

SAMUEL LEE

A biography compiled by Ruby Hansen Sorenson

Samuel Lee was born 14 April 1778 in Orange Co. North Carolina. He was the fourth son of William and Susannah Chaffings Lee.

Will Lee, father of Samuel Lee who was our emigrant ancestor, was born in Carrick-Fergus, Ireland, 15 August 1745. Carrick-Fergus and the Antrum seaport are located in Ireland, ten miles from Belfast. Although records were destroyed, tradition says that this family was non-conformist, and of middle English stock. When the Catholic Queen was on the English throne, non-conformists believers were greatly persecuted, and this part of the Lee family fled to northern Ireland which was strongly Protestant. William's brother Francis, married Jane Alexander, and all three came to America in 1765. They landed in Philadelphia and it was here that William met and married Susannah Chaffings. He served as school master for several years.

Tradition tells us that the family moved across the Delaware River to Camden, New Jersey, and worked in a glass factory for some time. They joined the Scotch-Irish companies and moved to Orange County, North Carolina, and it was here that William and Susannah's four sons were born: William, 1772, Francis 1774, Isaac, 1776, and Samuel 1778. It is believed that William and Francis died at birth, and Susannah died shortly after Samuel's birth. Not long after Susannah's death, William made a neighbor, Judge McElroy of Tennessee, guardian over his two small sons, Isaac and Samuel, assigning all his property and holdings in Orange County to cover the expenses of raising his children. William then joined in the Army of the Revolutionary War, and was wounded at the battle of Guilford County Court House in North Carolina, 1781. He was left for dead on the battle field but was later revived and taken to the home of Sarah McMullins, a widow, who nursed him back to life, and they were married in 1784.

Judge McElroy returned to Tennessee with the two small boys. When Samuel was just a lad, he ran away from the Judge and was befriended by the Quakers in North Carolina. When the Quaker group decided to move to the Ohio territory for freedom from persecution, they sent young Samuel ahead to build cabins on the land they had purchased. He built two cabins where most of the group lived the first winter. He didn't ever join the Quaker religion, so when he married Elizabeth Gilham, 14 July 1801, she was "dismissed" or excommunicated by the Quakers. They continued to live with

Quakers however, in Clinton Co. Ohio. There they were blessed with their first child, a daughter who they named Sarah in 1802. Second daughter Nancy was born here in 1804. Then the Quakers who still had holdings back in Orange County, North Carolina, sent Samuel and his wife back there to sell the holdings and bring back some documents and possessions. It was here that Alfred was born in September 1805. The family returned to Wilmington, Clinton Co. Ohio, where William was born in 1807, and died in infancy. Then Isaac was born in 1809, Francis in 1811, and Eli in 1816.

Samuel Lee gave his occupation as a Forester or woodsman, which meant that he acquired land either by purchase or homesteading, cleared the land of trees, prepared it for farming, built a cabin on it, and then sold it. That was how he made his living. He must have been away from home a lot, but Elizabeth stayed in Clinton Co. Ohio. Their oldest daughter Sarah, married James Abernathy, who was a Quaker.

Nancy the second girl married Wesley Robertson. It is not known just what went on between 1816 and 1832, but in 1832, Francis, Alfred and Eli join the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and with a group of converts, numbering about 100 people, moved in a body to Missouri, to be with the Prophet Joseph Smith. According to records the three sons, with their families were residing in the area of Liberty, Missouri, and it was the extermination order of Governor Boggs, that forced them to go to Payson, Illinois, and later to Nauvoo, Illinois. It was here, after much persecution and the martyrdom of the Prophet, that they decided to go west with the Saints.

Elizabeth Gilham Lee died in 1848 and Samuel was so grieved by her death that he decided to go West to California to the gold fields. He went to visit his sons in Illinois, and they persuaded him to go with them to Salt Lake. After much discussion and pressure he decided to do so. They were in the company of James Pace and Samuel Bennett. They arrived in Salt Lake City, 17 September 1859 and on the 20th of the same month, the Lee's were sent by Brigham Young to colonize at Tooele, Utah. This was their home for several years. Samuel was baptized in 1851. The three brothers were among the first called on a mission to settle Dixie Country in Southern Utah and then to Panaca, Nevada. They took Samuel with them, but he was restless and made his way back to Salt Lake City. He died there 14 April 1859. on the 16 th Ward, Salt Lake City Stake, cause of death, "old age and the bite of a dog." He is buried in the Salt Lake Cemetery, Plot D. Block 11, lot 9, in a potter's grave, and it makes one's heart ache that there was none of his family there to bury him.

It might be well to note that Samuel's three sons were prominent citizens of Tooele, Utah. Eli Lee was the first school teacher. Francis Lee was Sheriff for many years, and Alfred Lee was associate Probate Judge. In the first real governmental organization of

Tooele, and later when the first civil political rule in Tooele County was formed, on 7 February 1852, the Territorial Legislature appointed Alfred Lee as Probate Judge of Tooele County. Samuel Lee's other children, Sarah, Nancy and Isaac remained in the East. There is now a fine marker on his grave in the Tooele Cemetery.

He lived a long and restless life. His love of freedom and adventure has come down thru his descendants into the present generation.