

Evan and Mary Williams Biography

(Evan son of EDMUND WILLIAMS AND SARAH MORGAN)

Evan Williams was born 15 Nov 1827 at St. Brides Minor, Glamorganshire, Wales. He was the son of Edmund Williams and Sarah Morgan.[1] His early advantages for getting an education were limited; all that he gained with the exception of the meager knowledge acquired at Sunday School being the result of personal efforts.

Evan married at the age of 20. The girl of his choice was Mary Davies, daughter of Thomas Davies and Mary Jane Jacob. She was born 27 Apr 1827 at Aberdare in Glamorgan. [2] They were married according to the rites and ceremonies of the Independent Church, the witnesses being Jane Williams, Evan's sister, and Thomas Davies, Mary's father. Evan was already involved in his lifelong profession "that of a collier" while Mary was employed in household duties for a family in Aberdare. She was living with her father and stepmother at Davies' Row in Aberdare. Evan was living at the family home at Cwmbach near Aberdare.[3]

Despite his limited education, Evan made a name and a reputation for himself. He was well-learned in his tongue and stood prominent in Wales as an orator. He was one of the originators of the Welsh Industrial Cooperative Society, which at one time presented him with an excellent address, eulogizing him for his integrity and philanthropy. He was also secretary and treasurer of the Ancient Breton's Club for many years in his native land.[4]

Religiously, Evan was known as an infidel. He took some of his children with him each time he went to the infidel meetings which were held quite a ways from home. Sometimes these meetings were held in the open air on a rocking rock, which in Welsh they call "Girig Shiglow." The 1851 census shows the family, which is just beginning, as living at Llantrisant, as follows: [5]

- Evan Williams head md. 23 Coalminer Llangrallow
- Mary " wife md. 24 Merthyr Tydfil
- David " son 1 Eglwysilan
- Sarah Morgan lodger md. 25 Merthyr Tydfil
- John son 6
- Mary " dau 3
- Joseph " son 1 Eglwysilan

Evan and Mary became the parents of 12 children. The eldest was born in Pontypridd according to family tradition, but as seen in the above census, he was born at Eglwysilan, a small place just to the

northeast of Pontypridd. The next 5 children were born at Llantwit Vardre, a small village about 2 miles south of Pontypridd. The last 6 children were born at Cwmbach, a small village about a mile to the southeast of Aberdare. [6]

- David born 26 Aug 1849
- Mary Ann " 27 Aug 1851
- Thomas " 5 Nov 1853
- Edmund " 21 Mar 1856
- Catherine " 3 Apr 1858
- Sarah born 23 May 1860
- Catherine " 23 Apr 1862
- Richard " 3 Feb 1864
- Richard " 12 Nov 1865
- Jane " 19 Jul 1867
- Evan Edmund " 4 Apr 1869
- Gwilym " 16 Jun 1871

Raising a family in 19th century Wales was fraught with many trials, much sickness, and occasionally with death. The year 1861 was such a year in the Williams family. Family records have not handed down the details, but on 9 July 1861 3 year old Catherine died. She was followed on 17 Nov of the same year by her oldest brother David, age 12. They both probably died of cholera. Four years later during the cholera epidemic, Richard, age 1½, died on 17 Aug 1865.

The year 1869 saw Mary Ann willing to leave her family and unite with her sweetheart who was then in America. She made the proposal to her father, but he would not give his permission. In deference to her father's wishes, Mary Ann said she would stay until August when she turned 18 and would at that time leave with or without his blessing. Seeing that she was determined, Evan gave his permission and his blessing and Mary Ann left with the Perkins family from Liverpool on 2 June aboard the steamship "Minnesota".

During these years of raising the family and working in the coal mines, Evan increased in his knowledge of the work and was respected by his fellow workers and his supervisors. He had the nicknames of "The Timberman" (in mining, a man who erects wooden supports for the mines) and "The Saint." Thus in 1870 when the English government asked the mining corporations to pick some of their best men for a project in Russia, it was not surprising that Evan was one of those men.

