

HISTORY OF JOHN NEWLAND MORRIS

Documenting This American Family (DocFam) Editor's Note: The history of John Newland Morris was written by his great granddaughter, Julia Beck, before 1964. Light reformatting has occurred in this DocFam version; however, text is copied verbatim from the original transcription. No corrections are made to spelling, punctuation or syntax, to preserve the original author's unique personality and voice.

John Newland Morris, and his wife Phoebe Devonald Morris were converted to the gospel, and joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Wales. He preached in every country in Wales. He could quote passages from the Bible by the hundreds (This information is from a grandson Ed Morris)

A progenitor thru the Mary Hannah Morris lineage, Mrs. Doris Dinwall, gives us this information after a trip to Wales, taken from the Llandysul, Parish records.

John Newland Morris was born on February 16, 1823, Llandysul, Cardiganshire, S. Wales, and christened on the 23rd of March 1823. His wife Phoebe (Phebe) Devonald (Devinold) was born November 10, 1830, Solva Whitchurch, Pembroke, S. Wales. They were married December 9, 1853, at Sharon Chapel, Lettersen, Pembrokeshire (Dist: Haverforwardwest).

On April 17, 1855, John, Phoebe, and their first child, a baby girl Isabella, sailed from Wales. They crossed the plains also in 1855, leaving from Philadelphia.

This little family settled in Brigham City, Utah. Ten more children were born while there, and three passed away in infancy.

John Morris was a shoe and boot maker. He made boots for Brigham Young who ordered them a dozen at a time.

About 1881 the family moved to Rockland, Onieda Co., Idaho.

On August 20, 1864, I brought Edith Walker home with me from the Pocatello nursing home where she lived at the time. As long as I can remember Edith has been like a member of our family, and knew much of their history. We really have enjoyed a great bond of love. I visited with her about my great grandfather, John Newland Morris, and my great grandmother, and this is what she told me.

“John and Phoebe lived up on the ‘bench’ at Rockland, Idaho. They were good friends of my grandparents, the Isaac Thorne, Srs. and to the Robinsons.

In their later years, Phoebe was almost helpless. She suffered from ‘Dropsy; and was terribly bloated from the water in her tissues. John had a big chair for Phoebe, and they lifted her from the bed to the chair. Aunt Vick (Victoria Newland Morris Houtz) felt badly because she wanted to care for her mother, but Uncle Henry (Henry Pauling Houtz Jr.) thought it would be too much for her. The Robinsons offered to care for her so it was in their home where Phoebe lived during her final years. She passed away in the Robinson home, and the funeral was held outside in their yard. My grandfather, Isaac Thorne, Sr. was the Bishop, and I went to the funeral with him. You know, Uncle never missed a funeral in Rockland.”

Again from a grandson, Melvin Morris, “Did you know, Julia, that Dad (John Devonald Morris) and his father, John Newland Morris, planted the first half bushel of wheat in this valley?”

Every time I have heard or read anything referring to that first Morris family in Rockland, I have Kept a record of it. The following is a paragraph of this nature written by another grandchild, Esther Morris.

“My Dad (Henry Devonald Morris) told me many tales of his young years at home. Grandfather, John Newland Morris, was a very dominant personality, and brooked no back-talk or foolishness from the children. When he said ‘silence’, none dared whisper. However, when he tried to insist my Dad learn shoemaking, he failed because Dad drove the nails in crooked on purpose, etc,”

To close this history, I want to relate what happened in Rockland on January 27, 1905. This was told to me by my mother, Phoebe Alvaretta Jacobs Johnson, who was also a granddaughter (mother, Mary Hannah Morris Johnson).

There was a big celebration in Rockland on that day. Mother didn’t know what the occasion was but the church was full of people, and the closing number on the program was “Poetry” by John Morris. (Mother said this was a common thing in Rockland because he was such a creative entertainer.)

He took his place at the center stage, and the congregation called out the subjects. Usually it would be a name, and if so, he would create a “verse” spontaneously, then another, and another. Sometimes places would be called out, or things – fruits and flowers. He could hold an audience’s attention in pleasure, and happiness for many hours. And this he did on January 27, 1905, when he was 82 years old. His mind was sharp, and full of wit and wisdom.

That night he passed away.