

**John Francis Ellis 1818--1903
(Malad, ID)**

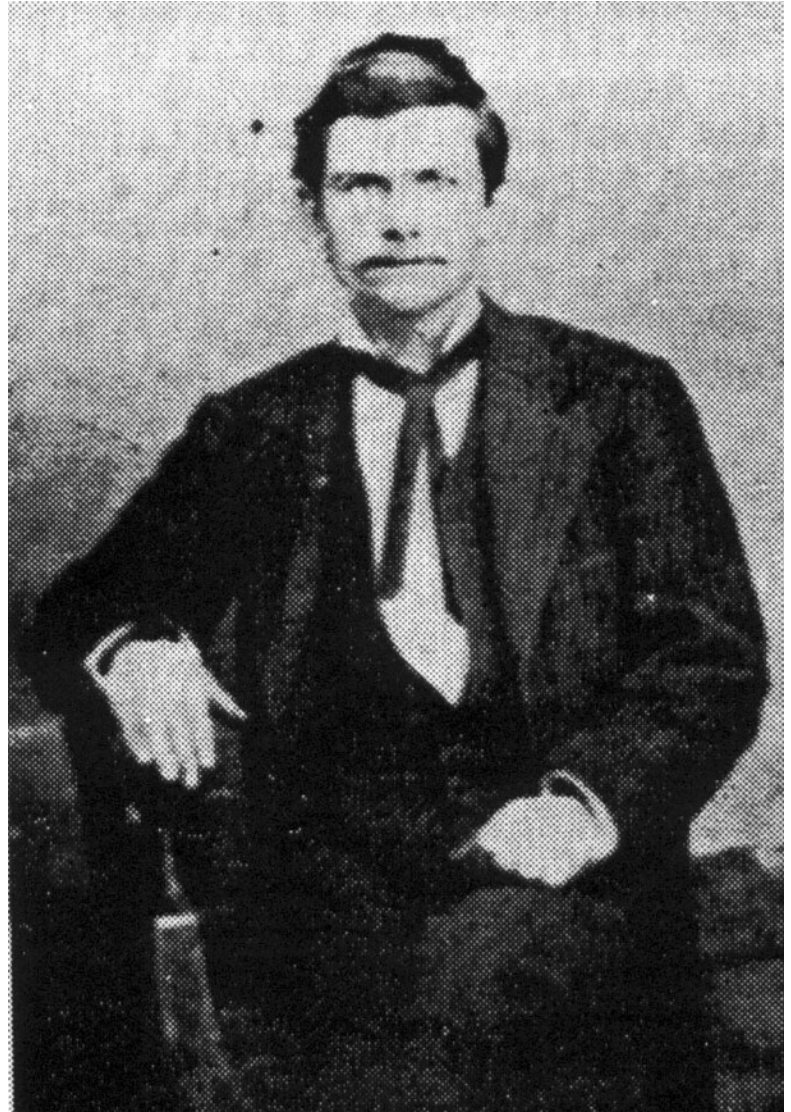
Biography

John Francis Ellis a carpenter and “joiner;” wagon teamster with the Hunt Co. in 1856 with John Galbraith; married Ann Daniels at about age 40, worked on the S.L. Temple and nearby Fort, lived at Smithfield, UT until early 1870s John Daniels, 1850, Margaret Ann, 1862, Hanna 1864, Ellen “Nell” 1866, Lewis 1868, Elias “Ted” 1870, Owen 1872, and Laura 1874; first 6 children born in Smithfield and/or SLC; children Ellen J. “Nell” and Owen born in Malad census 1880+1890;

John Francis Ellis was born July 19, 1818, in Llanbedr, Merionethshire, North Wales, the eldest child of **parents, John**

Ellis and Margaret Lewis, married April 29, 1815, according to the parish registry. His brothers were Owen, b. 1820, Elizabeth, 1822, Anne 1826, and another Owen in 1829. The middle three children did not live past childhood. John was a tenant farmer, listed in the Anglican Bishop's Transcripts. He lost his land to Tithe Commutations, but regained his holdings by 1840. By 1856 Margaret, age 59, was a widow living in Gwynfryn, a nearby hamlet. The only escape from the poverty imposed by English rule was emigration. John Francis left in 1856.

Llanbedr, which means "the sacred place" in Welsh, is slightly south of Harlech on Tremadoc Bay off Cardigan Bay where Wales reaches into the Irish sea with a little hook of land. It lies between Harlech and Barmouth, in one of the most beautiful parts of North Wales, close to the Rhinog Mountains. The community includes a multitude of isolated



farms and cottages in the wooded valleys of the Artro and Nantcol rivers, as well as the village with its ancient stone houses. Today the village of 500 depends primarily on farming, a local air field, and tourism.