Anticipating the loneliness he would feel during this journey, and wanting to have a remembrance with him at all times of his family, a picture was taken of the 7 children then at home and the parents. Sarah Williams records that the picture was taken in about Dec of 1870. Those in the picture are, from left to right, Sarah, Edmund, Thomas, Jane, father Evan, Richard, mother Mary, Evan and Catherine. (See picture section)

Evan and two or three others that had been chosen to go left in 1871, probably in the spring, and were in Russia for 6 months, opening coal mines for the Russian government and training Russian personnel in mining techniques. While Evan was in Russia he worked a good deal of the time in water-filled pits from which he contracted asthma of the very worst kind.

After returning home, Evan continued to work in the mines near Cwmbach, but his condition grew continually worse and finally he was forced into retirement. By 1876 his situation was such that he was unable to even lay in bed and had to sit in a chair, for days at a time fighting for his breath. After Evan lost his health, Mary ran a little bakery and a candy store. They already owned their own home, so the expenses of living were not prohibitive. In fact, on occasions the family would close up shop and spend awhile at the seaside, extending their travels sometimes for several days at a time.

It was about this time that Mary, probably from overwork and caring to the affairs of the family suffered some sickness or stroke and became partially invalid for the rest of her life. The effect this had on her physical appearance can be easily seen by comparing the pictures taken of her in 1870 and 1874 (see picture section). Evan's health continued to grow worse. The family doctor urged him to move to a drier climate, and so it was decided to immigrate to Utah. Many friends and relatives came to the old home at Cwmbach to see the family before it departed. They all bid farewell with a finality which death itself brings, for they would never see each other again in this life. The strain of breaking these ties, selling his property, leaving friends and all, left Evan extremely sick, but he began to improve almost immediately once the journey began.

Undoubtedly, both Mary and Evan wondered about their son, Thomas, who had been traveling in Australia for several years. It was not know when he would arrive home and so they left word with relatives and began their journey. The family arrived in Liverpool on the afternoon of 25 May 1878 and that evening they boarded the steamship "Nevada," an old vessel, and started for America. As it happened, when they stopped at Queenstown, Ireland, to take on more emigrants, they passed a ship on which Thomas was returning home. He followed them a year later. [7]

The following is taken from the church immigration records, showing the makeup of the family at the time of their departure. [8]

- Evan Williams Age 51
- Mary " 51
- Edman " 21
- Sarah " 15
- Catherine " 11 Destination – Salt Lake
- Richard " 9
- Jane " 8
- Evan " 6
- Gwilim " 4
- Heber Thomas 16 Destination - Logan

Cost of Fare: 106.9.3 pounds (Approx \$520)

"We experienced some very rough weather on the way over. During the voyage father improved considerably and his breathing was much easier"

"After 11 days on the water we arrived in the New York harbour (5 June) where we unloaded into a large building called Castle Garden. Our luggage was examined and our money exchanged for American money. The next day we crossed the Hudson to the Jersey side where we boarded the train headed for the west. We were on a slow immigrant train and father did not feel as well as when he landed in New York, as the movement of the train stirred up considerable dust which affected his breathing." [9]

The family was met in Salt Lake City by Benjamin Perkins and Mary Ann who had emigrated 10 years earlier. The reunion was the end of a deep void in the lives of Evan and his wife Mary.

"We stayed in Salt Lake about 2 weeks, a delay to give Benjamin Perkins time to get his teams and wagons prepared and going to the railroad terminus, a little railroad station about 15 miles north of Nephi called York. This was certainly a new experience; traveling in wagons over rough roads to Cedar City, camping wherever night overtook us, cooking our meals over sagebrush fires, and making beds on the bare ground. This was quite unusual and strange to people from foreign lands and everything was new and unfamiliar to us. We tried to make each day's drive so we could be in one of the settlements and everywhere we stopped at people were very good to us. No one could have asked for better treatment. We arrived in Cedar on the 1st day of July, 1878.

