

William and Lydia Lathrop Draper

(An account found in *The Mormon Drapers*)¹

William Draper [Sr.] was the second son of Thomas and Lydia Rogers Draper, born September 9, 1774, Little Nine Partners Tract in Dutchess County, New York.² His life story up to the age of twenty is part of the story of his parents.

He married Lydia Lathrop at Rome, New York, December 24, 1794. She was born November 5, 1775 at Norwich, Connecticut, to Isaac and Lucy Lathrop. Through her father, Isaac, Lydia is a descendant of the noted Reverend John Lathrop of England.

The people of Connecticut began to migrate westward from the seaboard about the same time as did the people of Massachusetts. As they approached the borders of New York the migrants from Massachusetts tended to turn south towards the Connecticut Gore and Pennsylvania while the Connecticut migrants turned north from southern Connecticut and followed the Housatanic river until they often converged with the immigrants from Massachusetts. This explains how the Drapers and Lathrops came together.

William and Lydia married young. It was a happy marriage until they were separated by the death of Lydia as they fled from mobs at Nauvoo in February 1846. It is interesting to note that their first child was born September 9, 1795, which was the 21st anniversary of William's own birth, and that he died at Draper, Utah, December 24, 1854, which was the 50th anniversary of his marriage to Lydia.

It appears that William spent the first five years of his life in the Hudson river valley of New York after which his parents took him to live in the Wyoming valley of Pennsylvania where he lived until he was about fifteen years old. As the years rolled by it is likely that all memories he ever had of living in Dutchess County, New York had faded away, but he must have retained vivid recollections of his life in Pennsylvania until he died.

When William reached Rome, in the Mohawk valley of New York, he was entirely satisfied to make that his permanent home. This is shown by the fact that although his father, mother, and brothers and sisters all left Rome sometime after 1795 he elected to remain here. It was a very special circumstance that later made him a citizen of Canada.

In February, 1807, they received word that William's mother, Lydia Rogers Draper, was ill in Richmond Township, Frontenac County in Ontario (Upper Canada) and not expected to live. With the help of an Indian guide, who had brought them the word, they proceeded to Canada, notwithstanding [sic] the bitterness of the northern winter and the fact that they were expecting a new baby within a month or two. They traveled in a sleigh and crossed the eastern end of Lake Ontario on the ice. The Indian successfully guided them to their destination where

¹Draper, Delbert M. (1958). *The Mormon Drapers* (1st Edition). Salt Lake City, Utah: Wheelwright Lithographing Company. This account comprises chapter seven, pp.31-40.

²This claim is in error, according to the records of William Draper Sr.'s family, as quoted in his obituary in the *Deseret News* on February 22, 1855. According to those records, he was not born in New York at all, but on September 6, 1774, in Wyoming, Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania. In working on family histories of a number of people mentioned in *The Mormon Drapers*, I find that there are many errors in fact. For that reason, I have more confidence in the obituary information than in this claim. —Randal S. Chase, 22 October 2000

they found Lydia Rogers still alive. She died, however, within a few days after their arrival, at the age of 60.³

After this tragedy, they took stock of their situation. William's father, Thomas Draper, was now a widower of advanced age (68) and Lydia Lathrop. William's wife, was in no condition to make the rugged winter trip back to Rome. On the other hand, good land was still available to new settlers in Canada and all of William's brothers and sisters were living there, so they too, decided to make Canada their home.

No record remains of their doings from that time on until 1832, except the record of the birth of their remaining children. From that record it appears that the child expected when they left Rome was born at Richmond Township, April 24, 1807. It was a boy and they christened him "William" (Herein designated as William Jr.). They then had a daughter, Lydia, born October 7, 1809, at Newcastle. On February 27, 1812, a son, Zemira, was born to them at Crambe, Northumberland County, about 100 miles west of the Richmond district. The place of birth of their last two children is not given, but other records show that they were back in Frontenac County, Loughborough District, in 1832 where most of the Drapers were converted to Mormonism.

Considering the frontier character of this branch of the Draper family up to this time, it is quite natural that they failed to preserve family histories. What its younger members knew of their origin was largely legendary. Up to 1833 they had never lived in settled communities where good records were kept by either church or state. Thus both William Jr. and Zemira Draper, having heard more legends about the early life of the family in the Wyoming Valley of Pennsylvania, than in any other place, they naturally assumed that their earliest known ancestors were born there. This appears, now, not to be so.