St. Peter's, the village church, (Anglican, Church of Wales) dating from the 15th - 16th century, provides a welcome, compact place of worship and is in good repair. It was extensively re-furbished in 1883, but kept its essential character. About 20 people still worship there. The building, still lit by oil lamps, is also used for poetry readings and concerts. John Francis was baptized at the St. Peter's Church in Llanbedr, according to M. Eugene Ellis, who visited there in 1985. Gene also went to nearby 64 acre Tanarlla Farm, part of the Maesyneudd Estate, in turn part of the Ardudy district in Merioneth, North Wales, where John F. Ellis was born. Nearby is *acromlech*, a burial mound, complete with an altar stone and subterranean chambers.

The name, **Ellis, is a variant of Elisha**, which means "God is salvation." Surnames were not used in Wales until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Until then, the word *ap*, meaning *son of*, was used. John ap John would be John, the son of John. M. Eugene Ellis states that the Welsh assumed they were the children of Gomer ap Japheth ap Noah, from the time of the flood. The language of Wales is called Cymric or Cymraeg. They likely originated north of the Black Sea and were called Cimmerians. The Romans called them Cimbri, related to the word Cambrian

Commonly recorded simply as John Ellis, he sailed to America to join other converts to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints assembling in Utah, having been baptized in August, 1850, by Elias Morris. He left April 19, 1856, and arrived May 23, 1856, 34 days later, on the *S.S. Curling*, weight 1898 tons. It carried 707 people, 560 from Wales alone, under the supervision of Franklin D. Richards. Life for those aboard began at 5 a.m., when the men washed the deck. Everyone then had 6 a.m. duty, according to Dan Jones, a returning missionary who wrote to Daniel Daniels from aboard ship. Duties were rotated and shared, interspersed with religious meetings. Two babies were born and five died. Jones says that the biggest problem was too much food and too little exercise, which they treated with olive and castor oil. In another paragraph of his letter, he describes the ship being festooned with drying laundry. The women washed, and the men hung the clothing on the rigging. He also noted that the mothers did not properly

supervise the children and allow them to get enough fresh air, which made the children unhappy and ill. When the inspectors came aboard the ship in Boston, the passengers broke into three spontaneous cheers. Jones had earlier bet the captain that by journey's end the floors of the lower decks would be whiter than the captain's own cabin. The inspectors ruled in favor of the immigrants. John undoubtedly met his future wife, Ann Daniels, who accompanied her sister Hannah Daniels Job and niece, Mary, aboard the *Curling*. In fact, Gene Ellis relates that the only complaint was that all the pretty Welsh girls were going to Utah.

John Ellis' passage was sponsored by the Perpetual Immigration Fund of the LDS church, passage ticket 209. Those who participated were expected to work to repay their passage, so the fund would be able to sponsor other immigrants in turn. John F. Ellis was listed as a carpenter, specifically, a joiner. Heading to a frontier civilization where buildings were being erected on every front, he probably was not worried about finding work. The group traveled by railroad from Boston to Iowa City. Tickets were \$11 per adult, with children half-price. They arrived June 18.

Coming across the plains, they separated. Ann and Hannah's Third Handcart company, led by Edward Bunker, was outfitted with handcarts and underway by June 23. This handcart company made the best time of any that traveled that year, with the fewest casualties. They averaged 20 miles per day, while ox-drawn wagons could only do about 10. (One 73 year-old woman walked every step of the way.) Although Ann's name is not on this company's list (nor any other), it seems likely that Ann accompanied Hannah and Mary in this group. The Edward Bunker handcart company arrived in Salt Lake City Oct. 15, 1856. (There is an oral tradition that Ann stayed in Florence, Nebraska, to work as a cook before completing the journey, as recorded by Gene Ellis.) There is simply no record nor has she left an account of her journey.

John Ellis followed in the John A. Hunt/William B. Hodgett Wagon Companies, the last pioneer group to set out that fateful year. The Hunt/Hodgett wagon train followed the now infamous Martin and Willie Handcart Companies. They set out from Florence, Nebraska, Sept. 2, 1856. He was 38 years old. The Hunt/Hodgett train is acknowledged to have suffered nearly as severely from cold, snow, and starvation as the handcart companies they followed.

