

# EDWIN HALL AND HIS FAMILY

## AN ABBREVIATED HISTORY

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Edwin Hall was born on the 15th of November, 1813 at Waterbury, New Hampshire. He was the son of Jacob and Polly (Molly) Pritchard Hall and with his identical twin, Edward, were the ninth and tenth of a family of 11 children. Their father was a tailor and could not keep the children employed so at the age of 15 Edwin and Edward went west to seek their fortunes.

They stopped at Cleveland, Ohio and took jobs such as chopping cord wood, splitting rails and doing other odd jobs. They were inseparable and through their industry and economy by 1841 (age 28) they had acquired 1300 acres of land in Lee County, Iowa and had built a fine house.

About this time they wrote a letter (later held by Eleanor Hall of Springville and read by Caroline Hall) to their father in New Hampshire, urging him to join them. They told him the only problems there were a few indians and the Mormons.

Upon hearing of a farm for sale in Brown County, Illinois, they went to look it over. They purchased this land in December, 1841. On the farm was a tenant named Thomas Ballinger with a large family of girls. In 1842 the Hall Brothers returned this farm to collect the rent. Along with the rent the brothers also asked Mr. Ballinger for permission to wed two of his daughters. This permission was given and the courting took place. Edward has been quoted since as saying that he courted only long enough to "whittle the top rail of the fence we were sitting on in two."

The two Hall boys were identical, not only in looks but in their nature also. When they met the two Ballinger sisters they did so together and did their courting together. They were reportedly so much in love that it didn't really matter who married who. Family legend has the decision being made by drawing lots while all four were sitting on the top rail of the fence.

At any rate Edward married Nancy Eleanor Ballinger and Edwin married Sytha Jane Ballinger in a double wedding ceremony on the 2nd day of February, 1842. They returned to Iowa three days later. After this they all settled in Mahaska County, Iowa (the same county our grandmother, Eveline Fifield was born in). Their homes were located in the Skunk River bottoms.

Near this location Fort Des Moines was located. This was the first fort built in the vicinity. Between 1843 and 1845, Captain B.F. Allen ordered all the local Indians moved from the area to a reservation in Kansas. When this move was completed in 1845 the fort was abandoned. The Hall brothers preempted 360 acres of land from the abandoned military area, including part of the fort. Eighty acres of the land they appropriated comprises the present location of Des Moines at the junction of the Racoon and Des Moines rivers.

On an early official plat of the city of Fort Des Moines the portion north of Birds Run is named "Hall's Ridge." On an 1845 lithographed map in the Iowa State Historical library the dam across the Des Moines river is shown with Hall's Mill (a grist mill) on the west bank. Their farm took in capitol hill where the State Capitol is now located.

Their holdings were vast. They had dams across the river and the first grist mill in the locality. They also had a foundry, a brick yard and a large interest in a bank. There are legends of other industries and holdings. Edwin is reputed to have stopped a run on their bank by taking a large trunk full of gold coins and paying off all the demands on the bank.

The brothers together built a huge brick house on a bluff overlooking the river and the mill. The house had 48 rooms in it and the two young couples shared it. They also later had a home in the country.

Having heard of the wonders of California the brothers decided to once more move westward. Due to their vast holdings it was decided that one of them should remain in Iowa to take care of their interests while the other one went to California to expand their fortunes there.

In May of 1850 Edward and his family started west. Due to Indian troubles and other trail dangers they joined a train of Mormon emigrants for protection. They traveled with the David Evans Company which arrived in Salt Lake City on the 2nd of September, 1850.

They first stopped at Mill Creek, then went on to Provo and rented a room for the family. Mrs. Hall had become interested in the Mormon religion while on the trail and extracted a promise from her husband that he would remain in Utah for at least a year. With his enterprising spirit, he went south to Provo and took up a squatters claim on 40 acres of land on the north side of Spring Creek (near the present day Springville fish hatchery).