After 1833, life, and records of life, took on a new meaning, especially with respect to religion. William Sr. always had a deep interest in religion as shown by the following statement in the Deseret News, under date of February 22, 1855:

"Being fond of the study of the scriptures and being convinced of the necessity of baptism for the remission of sins, he yielded to his convictions, and according to the best light he had then, was baptized a member of the Baptist Church... After being in full Baptist membership for 15 years (from about 1818) he began to be faulted for believing that the Scriptures were to be understood in accordance to their obvious purport and that the prophecies would be fulfilled and Israel gathered. He continued in this frame of mind until 1833 when he heard Brigham Young preach the Gospel, and was by him baptized, confirmed, and ordained into the lesser or Aaronic Priesthood in June in the Township of Loughborough and was ordained an elder under the same hands before the expiration of that month."⁴

It appears that his wife, Lydia, was not impressed by the new religion as was her husband. At any rate, it said that she did not join the Church until December 25, 1845.⁵ This

³"A Tribute to William Draper Sr.," a poetic narrative written by Artemesia Draper Anderson, granddaughter, on the occasion of the 110th anniversary of William Draper Sr.'s birth.

⁴William Draper Sr. obituary in the Deseret News on February 22, 1855.

⁵According to "Life of Zemira and Amy Terry Draper," by Estella Draper Magnus.

may be accounted for by the fact that she was the descendant of a distinguished Puritan preacher and was loathe to depart from her early teachings.

An extensive chart of her ancestry has been compiled, running back (on her father's side) eight generations, to Yorkshire, England, the ancestral home of the Drapers. Her first ancestor to come to America was the Rev. John Lathrop. He was born about 1584 in England and died about 1653 in Connecticut.

The following account of his life gives some idea of the strength of his convictions which, in all probability was transmitted to his descendants through many generations:

If one were to search among all the Prophet Joseph Smith's progenitors for the one who best typified his righteous zeal for true freedom and his dauntless devotion to truth perhaps no finer example could be found than his fifth great-grandfather, Rev. John Lathrop.

He was a young minister of the Church of England in which capacity he labored faithfully until his conscience rebelled against the doctrines he had to teach. He resigned his position...left the Church and in 1623 became Pastor of the First Independent Church of England.

Persecution raged against him and his little band of devoted followers. They were forced to meet secretly to escape the anger of the opposing bishop. One day as they met in worship they were discovered by agents of the bishop who suddenly invaded their meeting place, seized forty-two of their number and sent them in fetters to the old prison in Newgate. Finally, all but one, the Rev. Vin. Lathrop, were released on bail but he was deemed too dangerous to be set at liberty.

During these months of imprisonment a fatal sickness had seized upon his wife, and she was about to die. Upon his urgent entreaty the bishop consented for him to visit his' dying wife if he would promise to return. He reached home in time to give her his blessing and she passed away. True to his promise he returned to prison.

His orphaned children wandered about in helpless misery until someone suggested that they appeal to the Bishop at Lambeth. One can picture the mournful procession as they came before him and made known their sorrowful plight. The Bishop's heart was softened and touched with pity and he granted to John Lathrop his freedom if he would promise to leave the country and never return.

He gave the promise, and shortly thereafter, he, with his children and thirty-two members of his congregation, sailed to America, settling in New England where he was warmly welcomed and soon became one of the great Puritan fathers of his day. "No pastor was ever more loved by his people and none ever had a greater influence for good." He fearlessly proclaimed views far in advance of his time. Only in recent years has the name of his wife, who died in England, Hannah House, been discovered so that honor can be paid to her memory now.

Among the descendants of this famous Puritan preacher were Joseph Smith, Wilford Woodruff, Oliver Cowdery, and Fredrick G. Williams, all early leaders of the Mormon Church.

Lydia Lathrop was also a descendant of the Reverend John Lathrop, five generations down the line. Her roots were in Puritanism, but she ended her days as a Latter-day Saint. She was born about 6 months before the signing of the Declaration of Independence and was about 10 years old when the Revolutionary War ended but nothing has come down to us about her girlhood. After her marriage to William, her history was merged in his. It is interesting to note that William and Lydia were both born British subjects; that America declared its independence

soon after they were born, and that every state and territory in the Union was opened to settlement before William died. By a quirk of fate, they renewed and continued their British citizenship from 1807 to 1835, but a new religion brought them back to the United States where they narrowly escaped becoming citizens of Mexico, because the same religion forced them to flee from the settled portions of the United States into the deserts and mountains which then belonged to Mexico.

