

## *William Comish & Elizabeth Keig*

<http://www.isle-of-man.com/manxnotebook/mormon/wcomish.htm>

William Comish converted to Mormonism in 1841, his wife Elizabeth Keig some years later. He and eldest daughter emigrated in 1849, settling for a time in St. Louis before sending for the rest of the family to join them in 1851. They had nine children: Jane

William Keig,

Margaret,

Elizabeth,

John,

Ellen,

Robert Nephi and

Emma.

A son, Joseph, died in St. Louis July 17, 1852.

The following extracts give details of them and their children

William Comish, born May 20, 1805, at Kirkarbray [**Kirk Arbory**], Isle of Man, was the son of John Comish and Margaret Duggan; February 12, 1831, he was married to Elizabeth Keig of Kirkerise [**? Kirk Rushen**]. William joined the church in 1841, his wife in 1848 and soon began making preparations to leave for Utah. In 1849, William and his daughter Jane left the Isle of Man and arrived in St. Louis where they worked to earn money to send for the other members of the family. In 1851, the family arrived and they lived in St. Louis for four years preparing for the journey across the plains. The family joined the company led by Captain John Hindley and traveled with heavy covered wagons and ox teams, arriving in Salt Lake City September 3, 1855. They settled in Kaysville where they lived for five years and then, on April 13, 1860, moved to Franklin, Idaho, as some of the first settlers. William was a farmer, a strong active man who made a good living for his family and also took a prominent part in the activities of the town. He died December 16, 1877, and is buried in the Franklin City Cemetery.

Elizabeth Keig Comish, born December 22, 1805, at Kirkerise, Isle of Man, was the daughter of Patrick Keig and Jane Moore. She was married to William Comish of Kirkarbray at the age of 26 years. She did not become a member of the Church until 1848, as her mother had been very much opposed to her joining and even threatened to leave her nothing but to give all her worldly goods to her sister Nell. One day her mother asked her how she knew the teachings to be true. Elizabeth replied, pointing to the fireplace: You see the kettle on the hob? Well you know it's there? Her mother replied: Yes. Well, just as surely as you know that that kettle is on the hob, just so surely I know that Mormonism is true.

Her husbands absence in America was a great trial to her, as Elizabeth had a family of eight to care for. Mail was very slow and she suffered much anxiety when she did not hear from William. After about two years, she joined her husband and daughter.

Elizabeth's life was very busy; she spun yarn, knitted stockings until the last year of her life. She was very independent, generous and hospitable and when she would have callers she would often say: Stop and have a cup of tay (tea) and bread and butter. When her daughter, Ellen Comish Preece died, she took her three-day-old baby to raise and also took care of the other four children until their father was able to get a housekeeper. She was a believer in witches and fairies and in her native land would not walk across the green at midnight for fear of disturbing the fairies dancing.

Elizabeth was tall and slender. Her hair was curled in front and a tight bob was on the back of her head. Although she could not read, she loved to hear others read and while she listened, her knitting needles clicked busily away. She was medium height, was very neat in her dress and always wore a brooch. She died of old age and dropsy at the age of 79 years, on November 6, 1885, and is buried in Franklin, Idaho. -Mrs. Lulu G. Parry [p.526]

### **Children**

Jane Comish Ashton, daughter of William and Elizabeth Keig Comish, was born October 11, 1831. She became the second wife of Robert Ashton July 2, 1855. Their children were Robert Nephi, Joseph, Maria Elizabeth, John William, Hyrum, Emma., Elias, Brigham, Heber, Thomas Francis. They settled at Calls Fork, moved to Cache Valley in 1857 and were in "the Move" south in 1858. The family home was in Wellsville.

William Keig Comish, born April 15, 1833, at Castletown, was the son of William and Elizabeth Keig Comish. Anna Cook, daughter of Barnabus and Sarah Cook, born February 22, 1840, at Carowle, Lincoln, England was married to William Keig Comish. In 1860, they settled in Franklin, Idaho. Anna was a young woman of twenty years and having no children of her own and loving children and desiring their advancement, she offered to teach the children in her home. During the winter of 1860-61 she had twenty students. After living for a short time in Franklin, they moved back to Kaysville.

Margaret Comish Roueche, daughter of William and Elizabeth Keig Comish, was born September 28, 1834, in Douglas. After the family arrived in St. Louis, they prepared to emigrate to Utah. Margaret was married to Thomas Francis Roueche in St. Louis, August 24, 1854. The next spring on the 13th of May, Margaret and her husband Thomas began their long pilgrimage across the plains to be with the saints in Zion. After seven weeks of travel, as they made their way across Nebraska, a baby son was born, July 9, 1855, and was given the name of Joseph Platte. They arrived in the valley September 3rd and immediately went to Kaysville. In 1858, word came for the families to move south because of the threat of the United States Army invading the valley. The Roueche family literally assembled a wagon, then father, mother and young son went as far south as Salem, where Margaret and her son remained until the hostilities were over. Thomas rented a small farm on the west side of Kaysville close to the shores of the Great Salt Lake. Five years later, he purchased the farm where they spent most of their lives. Mary Rushforth Raymond Peart wrote: "My mother and Sister Roueche were Relief Society teachers.... the homes were far apart and many times they took the team and farm wagon

and drove to the homes in the distance. Sometimes the snow was so deep they could hardly make the trip; other times the roads were full of deep mud holes. Margaret gave a home to Elizabeth Bailey, whose father had passed away and whose family was in humble circumstances."