Family stories have rumored that he happened to be in Salt Lake when the Aaron Johnson wagon train arrived. He is supposed to have learned of their destination South of Provo (Springville)



and hurried to establish his claim before they arrived. His claim was established on the 12th day of September, 1850. This was six days before the original pioneers under the leadership of Aaron Johnson arrived to establish the city.

He built a cabin for his family and that fall he put up wild hay. During the winter he helped establish the first grist mill in Springville. A monument to the mill presently stands on the park grounds north of the Fish Hatchery with his name on it.

In the spring of 1851, Hall went on to California, leaving his family in Springville. On arrival in California he purchased 1000 acres of Spanish grant land where the city of San Bernadino now stands. The land comprised nearly all of the present business district and much adjoining land of that city.

Hall became violently ill while in California and asked some Mormon elders to administer to him. After what he considered was a "miraculous cure", he was convinced of the truthfulness of the Mormon religion. He then traded the 1000 acres of land for 100 Mexican ponies, hired some help and started for Springville with them. While on the trail he lost all but 16 of the ponies.

On arriving in Springville he settled at 2nd East and 2nd North and took up a 360 acre homestead along the east hills. He became a road builder, established a saw mill (in Hall's Fork of Hobbie Creek Canyon) and furnished red pine bark for the local tannery.

In 1854 he took an ox team and a heavy wagon and returned to Iowa (after four years) to settle his affairs with his brother Edwin. Very little is known of this meeting or the terms they came to, but Edwin remained in Iowa, apparently with control of the holdings there and Edward returned to Utah, apparently with control of the holdings here. The rift was evidently permanent and Edward brought back a huge load of fine furniture.

Accompanying Edward on this second trip to Utah were two sons of Edwin, Joseph Hall and George Washington Hall. George remained in Springville while Joseph later returned to Iowa.

Edwin was real embittered by the religious beliefs of his brother and it is believed this caused their first real separation after so many years of living in harmony and working together. Edwin turned to a belief in spiritualism and had a tower constructed on his home where he held seances and tried to communicate with the spirit world. He evidently had some success as it is told he could make hands appear and make the table rap.

Edwin died on the 6th day of September, 1864 at the age of 51 at Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa. His survivors were his wife Sytha Jane and five sons. His sixth son, Joseph had preceded his

death in 1855 after returning from Utah.

Sytha Jane Ballinger Hall, Edwin's wife, made two trips to Utah from Iowa. On the first trip she brought her sister's daughter, Mary Norley, to marry her son George. After this marriage she returned to Iowa and joined the Mormon Church. After the death of her husband she sometimes acted as a nurse during the Civil War. She also opened her huge home to the Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

At this time she desired very much to move to Utah. As a convert to the church she wanted to be with the other saints. Also she had two sisters and two brothers and a son living there. So she once again returned to Utah, this time with the remainder of her boys, to make her home there.

At this time the family consisted of Lucian, Edward Newton and Jasper. Two young daughters had died in Iowa and Joseph died a year after his father. George Washington Hall had remained in Utah.

In Springville, Sytha Jane built a large log cabin which the boys, who were used to much luxury promptly named Hall's Castle. This home was a constant open house where all were received and entertained. Dances and neighborhood parties were held there regularly. Mrs. Hall also acted as a mid-wife and nurse for the community.

The boys were well educated for the time. They never had much work to do and became very proficient athletes. They introduced the game of baseball to Springville. They were so anxious to play they would get a team of horses and scrape the snow away, then carry ashes to make the bases and running lines so they could play during the winter. They also loved to play cards and other games. When they became old enough to leave home they were each give \$3,000.00 to help them build their new homes.

Edward, Edwin's brother, tried very hard to convince Sytha Jane to marry him and live in polygamy at this time. She continually refused to do this however, and raised her boys alone until her death on the 13th of November, 1890 in Springville. She is buried in the Springville City Cemetery near 2nd West and 400 South in Springville.

After her death, Edward went to the St. George Temple and had Sytha Jane and her two spinster sisters sealed to him. This caused some bitter feelings between the two families and they were never close after that. The sealing's were later revoked.