John [Owen] bought ten acres of land off of William Hamblin in Cache Valley. Hamblin had left the time of the move and intended to stay in the south. So we came into Cache Valley about the 10th April 1859. We put in a crop and had a good crop of wheat.¹⁵

William Hamblin, the brother of Jacob Hamblin, had been one of the original settlers of Wellsville, although his name is not included on the Pioneer Monument there. He became

¹²*History of Daniel Leigh Walters*, pp. 19-24.

¹³Leonard Arrington. *Great Basin Kingdom* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1958), p. 127.

¹⁴Dalton, Luella Adams. *History of Iron County Mission, Parowan, Utah* (Parowan Utah: s.n, 1973), p. 120.

¹⁵*History of Daniel Leigh Walters*, p. 24.

part of the Cotton Mission and a missionary to the Paiutes. Noted for his marksmanship and expertise in repairing gunlocks, he was given the nickname “Gunlock” by George A. Smith. The village of Gunlock near Santa Clara was named after him.¹⁶

In April of 1859 the former settlers who had gone south returned to their homes and farms in Cache Valley. About the same time the Owen and Walters families arrived along with several other families who had shared the Iron Mission experience with them. These new arrivals increased the families to over thirty, and the fort had to be enlarged with additional cabins. The original fort was two rows of houses facing each other on what is now 200 East Street from Main Street north to 200 North. The fort was enlarged on the north end by extending the pattern of two rows of cabins facing each other running west on 200 North, making an “L” shaped enclosure.



Wellsville Mountains in Spring

Life in the fort was difficult for those early settlers. Daniel Walter’s journal records:

We did not have anything much to live on Bread and a little Milk Sometimes a little Butter as Cows were not Plentiful . . . Nobody know what hardship People have to go through only those that have had it to do. We had to haul what wheat we had to Salt Lake and then sell it for fifty cents per bushel. Sugar we [bought for] 75¢ per pound. Calico was 50¢ per yard common nails 75¢ per pound, a Spade or Shovel \$5.00. These were the prices we had to pay for everything we needed and wheat at 50¢ pr bushel. We had nothing else to sell and not much of that.¹⁷

John Owen must have impressed the county leaders, because on 23 May, less than a month after he arrived, he was appointed assessor and tax collector for the county and given 10% of the taxes he collected for his work.¹⁸ Barely two years later, in 1861 at the call of Brigham Young for teams from Utah to go east to bring poor saints to Zion, John showed his support of the brethren and his concern for the poor saints who needed help in achieving the blessings he had found in Utah and volunteered as a teamster, along with two others.

A few years later when the city was incorporated by the Utah Territorial Legislature on 19 January 1866, John Owen was selected as a member of the first Wellsville City Council, which first met on 23 March 1866. He served three two-year terms before being

¹⁶*Windows of Wellsville*, p. 522

¹⁷*Windows of Wellsville*, p. 82

¹⁸*Ibid.*



Reid Parkinson's Painting of Maughan's Fort

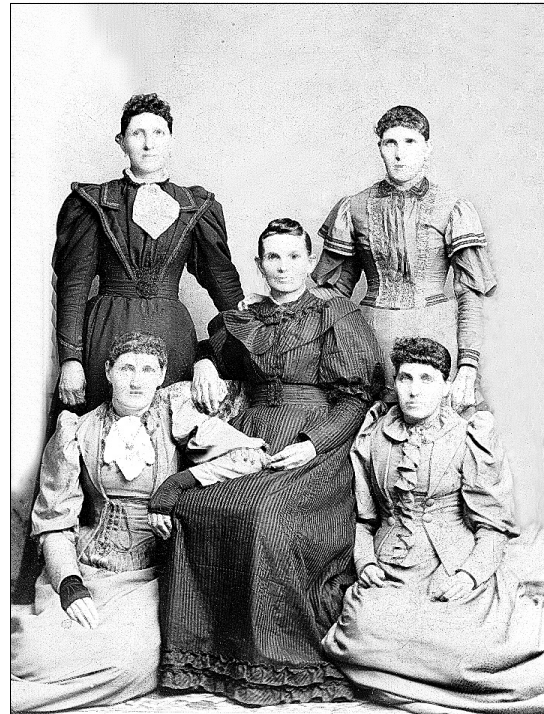
replaced by his brother Evan.

Maughan's Fort had received its new name when Apostles Orson Hyde and Ezra T. Benson, on assignment to set in order the Church organization and name the northern settlements, visited the city and with the support of Peter Maughan and the people named it Wellsville to honor Daniel H. Wells, second counselor to Brigham Young.

Cache Valley was a traditional hunting ground for the Shoshone Indians, who often stole horses and cattle and came into the valley communities demanding meat, sugar, flour, anything the settlers could spare.

To help protect themselves against hostile threats, the saints organized the Cache Valley Brigade of the Nauvoo Legion. John Owen was a teamster for the 1st Platoon of Company E, of the 2nd Infantry Regiment.