A sudden blizzard struck the companies Oct. 19. When the rescue effort from Salt Lake reached the Sweetwater River of Wyoming to rescue the handcart companies, the wagons of the Hunt/Hodgett train were needed to transport the survivors to Salt Lake City. Personal possessions were removed from the wagons and the livestock left behind at Devil's Gate. Daniel W. Jones (not the same as the Dan Jones previously mentioned) was called to lead 20 men detailed to guard these items through the winter. Jones was given his choice of men to keep about him on the Wyoming plains that winter. He chose two boys from the valley plus 17 of the hardest pioneers, among them, John Ellis. Wallace Stegner recounts the event in a story called "The Man Who Ate the Pack Saddle," a chapter in his book, *The Gathering of Zion*. They stayed the six-month winter in the cabins of a nearby trader fort with a few crackers for provisions and 75 head of starving cattle they were not to eat if they could help it. The scouts at Devil's Gate, as they are now called, were reduced at one point to eating boiled rawhide when friendly Indians gave them some buffalo. They stayed throughout the winter until the passage cleared in the spring. They spent their evenings reading Shakespeare, scriptures, and other pieces that were available in the supplies. They ate the cattle that died. Their salt ran out before Christmas. When it became apparent that the cattle would not survive, they slaughtered them to protect the meat from the wolves. When the meat was gone, they boiled the hides and ate them. They boiled moccasins. They boiled harness. An Indian helped them find some game. John Cooper, who settled in Millard County, said that about mid-March an old cow and calf came along. They ate for two weeks. Stegner relates that by early spring, a few couriers found them and shared their scant supplies. But again, before they were rescued, they were preparing to boil an old rawhide pack saddle, their last piece of leather, for nourishment.

And the supplies they were left to guard? Earlier, Jones backed down a passing gang of men bent on taking the freight they had guarded so desperately all winter. But by the time they all reached the Salt Lake valley, a few pioneers claimed their goods had been misappropriated. Brigham Young, hearing that Jones had been brought up on charges of theft, exonerated him and the others. In the course of the proceedings, Jones listed their expenses: forty head of dying cattle (others eaten by wolves), game on occasion, two weeks of thistle roots, one week of wild garlic bulbs, three days of minnows, a few fish, roasted prickly pear lobes, and several days of nothing but water. The scouts had paid

Indians and some mountain men for meat with calico, soap, candles, and coffee from the stored freight. That was all.

Two years later, John, now about 40, married Ann Daniels on Oct. 26, 1859, in Salt Lake City, according to the *Deseret News Marriage Index*. He lived in Farmington, Utah, at the time. Family tradition holds that he worked on the Salt Lake Temple (and also at the nearby fort). If so, this may have been how he repaid the Immigration Fund. They likely lived for a time in Salt Lake City then in Smithfield, Utah, until the early 1870s. They were sealed in the Endowment House on April 29, 1865. She, baptized in 1849, was endowed Apr. 29, 1865, and he Apr. 10, 1859. Their children were John Daniels, born 29 Sep 1860; Margaret Ann, born 10 Feb., 1862; Hannah Ann, born 29 Jan 1864; Ellen J. (Nell) born 7 Oct. 1866, Lewis W., born 7 Apr. 1868; Elias Daniels (Ted) born 27 May 1870; Owen F., born 10 Aug, 1872, and Laura E., born 4 Feb. 1874. Birthplace of the first six is given as either Smithfield or Salt Lake City. The two youngest, Owen and Laura, were born in Malad, Idaho. The family is not listed on any Utah census records for 1860 or 1870, to date. Although there is a family story that he entered into plural marriage, no record of a second family has been found at this writing.

One date has been established through the research of Bliss Brimley Hanson. John went to bishop's court once, a dispute over a heifer with Mary Ann Swanner on Feb. 22, 1870, in Smithfield, Utah. She had five witnesses and he could only produce two. He had to return the animal in question.

The couple and all eight children finally show up on the Malad, Oneida County, Idaho, census for 1880 and 1890. They likely moved about 1871-73 since Laura was born there in 1874. By 1880, John is 61, Ann 49, and the oldest son, John Daniels, is listed as a teamster. JD, as he is called, transported goods between the end of the railroad in Corinne, Utah, to Virginia City, Montana. Malad was on his route. Later, he and his brothers would homestead in Small, on the Medicine Lodge Creek, Clark County, Idaho.

John F. Ellis served one LDS mission back to Wales. He returned on April 9, 1884, on the steamship *Nevada* under John Henry Smith. His death is recorded on the Malad Ward Records for Dec. 9, 1903. Ann had preceded him in death, March 8, 1893. Ann's sister Hannah had been buried at Mink Creek near Smithfield. Thinking she was buried in

Smithfield, the family returned Ann's body to the Smithfield, Utah, cemetery. Once the error was discovered, they could not afford the additional expense for her to be laid beside her sister, Hannah, with whom she crossed an ocean and a continent. John's body was also returned to Smithfield for burial at Ann's side. Their daughter Ellen J. (Nell) and son, Owen, are buried beside them.

Sources

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Immigrants:

[Ellis, John Francis](#)

[Daniels, Ann](#)