

Morris Charles Phelps (Dwelling #655)



Morris Charles Phelps was born on December 20, 1805 in Northampton, Hampshire County, Massachusetts. He was the first child of Spencer and Mary Kneipp Phelps. In 1807, Morris' parents moved from Massachusetts to Painesville, Lake County, Ohio. A short time later, they moved near the town of Kirtland. Morris's parents were among the first to settle in the area.

When Morris was 10 years of age, his parents sent him to Mentor, Ohio for 15 months of school. When he was 19, he went to live with some relatives in Lawrence County, Illinois. Morris married Laura Clark, age 17, on April 12, 1825 in Lawrenceville, Lawrence County, Illinois. On March 20, 1827, their first daughter, Paulina, was born. Shortly after that event, the family moved to Peoria, Illinois where Morris started a sawmill and a farm. Their second child, Mary Ann, was born on August 6, 1829.

A generous offer was made on the farm and sawmill and Morris sold everything and moved the family to Chicago, Illinois. While Morris returned to Peoria to finish up some of his business, Laura wrote him a letter about a new book called the Book of Mormon, translated from gold plates. Missionaries were sent to them in Chicago and they baptized Morris and Laura.

Following their baptism, Morris sold his property and moved to Independence, Missouri. Their third child, Harriet Wight was born on April 7, 1832. She was born in Lyman Wight's tent. She was the first Mormon girl born in Independence, Missouri.

The family's next move was to Macedonia, Hamilton County, Illinois. It was about 20 miles east of Nauvoo. They lived there for about a year and a half. During this time period Laura became a midwife and travelled constantly, being of service where needed. After constant exertion and exposure because of her midwife travels, she became ill and never recovered. She died at the age of 34 on February 9, 1842, at Macedonia and was buried at Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois.

Morris married again on March 27, 1842 to Sarah Thompson, age 22, a schoolteacher, in Nauvoo. She was born March 20, 1820 at Pomfret, Chautauqua County, New York. A daughter, Laura Ann, was born February 16, 1843 in Macedonia, Hancock, Illinois and died in 1844. Morris moved his family into Nauvoo in 1843 so that he could work on the temple. Their second daughter, Sara Diantha, was born February 25, 1845 and she died on February 28, 1845 in Nauvoo.

As they were driven out of Nauvoo, Sarah's first son and third child, Hyrum Smith Phelps, was born in a wagon and was able to survive the bitter cold weather of that cruel night on the banks of the Mississippi River. They traversed Iowa and made it to the Missouri River. They wintered as members of the Winter Quarters Fifth Ward where Shadrack Roundy was the Bishop.

After leaving Winter Quarters, they moved to Big Pigeon. Martha Ann, Morris and Sarah's daughter, born on October 18, 1848 was probably born in Big Pigeon. On February 26, 1848, Morris, age 42, married Martha Barker Holmes Moulton, age 49, in polygamy. She was born in June 1798 in Londonderry, Rockingham County, New Hampshire. She had been previously been married to James Holmes, Sr. After Martha joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day

Saints, she married Henry Moulton. Sarah and Henry had one child, George Moulton. Henry died in Nauvoo in 1846.

The 1850 U. S. Census listed the family in dwelling #655 as: Morris, and LDS Clergyman, age 45; Sarah, age 30; Joseph, age 13; Hyrum, age 5; Martha, age 2; and George Moulton, age 15. George Moulton, Morris' stepson died in 1851 in Big Pigeon.

Morris and about 79 people, in an independent company, that left Kanesville on June 9, 1851 and arrived in the Salt Lake Valley between September 26 and October 1. The family settled in Alpine, Utah County, Utah Territory.

Brigham Young asked Morris to settle the Bear Lake area. Morris went to Montpelier, Bear Lake County, Idaho Territory. Their first log cabin had a dirt floor and a sod roof. Morris later built a two-story house, became the postmaster in 1869, and was made a Church Patriarch by Brigham Young in 1873. Sarah was the first Relief Society President in Montpelier, Idaho.

In 1875, Morris made a long journey to work on the St. George temple. While there, he came down with a fever and was never able to get over it. In May 1876, Morris returned from St. George. On May 22, 1876 at age 70 he died of pneumonia at Montpelier, Idaho.

Sarah left with her son Hyrum Smith Phelps and his family for Mesa, Arizona. She lived with Hyrum the rest of her life. At age 75, she died on January 31, 1896 at Mesa, Maricopa County, Arizona Territory.