

## PARRY, JOHN (1789 - 1868), stonemason and musician

**Name:** John Parry  
**Date of birth:** 1789  
**Date of death:** 1868  
**Spouse:** Mary Parry (née Williams)  
**Spouse:** Harriet Parry  
**Child:** Bernard Parry  
**Child:** Elizabeth Parry  
**Child:** Mary Parry  
**Child:** Sarah Parry  
**Child:** John Parry  
**Child:** William Parry  
**Child:** Caleb Parry  
**Child:** Joseph Hyrum Parry  
**Child:** Bernard Llewelyn Parry  
**Child:** Louisa Ellen Parry  
**Child:** Edwin Francis Parry  
**Child:** Henry Edward Parry  
**Parent:** Bernard Parry  
**Parent:** Elizabeth Parry (née Saunders)  
**Gender:** Male  
**Occupation:** stonemason and musician  
**Area of activity:** Business and Industry; Music  
**Author:** Jill Morgan

John Parry was born on 10 February 1789 in Newmarket in Flintshire, the son of Bernard Parry, farmer and singing master, and his wife Elizabeth (née Saunders). In the 1841 census John Parry and his wife Mary Williams Parry (1784-1849) were said to be living with their two youngest sons, William and Caleb, at Ochr-y-gop, to the northeast of the village. He was a stonemason by trade, employing several workmen. One of the buildings he worked on was Point of Ayr (Talacre) lighthouse at the entrance to the Dee estuary. He was well-known locally as a Welsh-language poet, and also had a reputation for a fine voice and played piano, harp and flute. His eldest son, Bernard, followed his father's occupation of stone mason, but was also a talented artist and musician and chose to work as a portrait painter and piano teacher. He died at Ruthin in 1841, aged just 32.

John Parry was raised in the Anglican Church, but by his late twenties he had become dissatisfied with its doctrine, and considering the Baptists to be closer to the 'apostolic gospel' as he referred to it, he became a Baptist preacher. When he encountered the Campbellites or Reformed Baptists he considered their doctrine to be even closer to the primitive church and joined with them, eventually establishing his own branch of that organisation. He first heard the Mormon missionaries preach when he was living and working in Birkenhead. After careful investigation (perhaps also influenced by the death of their daughter Sarah five weeks previously), John Parry and his wife Mary, together with their son John, were baptized into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints on 12 September 1846. A daughter and two other sons soon followed.

John and Mary Parry, with their two youngest sons William and Caleb, emigrated on the *Buena Vista* in 1849 as part of the 249-strong group of Welsh Mormon Saints under the leadership of [Captain Dan Jones](#). On arriving in New Orleans they took passage on a steamboat up the Mississippi and Missouri rivers to St Louis and thence to Council Bluffs Iowa. However, Mary Parry contracted cholera, died and was buried at Council Bluffs. John and his sons proceeded on the trek west to the Salt Lake Valley with about 80 of the Welsh emigrants, arriving in October of that year.

During the journey across the plains, John Parry organised the Welsh into an informal choir. When the company reached the Salt Lake Valley, he was asked by then President of the church, Brigham Young, to form a choir with his singing group as the core. The choir he directed became the nucleus of the now world-famous Mormon Tabernacle Choir. He continued to direct the choir until 1854.

John Parry settled in Salt Lake City with his second wife Harriet (also from Flintshire). They had two sons, Joseph Hyrum and Edwin. He worked as a stone mason for some years until his health began to fail when he was in his late sixties. He had helped to build the wall which enclosed the Salt Lake temple block, and was present at the laying of the cornerstones of the Temple in 1853. In 1854 he returned to north Wales as a missionary, preaching with his son John.

John Parry died on 13 January 1868 in Salt Lake City, Utah, and is buried there with his wife Harriet.

## Author

Jill Morgan

## Sources

Census 1841

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Ron Dennis, 'John Parry and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir', *Y Drych*, April 1985

[The Welsh Saints Project](#) website, viewed 2024-04-24

## Further reading

Wikipedia Article: [John Parry \(Mormon\)](#)

## Additional Links

Wikidata: [Q6251980](#)

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