The militia members served as minutemen on call to help defend the various valley settlement against Indian depredations. The Shoshone were a threat to the settlers for many years until after January 1863 when Colonel Patrick O'Connor and his soldiers from Fort Douglas fought a battle, some call it a massacre, at the junction of Battle Creek and Bear River, about twelve miles north of Franklin, Idaho. They killed over 250 Indians including 90 women and children, virtually eliminating the Indian threat from the valley. With the Indian threat over, the settlers began to move out from their forts and occupy the newly surveyed city lots. Wellsville was surveyed on 28 October 1863 by James H. Martineau. Under the direction of Bishop William H. Maughan, by casting lots, John Owen was given Lot 1, Section 19, the northwest corner of Main and Center Streets, where he eventually built the large white two-story frame house, later owned by James W. and Martha O. Hall. With major additions by later owners, it is still in use today.



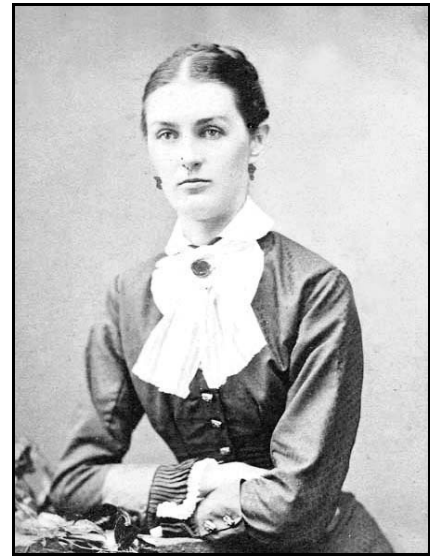
Front: Hannah, Sarah Ann, Elizabeth
Rear: Catherine, Martha
Owen Sisters - After 1889

While the Owen family occupied their log cabin in the fort, Mary gave birth to two daughters, Catherine Elizabeth, born 2 December 1860 and Margaret Walters, born 10 December 1862. They joined Sarah Ann, Mary's daughter from her marriage to George Gaskets, who was adopted by John and sealed to him; and Mary Jane, born on 7 November 1858 in Cedar City. During the next nine years, Mary gave birth about every two years to four more children: Hannah Maria, 15 January 1865; Martha Walters, 14 April 1867; Evan Walters, 6 August 1869; and Elizabeth Walters, 5 April 1871. Evan, only ten months old, died 12 June 1870. This must have been especially difficult for John and Mary because he was their only surviving son. Mary Jane, five days before her twentieth birthday, died on 2 November 1878 of tuberculosis, then called pulmonary consumption. Margaret, who had



Sophia Owen

married Robert James Kerr in 1885, died four years later in 1889 at age twenty seven. The remaining five girls all lived to marry and have children, leaving John and Mary a large posterity. Martha wrote in her history: "My parents were both industrious and worked hard to help build up the city and also to build themselves a comfortable home. It was sure a happy



Mary Ann Owen Thompson

home and a gathering place for the young people."

Before his death in 1886, John Owen and his brother Evan and some of their family members began a correspondence with his brother Richard's widow, Sophia, and her daughter Mary Ann in St. Louis, Missouri, Richard's only surviving child. She kept many of the letters sent from John and Evan and their children between 1870 and 1928. During the 1960s, Charles O. Thompson, Mary Ann's son, sent these letters with some pictures to Effie Hall, who was trying to get information for James O. Hall's genealogy. These are now in my possession. The letters show that both John and Evan were concerned about their brother's family and expressed a strong desire to continue a relationship that had begun in Wales and continued in St. Louis before John and Evan left for Utah. These separated families not only kept in touch - both apologizing for taking so long to answer letters - but were anxious to share "liknesses," their term for photographs.

Since most of the letters from John and Evan were signed by both brothers, it is difficult at times to know who was doing the writing, but two were definitely written by

John. The two families in Wellsville always wrote about going to visit Sophia, but neither John or Evan were able to do so before their deaths. However, many years later, Mary Ann came with her sons to visit her first cousins in Wellsville. Her son Richard had made his home in Salt Lake.

John Owen died at age 58 on 8 April 1886 in Wellsville “of hemorrhage of the lungs,” which usually meant tuberculosis, the same disease that claimed his daughter Mary Jane eight years earlier. He was buried in the Wellsville Cemetery on 11 April 1886, leaving Mary a widow again with three unmarried daughters. Martha says that after John’s death, her

mother never saw another well day. Mary died and joined her husband a little over two years later on 30 August 1888 in Rexburg, Idaho, where she had gone to visit her daughter Sarah Ann, whose husband, Francis C. Gunnell, had been called as a counselor to Pres. Thomas E. Ricks to help settle Rexburg. They are buried in the Wellsville Cemetery.



John Owen's Headstone



Mary Walter's Headstone

John Owen and Mary Walters may have begun married life after

only a nine-day acquaintance, but they were obviously able to forge a strong bond of love for one another and create a happy and loving marriage of thirty-two years.

Firm in the faith that brought him to America from his native Wales, John endured the arduous and difficult frontier life in pioneer Utah. First as an iron missionary in Cedar City and then as a farmer in Wellsville, he set an example of hard work, perseverance and leadership, earning him the confidence, respect, and love of the community in which he made his home. His obituary recorded that “his remains were followed to the cemetery by 50 well-loaded vehicles and 150 persons walking.”