

Reprinted from the April 2002 issue of *Wellesprings*, the newsletter of the Welles Family Association.

Daniel Hanmer Wells, Father of the Utah Branch of our Family

By Barbara Jean Mathews, CG

On October 27, 1914, there was a Welles family reunion in Salt Lake City, Utah. The program included many hymns, several historical pageants reenacted by descendants, and a stereoptican slide show of Welles sites including Wethersfield. This family reunion was held to mark the 100th anniversary of the birth of Daniel Hanmer Wells, a seventh generation descendant of Gov. Thomas Welles. A descendant in that branch of the family has provided us with a photocopy of the program for the reunion.

Daniel Hanmer Wells was himself a remarkable person. He is the progenitor of the Utah branch of our family. Daniel had been born on October 27, 1814, in Trenton, Oneida County, New York, the only son in a family of six children. His parents were Daniel and Catherine (Chapin) Wells. His father died in 1825 and his mother in 1848. Daniel died on March 24, 1891, in Salt Lake City. His line to Gov. Welles goes like this:

1. Gov. Thomas Welles and Alice Tomes
2. John Welles and Elizabeth Bourne
3. Capt. Robert Wells and Elizabeth Goodrich
4. Joseph Wells and Hannah Robbins
5. Joshua Wells and Experience Dickinson
6. Daniel Wells and Catherine Chapin
7. Daniel Hanmer Wells

When he was only 19 years old, Daniel's father's estate was divided among the six siblings. Daniel then traveled with his mother and younger sister from Trenton, New York, to buy land near Cleveland, Ohio. Land proved too expensive there, but the three stayed one winter while Daniel taught school. The next year, they moved on, finding land they could afford in Commerce, Hancock Co., Illinois, where they settled around 1837. This choice of residence proved fateful.

Daniel was thus living in the town of Commerce in 1838-9 when the Mormons living in Missouri were driven over the Mississippi River to the area around his hometown. The town of Commerce was renamed Nauvoo by the new Mormon residents. Sympathizing with the Mormons who were prosecuted by other local residents, Wells subdivided his land on the highland above the river, selling it to the newcomers. On one of his plots of land the Mormons built the Nauvoo Temple. Daniel is reported to have been supportive of the Mormons. However, he wasn't baptized until August 9, 1846, about eight years after his first encounter with the new religious movement; he was immersed in the Mississippi River for his baptism.

On June 16, 1847, the Nauvoo Temple was sold to the Catholic church and under the leadership of Daniel H. Wells, the last Mormons left Nauvoo. Conspicuous in her absence was Daniel's wife Eliza. In spite of Daniel's baptism into the Mormon faith the previous year, Eliza elected not to accompany him in the flight from Nauvoo. Daniel

didn't remain lonely for long, as on his arrival in Salt Lake, he married plural wives, two in 1849 and four in 1852.

In Utah Daniel became a leader in church affairs, being ordained an apostle and appointed second counselor to Brigham Young. He also served as the third Mayor of Salt Lake City from 1866-1873. He was arrested for polygamy in 1871 and was indicted that same year for murder stemming from the confessions of Bill Hickman but evidently not tried as he was again elected mayor the following year. He achieved some fame as Lt. General of the Nauvoo Legion (the Utah militia) during the Utah War.

Daniel married 1) 12 Mar 1837 in Commerce, Hancock Co., Illinois, Eliza Rebecca Robison,¹ daughter of Charles Robison and Jerusha Rebecca Kellogg, who was born 4 Jun 1820 in Cincinnati, Hamilton Co., Ohio, and died 2 Aug 1905 in Alma, Michigan; married 2) 15 Feb 1849 in Salt Lake City, Louisa Free, daughter of Absalom P. Free and Betsy Strait, who was born 9 Aug 1824 in St. Clair Co., Illinois, and died 18 Jun 1886 in Salt Lake City; Louisa had married on 19 Apr 1844, John Doyle Lee,² a bodyguard of Brigham Young and divorced him on 12 May 1849 [sic]; married 3) 20 Sep 1849 in Salt Lake City, Martha Givens Harris, daughter of McGee Harris and Mary A. Givens, who was born 27 Mar 1832 in Nashville, Tennessee, and died 12 May 1908 in Salt Lake City; married 4) 4 Apr 1852 in Salt Lake City, Lydia Ann Alley, daughter of George Alley and Mary Simons, who was born 1 Jan 1828 in Lynn, Massachusetts, and died 6 Aug 1909 in Salt Lake City; married 5) 18 Apr 1852 in Salt Lake City, Susan Hannah Alley, sister of his fourth wife, who was born 3 May 1830 in Lynn and died 5 May 1924 in Salt Lake City; married 6) 6 Aug 1852 in Salt Lake City, Hannah Corilla Free, sister of his second wife, who was born 9 Jun 1829 in St. Clair Co., Illinois, and died 6 Mar 1913 in Salt Lake City; married 7) 10 Oct 1852 Emmeline Blanche Woodward,³ daughter of David Woodward and Deiadama Hare, who was born 29 Feb 1828 in Petersham, Massachusetts, and died 25 Apr 1921 in Salt Lake City. Emmeline had previously been married in 1843 to James Harvey Harris who deserted her and in 1844 to Newel K. Whitney who died in 1850 after their migration to Salt Lake City.

¹ Eliza Rebecca (Robison) Wells did not accompany her husband to Utah or participate in his plural marriages. Following his flight from Nauvoo, she lived there for three years with her son, then moved to Minnesota when she became involved in an Episcopalian mission.

² John Doyle Lee was involved in the Mountain Meadows Massacre in southern Utah on 11 Sep 1857. The massacre was the largest killing of white civilian Americans prior to the bombing of the Alfred Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, on 19 Apr 1995. After the massacre, the Mormon hierarchy blamed the events on the Paiute tribe but many years later the true extent of the involvement of the white settlers became known. To this day, the truth of whether Brigham Young was involved is still widely debated. Only one person was ever convicted of participation in the killing of 125 pioneers: John Doyle Lee. He was executed on 23 Mar 1877 at the site in Mountain Meadows.

³ Emmeline Blanche (Woodward) (Harris) (Whitney) Wells was a suffragette who also lobbied for polygamy. She served as editor of the *Women's Exponent* from 1877 to 1914 and as President of the LDS women's Relief Society from 1910 to 1921. Utah did give women the vote, a condition that was rescinded in 1887. Fortunately, Emmeline lived until 1921, long enough to see the Nineteenth Amendment return the vote to all the women of America.



The picture on the left shows Eliza, the first wife of Daniel Hanmer Wells. The six plural wives are shown in one group photo and may well be, in the front row, from left to right, Lydia, Emmeline and Martha; and in the back row, Hannah, Louisa and Susan. The photo on the right is Daniel Hanmer Wells himself.