"Not long after our arrive in Cedar, father bought two city lots and we made preparations to build a home. During the summer we made adobes, traded for some lumber, and with the help of good neighbors, we built the house and moved into it by the beginning of the year 1879.

"During this time father had greatly improved in health and was able to do some work in building the house. We all appreciated this very much, especially mother who had surely been a good and faithful wife during his long siege of illness." [10]

The marriages of Evan and Mary's children are recorded as follows: It is not confirmed that the endowment date given as Catherine's marriage date is, in fact, her marriage date, but it was customary for a young woman to be endowed at the time of marriage, and as no other date has been found to disprove this assumption, it will be so recorded in this history. [11]

- Mary Ann md 4 Oct 1869 Benjamin Perkins
- Thomas md 24 Mar 1884 Annie Christine Anderson
- Edmund md 13 Feb 1887 Letitia Jane Lambeth
- Sarah md 28 Oct 1881 Benjamin Perkins
- Catherine md 8 Oct 1879 Harry Siedentoph

- Richard md 22 Apr 1891 Jessie Urie
- Jane md 19 Jan 1887 George Wm Muir Hunter
- Evan Edmund md 16 Dec 1889 Mary Jane Bullock
- Gwilym md (1) 19 Nov 1891 Sarah Bauer
 md (2) 29 Apr 1941 Rachel Paramore

"As time passed, Father became strong and healthy, and was able to perform any kind of manual labor such as work on roads for the County Road Supervisor. He also worked in the local coal mines in the winter time. During odd times he quarried rock for the foundation of a great many houses in Cedar City. It was decided by the County Commissioners to put up mile stones along the road between the Washington County line through Iron County to the Beaver County line. The rock was made of uniform size, about 2 ¼ feet long and a foot or more wide, standing about 2½ feet above the ground. With a friend and neighbor, Thomas Bladen, father obtained this contract. He helped with this job and it was quite an undertaking to quarry the rock, dress them to the size specified and distribute them along the road, setting them up and painting the mileage figures on them, covering a distance of 60 miles.

"Later Cedar needed a new church, which at the time as one ward. Father gave freely of his time and labor to the building of this church, donating most of his labor. This work consisted of quarrying rock which he did again with his friend Thomas Bladen. Then again another bigger job. The state wanted to build a branch normal school and they decided Cedar was the ideal location for it. Preparations were made to go into the mountains to get out the lumber. I well remember how faithfully they worked up in the deep snow nearly all winter in freezing weather, through deep and drifting snow. Some places the snow was 10 feet deep. They persevered and by spring they had nearly all the lumber out. It was necessary to do this in order to have the building ready for school the next September. One group with teams did the excavation, another group quarried the rock, while others hauled the rock, sand and gravel and the building was ready for school in due time.

"Father was always ready to donate his labor for any community undertaking, at the same time taking care of his little farm with the help of his boys. He was always working and could always find something to do." Everyone liked him; he was well thought of and he had no enemies. What more could be said of a man? And to think all this happened after being at death's door for 2 long years. We had thought many times that he would not live till the next day, then he would revive and his breathing would be easier for a day or two then a severe attack for two or 3 days." [12]

Previous to this was a music writer and composer, was a member of the board of the Cedar City Co-op Mercantile Association, and was its principle stockholder. "When the Mormon Elders visited in that district, they always made a call on ma and pa and they were always taken care of. He was always neat and tidy with everything. His place was always clean from weeds and he was a good gardener. His wood pile was always neat." [13] He planted an arbor of Isabella grapes that also made the lot very picturesque. [14]

One family tradition states that Evan and Mary joined the Mormon Church in Wales, that Evan became disaffected and finally left the church, although he never persecuted it as many did under similar circumstances. No record of this seems to exist, although our records show that Mary was baptized 15 January 1878. After coming to this country, Evan was always willing to donate to any call made of him and was always called "Brother Williams."