Margaret and Thomas were the parents of six children: Joseph Platte, Thomas Francis, Josephine Elizabeth, John Edward, Jacob and William Henry. When John completed his mission to the southern states he brought a small three-month-old [p.527] child home with him. Thomas and Margaret took this little girl and raised her as their own. When Margaret was fifty-nine years old she was injured in a fall and never fully recovered from the accident. She died June 23, 1893, and was buried in the Kaysville Cemetery. (Maud M. Odd)

John Comish, the fifth child of William and Elizabeth Keig Comish, was born December 1, 1838, at Douglas. After arriving in America, John worked on a boat on the Mississippi River. One morning he had a chance to leave St. Louis with a friend to travel to Utah, but as he pondered trying to decide whether to leave, the boat pulled out and left him. However, as he stood watching, the boat blew up and his friend was drowned. He came to Utah with his family. While living in Kaysville, John worked for Bishop Layton during the summer and herded cattle on the promontory during the winter months. In 1858, John was a Minuteman in the Horton D. Haight Company and went to the Salmon River to fight the Indians. He also took part in the Echo Canyon trouble, aiding Lot Smith. He served as an Indian scout on several occasions and made seven trips across the plains. In Florence, Nebraska, he met a seventeen-year-old English girl. He escorted her to the evening dances and prayer circles. She was Esther Elizabeth Stanford, the daughter of Thomas and Elizabeth Barnett Stanford, born in Southwick, Sussex, England, February 20, 1845. They were married November 22, 1862, in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City by Wilford Woodruff. John and Esther settled in the Franklin area where their first eight children were born. John, his father William, and his brother, Robert Nephi, were each given five acres of land in the area known as Whitney and thus became some of the early land-owners in Idaho. They loved company and everyone was treated well when they came to visit. During the polygamist raids, their home became a sanctuary for several people in flight for their lives. John loved his garden and fish ponds. It was stated in a newspaper article that his ponds contained between twelve and fifteen thousand fish. Esther died March 15, 1916, and John died May 14, 1922. Both are buried in the Franklin Cemetery. They were the parents of fifteen children. (Verla Comish)

Ellen (Eleanor) Comish Preece, the sixth child of William and Elizabeth Keig Comish, was born December 30, 1840, at Kercoming [? ]. When she was a small child she was badly burned on her cheek, which left a scar of which she was very sensitive. She would never have her picture taken. In the fall of 1862, Ellen's sweetheart, Mark Preece, returned from Florence, Nebraska, where he had gone as a volunteer driver to help bring in the poor emigrants. The bishop of Franklin handed him a recommend and said Go and get married. He and Ellen and Ellen's brother, John, [p.528] and Esther Stanford, went to Salt Lake City and were married in the Endowment House, November 22, 1862. Their first home was a two-room, dirt-roofed cabin with a fireplace in one end. By 1869, Mark had built a good two-room log house with a shingled roof. All of their furniture was

handmade, including a four-poster bedstead and a trundle bed. There was a cupboard, a table and chairs and a little stand used as a washstand. The chairs and bedstead were corded with rawhide. About the same time, Mark bought a new Charter Oak stove of which the family was very proud. One time when Ellen was scolding her daughter, Susie, Ellen's mother took the granddaughter's part and Ellen said: Hold thy tongue, mother, I am talking to my own child and her mother said: Yes, and I am talking to mine. In the fall of 1871, as Ellen came out of a store, she caught her foot on a wire which caused her to fall and she was severely injured. She was expecting her fifth child and on November 11, 1871, a lovely baby girl was born, which brought much joy to the family, but their happiness was short lived. By morning she was very ill. Her last words were Take good care of the children, Mark, and she was gone suddenly November 13th. Ellen's mother, Elizabeth, took the baby and others helped take care of the children until Mark could make arrangements for someone to stay with them. (Lulu Gregory Preece Parry)

Robert Nephi Comish, born December 13, 1842, at Douglas, was the seventh child of William and Elizabeth Keig Cornish. He, with his mother and brothers and sisters, sailed on the ship Ellen Marie to join his father and older sister Jane who had emigrated to America in 1849. This was a great adventure for the eleven-year-old Robert. In 1864, Robert Nephi drove an ox team back to Winter Quarters and assisted in moving poor emigrants to Utah. He was married to Emma Jane Howland, daughter of Henry and Martha D. Case Howland, January 21, 1865, in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City. They became the parents of five sons and four daughters. The family resided at Franklin where they were active in the community. He was a Minuteman and took part in the battle with the Indians at Battle Creek, Idaho. He also was active in dramatics and was known as the Star Actor in their home dramatic plays. In the spring of 1875, he moved his family to Cove, Cache County, Utah, where he engaged in farming and stock raising. He built a home there, surrounded by flowers, shrubs and trees. They were very hospitable and enjoyed entertaining their friends at their home. Robert Nephi died November 13, 1882, of quinsy at Cove and is buried in the Franklin Cemetery. (Harriet C. Larsen)