

# HISTORY - HISTORY

HISTORY OR THE LIFE OF WILLIAM FOWLER

1863

PIONEER OF NOVEMBER 1863

PRESENTED BY GREAT-GRANDDAUGHTER LUCY PRATT MORRISON

SEGO LILY CAMP- BANNOCK COUNTY

POCATELLO, IDAHO.

DUP PREVIEW PAGE

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## THE LIFE OF WILLIAM FOWLER

William Fowler was born in Auburn, Australia, May 9, 1830. He was the 5th son of John Fowler and Bridget Neal.

His father, an officer in the English Army had his family with him in Australia where they lived until William was three years old. His father was then transferred to India where they remained for five years.

Following an honorable discharge from the army John Fowler then took his family back to England and they settled in Sheffield. Two years later John Fowler died and three years later his wife followed leaving William an orphan at the age of 14.

His parents had given him a good education and he was an accomplished musician. He played the violin, piano, piccolo, and harp. Also he composed and wrote music.

When the gospel was brought to England by the missionaries he received and accepted it and was baptized July 29, 1849 by J. V. Long. The same month he was appointed to do missionary work and served for 4 years.

He was married to Ellen Bradshaw in 1854 and they had three children, two girls and one boy.

He wrote many songs and poems that were used in meetings and entertainments.

He was a silversmith by trade and worked for one of the leading cutlery manufacturing companies in England, making knives and razors.

On learning that he was becoming a member of the church, his employer fearing he was a religious fanatic told him if he joined the church, he could no longer employ him, but would give him two weeks to reconsider.

William told his employer, who was very bitter toward the church, that his answer would still be the same and so by the end of two weeks he was discharged without recommendations.

He was without employment for several months because of this as his employer had made contact with other firms, not to employ him because he had joined the 'mormons'.

His faith never wavered even though he spent many weary hours looking for work. Finally they sold some of their fine furniture to buy food and clothing for his family.

At the end of one of his fruitless days waiting, searching for employment he came home exhausted and asked his wife, for pen and paper and he sat down and wrote the first two verses of "We Thank Thee O God For A Prophet." The first verse is one of thankfulness to God and the second verse one of consolation. A few months later he wrote the third verse, which is one of praise.

This song was received by the saints and became so popular it was brought back to America by the Elders and has now gained great popularity as it is sung at every General Conference of the Church.

He and his wife decided to come to zion, so they sold all of their possessions and booked passage on the ship "Amazon" which was the world's largest passenger ship. This was in June 1863. He took his brother Henry's family with his own, while his brother stayed to complete a mission in England.

There were 900 saints who came across the ocean and they landed in Castle Gardens, New York. William was captain of one of the wards.

The journey across the Eastern part of the United States to the Mississippi River was a very hard trip. The time was during the Civil War, the soldiers had the trains as they had to travel in cattle cars. This was very uncomfortable and slow.

They joined a wagon train at Florence, Nebraska and there were fifty wagons each drawn by two or more oxen. William herded those oxen at night and times when they couldn't travel. He suffered much

exposure and fatigue and contracted tuberculosis from which he never recovered.

They arrived in Salt Lake City, November 4, 1863 and stayed there the first winter, then they moved to Manti.

His trade didn't help him much here in America but his knowledge of music brought him a teaching position and his wife helped him in this in their own home.

He died at Manti in August 1865 at the age of 35 years.

The B. U. P. sponsored a movement to place a monument at his grave in Manti in honor of his famous song.

He was five feet six inches tall and had dark brown hair and brown eyes. He was of slight build.

His family has in their possession 2 razors that he made in England and his violin is displayed in the Utah State Capitol Building.

He was my Great-Grandfather, his daughter Harriet being the mother of my own mother Clara Allen Pratt.

Submitted by Lucy Pratt Morrison