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It might be interesting to some in the family to know what the town of Cedar City was like at the turn of the century. The following description is made of it by one of Evan's grandchildren.

As a family we lived through the horse and buggy days, saw the electric lights to come to our town, the first electric propelled washing machine, the first car that came to Cedar, running water in the house, a bathroom, etc.

It is within my recollection of carrying water from the irrigation ditch for culinary purposes; some kept in barrels for settling, some boiled for drinking when typhoid fever was a rampant, especially in the summer. Each summer took its toll in deaths.

There was a butcher shop, the tonsorial parlour where you could get a shave and a haircut for \$.50. The barber also provided a tub and hot water for a bath for those who wished. The old co-op store, with a hitching post for the horses, a bench in front of the store for those who cared to loaf or visit with their friends. A familiar sight were the Indian bucks and squaws, squatting on the ground to sell their pinenuts.

We took eggs to the store to buy calico or some kerosene for the lamps. They were such friendly little stores with their variety of merchandise. The drugstore of that day knew nothing of hundreds of medicines dispersed today, only Sulphur drugs, penicillin and others. Mrs. Pryor administered her home remedies and saved many lives.

The post office was in connection with the Thomas Roche store. The boxes were on the outside wall, each box having a combination. Next to this building was the telephone office on the upper floor, Ken Urie's butcher shop, Harry Hunter's barber shop, the Co'op store, the Bank, Henry Houchen's real estate and bookkeeping office. Then the old sheep store run by Myron Higbee Sr. with Mama Parry as clerk. Next was Jos' Cosslett's nic-nac and music store, followed by Jethro the drugstore run by John Bladen with Clarence Goddarn as clerk. Then came the George Hunter Sr. Home, then the tithing office.

Across the street to the east was the George Wood hone, along with the old Higbee home, that included the telegraph office and several other places that I don't remember. Then followed the Knell block, Cedar's hotel, then a bakery. Next, came the tabernacle that was built by the pioneers of Cedar. The great fourth of July meetings were held here; everyone came to hear the patriotic speeches. There was a lot of singing. Drinks of lemonade were provided from the 50- gallon lemonade barrels. The old bell of the church called the people to church and other special occasions.

Now turning to Mary, the staunch little Welsh mother, who though invalid during the last twenty years of her life, yet carried on her duties and was faithful wife and member of the church. She was the mother of twelve children, eight of whom – five sons and three daughters – were still living at her death, as were forty-one grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Mary was 71 years 9 months and 19 days old at the time of her death on 15 February 1899. The funeral services were held in the Cedar City Tabernacle, with addresses by U.T. Jones, Bishop Corry, and Elder Richard Palmer. The Choir rendered appropriate airs which were especially for the bereft husband, who seemed to derive much solace therefrom. The building was well-filled with friends, anxious to manifest the respect in which they held the deceased. [15] Mary was buried 17 February at the Cedar City Cemetery. [16]

And so the patriarch remained alone to learn the remaining lessons that his probation was to teach him. Seven years of loneliness lay ahead of him; years filled with faith in the future, but lacking a firm conviction of the final result. Yet he had lived his life well, had been a Christian in the true sense, and so he looked forward to that reunion with his wife, firm knowledge of the mercy and love of God.

“At five o’clock Tuesday afternoon (19 June 1906), death came to relief of Mr. Evans Williams Senior, who for over a year has been an invalid suffering the effects of a stroke. For several days the deceased has been in a precarious condition, and the end was not unexpected by the family.”

“Funeral services were held... in the tabernacle. A large number of friends and relatives were in attendance, and the building was appropriately decorated for the occasion.” “The speakers were President U.T. Jones, Councilor Lehi Jones, Elder Richard Palmer, Bengt Neilson Sr., Thomas Bladen and William Leigh. All spoke warmly of the deceased emphasizing his uprightness of character. In the death of Mr. Williams has passed one of the historic characters of Cedar City. He was a typical Welshman, alert, industrious, talking English with a rich brogue, and possessed with the inborn love of music and poetry common to his race. For many years he has been a resident of Cedar City, and was well-liked as a man for genial disposition and sterling quality. He was a devoted husband and father, always ready to give aid to the distressed and to public enterprises, and was recognized as a substantial citizen generally... .”

