

# John Varley Adams Biography

## 1832 – 1919



John Varley Adams was born August 17, 1832, in Rounds, North Hampshire, England, the son of Thomas and Rebecca Varley Adams. He was the fifth son of eleven children. John was put to work early in life and learned the trade of shoe and boot making. He realized that education was very important and spent every spare moment studying.

At the age of 18, John joined the L.D.S. Church and was baptized June 25, 1850. On February 15, 1853, he left his native land for Salt Lake City, Utah, on the ship *Elvira Owens*. After a voyage of over six weeks, he arrived in New Orleans and continued on to Salt Lake City, reaching his destination on October 10, 1853. In a few days he was called to join the first rifle company of soldiers there under the command of Captain Hardy.

On April 9, 1857, John married Mary Ann Bailey, one of the first Handcart girls; and, in the fall of the same year, they were called to settle in Cedar City, Utah. Eleven children were born to this

marriage.

Adams was called by Brigham Young to go to Missouri to assist the L.D.S. emigrants across the plains, among which were his brother, Thomas, and family. He left Salt Lake City in April of 1863, acting as Captain and Chaplain of the Company. On the way home, in October, his brother died in Nephi and was buried at one of the settlements in Utah in a coffin made from the lumber from a wagon box which was given to John by a kind Saint, with a promise that the debt would be repaid. Several years went by, but John eventually kept his promise by making his creditor two pairs of beautifully cobbled shoes, which were appreciated more than money.

In the late 80's, John was called to Dixie (St. George) to help find suitable places for people to settle. He was a member of the first Cedar City Drama Club and organized the first literary class in the area. The Indians in this area were a constant worry, so a watch tower was built east of the bowery; and, when the drum beat from the tower, it struck terror into the hearts of all. Later, when a bell was made at the Iron Works, its peal rang out for danger, fire, funerals, parties, and all devotional services, and school. At the time of the grasshopper famine, Adams was able to save an acre of wheat, but it had to be dried by the fire before it could be threshed because, when the wheat was cut and shocked, it rained for six weeks.

John V. Adams was Mayor of Cedar City for one term and was a member of the City Council for several terms. He had charge of all donations for the poor for over twenty years. He was a school teacher as well as a cobbler.

During the time of the iron boom, he was called to go to Iron Springs to guard the water hole; and, later he helped start a settlement there. He died April 24, 1919.

(From *Iron County Record*, 11-7-74, "Tidbits of History", by William R. Palmer)

(From *Mayors of Cedar City*, p. 120)