

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF JOSEPH ELIJAH FORDHAM  
OF  
SALINA, SEVIER COUNTY, UTAH

This biography was written by my father's own hand.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I, Joseph Elijah Fordham, was born in Des Moines, Iowa, son of Elijah and Anna Bibbin Chaffee Fordham. When I was three years old I with my parents, was ferried across the Missouri River to Nauvoo, and came across the plains in Edwin Hunter's company. We landed in Salt Lake City on October 1, 1850.

I well remember while crossing the plains of finding an iron ring. I still have that ring in my possession.

I was baptized on my eighth birthday by Bishop Williams then of the Third Ward.

I well remember the crickets and grasshoppers and many other incidents of pioneer life.

I helped my father to plant some potatoes in a space of ground later owned by Caulkin and Hamilton C. Parks -- now owned and occupied by the Auerbach Furniture Company on State Street.

I went with my parents in 1862, who was called by President Brigham Young, to help settle St. George, Utah and in 1867, I went through the Blackhawk War.

Then in the year 1868, I went back over the plains with my father for more immigrants. I also helped to build the first railroad into Utah through Nebo Canyon, then on returning back to St. George. I met Mary Bleak, daughter of James C. and Elizabeth Moore Bleak, and later came by team to Salt Lake City and was married in the old Endowment House on May 10, 1871.

Then we returned to St. George and in 1875, I with my wife, was called to Pine Valley to help settle that part of the country.

In 1879 we then moved to Escalante, Utah, to go through more pioneer life, and got us a home and a farm, and when we began to get along so we would not have so many hardships, my wife died on April 1, 1886 leaving me with seven children to be both father and mother too, the youngest being only three weeks old.

Three years later I married Emma Graff in the St. George Temple. As the result of this marriage ten children were born.

I now have 12 living children, 5 dead, making seventeen children in all.

I am a carpenter by trade and a musician.

I took a great interest in making furniture and also making a great many caskets to lay away the dead in, always trimming them and painting them a beautiful black or covering them with black velvet.

In 1892 I moved my family to Salina, Sevier County, where I now reside building me a beautiful home.

I have always been a faithful Latter-day Saint always paying my tithing in full as well as many other donations. I have done all I could to build up the church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, being able to do so financially. I have always done all I could to help the poor and distressed, as well as the sick.

I have also done all I could in the musical line leading the choirs in the different organizations. I have played my violin to more than one thousand dances and parties as well as places of worship, and I do yet play my violin to dances and parties as well

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places of worship.

I have built five homes for my family. I have always been a good, pure, clean father.

I never was sick much, never touching tobacco of any kind nor intoxicating liquors to my lips; I never indulged in cards, nor ever went inside of a saloon in my life. If it was necessary to call a physician into my home and he would offer a little liquor I would tell him I forbid that filthy stuff being used in my home or on any of my family.

I always depended on the priesthood.

Now I am drawing a pension from the government for service, and I am well and hearty and enjoying life and I am able to go wherever I desire.

I do not owe anyone a cent, and I am at peace with the world so far as I know.

I was 79 years old on the 21st of last November.

This autobiography was written by my Father's own hand on February 26, 1895. God bless his name, I am proud of him!