



Mormon Pioneers

In 1850 it was noted that the house of Mr. Thomas Dowding was used for worship by an unspecified denomination of Protestants in 1850¹ in Great Cheverell, Wiltshire, England. It finishes with the comment no more is known, at the time that would have been enough to satisfy that it was solely a different religion and no further interest probably given to that fact.

Research into Thomas Dowding shows that he married Hannah Naish also from Great Cheverell on 16th Sep 1848 and they had family born in Great Cheverell. Thomas himself had been christened in Little Cheverell by his parents David Dowding b.1794 and Elizabeth Smith b.1795.

Thomas and Hannah Dowding had given their allegiance to the Church of Latter-day Saints how they came across this new religion remains unknown except that in 1837 the Church² had sent its first missionaries to England creating the first Missionary in Preston, pre-dating the Salt Lake Branch by 10 years. By 1840 Britain had become the largest nation of converts who were currently emigrating to America at that time. They were dedicated as they were being converted to support the persecution and ridicule towards them at the time whilst searching to build a single and centralised Zion community away from the struggles they faced in an open community.

It is hard to imagine their commitment to the cause yet alone how they came across such a non-conformist group in a village so small and so contained as Great Cheverell. They would have raised their own money to pay for their journey and could have relied upon donations from the church itself. By seeing the place of birth of their children and as no immigration record has yet to be found, they made their journey from Great Cheverell from around 1864 and was completed in 1866.

The children of Thomas and Hannah Dowding are recorded in the table below with facts as known.

Given Name	Year Born	Where Born	Year of Death	Where	Notes
David	1851	Great Cheverell, Wiltshire	1925	Sandy, Salt Lake, Utah, USA	
Elizabeth	1852	Great Cheverell, Wiltshire	1906	Salt Lake City. Utah, USA	
William	1854	Great Cheverell, Wiltshire	1868	Utah, USA	Place of death assumed.
Nephi	1856	Great Cheverell,	1889	Sandy, Salt Lake,	

¹ [British History Online - Great Cheverell](#)

² [Church of the Latter-Day Saints - The Convert Immigrants](#)

		Wiltshire		Utah, USA	
Louise	1858	Great Cheverell, Wiltshire	1918	Sandy, Salt Lake, Utah, USA	
Mary	1860	Great Cheverell, Wiltshire	1946	San Diego, California, USA	
James	1863	Great Cheverell, Wiltshire			Death unconfirmed at time of writing
Martha	1866	Chimney Rock, Bayard, Nebraska, USA		Arizona, USA	Place of death assumed.
Sarah Jane	1868	West Jordan, Salt Lake, Utah, USA	1869	West Jordan, Salt Lake, Utah, USA	
Emma	1869	West Jordan, Salt Lake, Utah, USA	1869	West Jordan, Salt Lake, Utah, USA	

The fact that the journey was started with seven children is clear. William died in 1868 two years after arriving in the USA. His death at the time of writing has not been confirmed officially and is only assumed by [LDS] Member submitted family pedigrees.

Martha may have been conceived during the journey or indeed Hannah may have left already pregnant. Marta's birthplace, Chimney Rock is likely to have been a stopover. The road passing the area is known as The Pioneer Route. A campsite today states a small amount of history³.

From a very well written and now important piece of parish history can people now be traced and connections made. Many descendants from Great Cheverell are still alive and well in Utah and the rest of the UK from their roots in Utah after a long and arduous journey misunderstood by many but admired by the knowing.

Many are revered in the community as Mormon Pioneers.⁴ The information relating to Thomas and his family can be located at the LDS overland travel website.⁵ From there it can be seen they obtained organised passage with the William Henry Chipman Company in 1866 starting from Nebraska.⁶

If you have members of your family that were Mormon Pioneers and you take the many offers of DNA testing you will be surprised at the locations of your relatives if your link to a tree search. You will also find of course they spread out venturing further afield, which was their ultimate aim, after a initially forming a single community. Their history is normally well recorded as the religion requires some Family Research to be undertaken and some even take that up as a profession.

The moral of this piece of research is that it remains clear that even the most unassuming of villages have big stories to tell.

³ [Chimney Rock Pioneer Crossing](#)

⁴ [Mormon Page - Wikipedia](#)

⁵ [Mormon Overland Pioneer Travel](#)

⁶ [William Henry Chipman Company 1866](#)