“His wife died a few years since, and the remaining members of the family are Thomas, Edmond, Richard, Evan, William, Mrs. Jane Hunter, Mrs. Sarah Perkins and Mrs. Mary Ann Perkins. The two latter are residing in San Juan and unfortunately were unable to attend the funeral. Fifty living grandchild, fifteen great-grandchildren also survive.” [17]

In appearance, Evan was very much like his father Edmund Williams with some features of his sister Gwenllian. As you see by the photograph of him in his later years (see picture section) the beard which he had worn all his adult life turned a snowy white and his countenance was much like that of one of the Old Testament prophets.

Most histories stop at the death, but not so for Evan Williams and Mary. We have the following as told by Gladys Perkins Lyman, a granddaughter of this couple.

Sarah Williams Perkins “was very ill and we had taken her to the LDS Hospital in Salt Lake City, but she was very unhappy there and perhaps because of that was not doing well. It was decided that we would take her to our home and I would care for her. One morning as I entered her room she said, “Come, look at this beautiful sky. That is the color of Lehi’s robe.” “What do you mean, what do you know of Lehi’s robe?” I asked. She said “Didn’t I tell you I saw him? Just when or how it was I cannot tell. But some time ago I was thinking of my Father and wondering about him in the spirit world. All at once before my eyes was the tree of Life. In the tree stood Lehi. Next to his body was the whitest, softest-looking robe, and over that was a robe of the color of that sky. At the foot of the tree stood my Father and Mother, and Albert’s Father and Mother partaking of the fruit of the tree. And my heart was comforted, for I knew that my Father had accepted the Gospel.” [18]

The death dates of the children that have not yet been mention are as follows. [19]

- Mary Ann: 12 October 1912
- Thomas: 22 March 1922
- Edmund: 10 August 1929
- Sarah: 30 June 1943
- Catherine: 8 July 1882
- Richard: 29 September 1946
- Jane: 23 April 1950
- Evan Edmund: 10 June 1941
- Gwilym: 30 December 1943

[1] Cedar City, Utah LDS Ward Records (GS Ser. No. 025, 845) Early 1907, No. 262. Richard Williams, *A Sketch of Father's Life From the Time We Left Wales Until We Arrived in Cedar City, Utah* (GS Ser. No. 01187).

[2] Cedar City, Utah LDS Ward Records, No. 262. Obituary notice.

[3] Marriage record (No. MA045094) in possession of Lyman De Platt.

[4] *Deseret News*, June 23, 1906, p. 15 (Obituary notice).

[5] 1851 National Census of Great Britain.

[6] Family records. Cedar City, Utah LDS Ward Records, Nos. 264-275
Personal notes of Evan Williams in possession of Lyman De Platt.

[7] Family records. Williams, *op. cit.*

[8] Church Historian's Office, Emigration lists.

[9] Williams, *op. cit.*

[10] Notes of Sarah Williams Perkins.

[11] Same as footnote No. 6.

[12] Sarah Williams Perkins, *ibid.*

[13] *Ibid.*

[14] Williams, op. cit.

[15] Funeral Services of Mary Davis Williams

[16] Family Records

[17] Funeral Services of Evan Williams

[18] Gladys P. Lyman, *Spiritual Experiences of Sarah W. Perkins*

[19] Family records. Cedar City, Utah LDS Ward Records, Nos. 264-275

Personal notes of Evan Williams in possession of Lyman De Platt.

Immigrants:

Williams, Evan

Davis/Davies, Mary

Comments:

Source: De Platt, Lyman. The Ancestral Heritage of Benjamin Perkins and his two wives Mary Ann Williams & Sarah Williams. Part One. (n.p., n.d.) 26-33.