Lydia lost her life in the process, but William lived to die in Utah in 1854. The eighty years during which he lived was one of the most important periods in history. The American and French Revolutions for freedom and the War of 1812 were fought in his time. The battle was on for the emancipation of the minds of men. The daring Voltaire died in 1778 just as his revolutionary doctrines began to take effect. Thomas Paine came to America in 1774 and published his well known pamphlet, "Common Sense," in 1776, which was followed by the "Crisis" beginning with the words, "These are the times that try men's souls." Then in 1807 he published "The Age of Reason," being an investigation of "True and Fabulous Theology" which is said to have created the greatest stir of any book of its time.

The great Charles Darwin was born in 1809, and at the age of twenty-two he began his famous studies which culminated in a revolution in scientific, biological thinking.

With such great minds at work it is not strange that there was unusual religious ferment during the time that William and Lydia lived. Lydia seems to have been content with the theology handed down by her Puritan forebears, but William, being a student of theology, was impressed by the teachings of the Baptists who are credited with securing religious liberty, guaranteed by law in Rhode Island, which principle was later incorporated in the constitution of the United States.

After the Revolution, the Baptists made great headway in the new settlements of the west. William became a member in ISIS. when the Church was at its peak of popularity. The Baptists introduced the first Sunday School, rejected the doctrine of infant damnation for want of baptism, espoused the doctrines of baptism by immersion and formed the American Bible Society (1816) for wider circulation of the Scriptures.⁶ These were the doctrines and practices that attracted William into the Baptist fold, but by 1833, religious liberty had suffered great curtailment even in the Baptist Church. Its membership had broken into many contending groups from the old "Hard Shell Baptists" to the most liberal groups clinging to the doctrine of religious liberty. William was among the liberals, for which he "began to be faulted." He was ripe for a change when Brigham Young came to Canada preaching doctrines originally espoused by the Baptists and in addition proclaiming that the gospel, as preached by Jesus, had been restored to the earth through Joseph Smith. Accordingly, he and his whole family became members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In 1835 he emigrated to Kirtland, Ohio, and in 1836 went in company with John E. Pare on a mission to Canada where they baptized many persons and organised a large branch of the Church. He received his endowments in the Kirtland Temple, and in 1837 was ordained a High Priest under the hands of Don Carlos Smith and his Counselors.⁷

⁶Vol. 3, *The Encyclopedia Americana*, pp. 219, et. seq.

⁷*Deseret News*, February :2, 1855

Prior to his conversion, William and his forebears had been pioneer farmers in the United States and Canada. No record has been preserved of his land holdings, but it may be assumed that whatever land he had in Canada was sold when he moved to Kirtland. From the time he reached Kirtland, at the age of 61, he seems to have devoted most of his time to the Church until he died at the age of 80. He rendered his greatest service as a missionary until he reached Council Point in Iowa, and as a Patriarch thereafter. He was much older than the founders of the Church, and while he had all their seal, he probably lacked their energy and daring. He was 31 years older than Joseph Smith, and 29 years older than Brigham Young. He was a contemporary of the father of the Prophet and, like him, became a patriarch—a position well suited to the older men of great faith in the Church.

When the time came to evacuate Kirtland, he was 64 and his wife was 63 years old. They proceeded westward with the "Kirtland Camp" toward Missouri but lack of means and weariness caused him and part of his family to drop out to recuperate in Sangamon County, Illinois. The Saints who reached Missouri were so brutally treated that they returned to Illinois the next spring. William remained in Sangamon County until the fleeing Saints found refuge again in Illinois. (It is interesting to note that Sangamon County was the home of Abraham Lincoln. He was just emerging as a power in Illinois politics in 1838, and in 1846, when William and Lydia were driven from Nauvoo, Lincoln was elected to the Congress of the United States.)

For want of reliable records it is impossible to follow the movements of all the Drapers from the time they left Kirtland until they reached Utah. It is known that Zemira, the son of William and Lydia, was with them in Sangamon County, and it is possible that Phoebe, their daughter, and her children, also remained with them. The best evidence of this is that when the Kirtland Camp was organized the adult males were required to list the number of people in their respective families. Zemira, who was then unmarried, listed six.¹ This can be explained only on the theory that he made himself responsible for the family of his eldest sister, Phoebe, who was a widow with a family of young children. That she admired her "brother" is shown by the fact that she named one of her sons "Zemira." On the other hand, there is some evidence from which it may be inferred that she was with her brother William Jr. while the Saints were in Missouri. That assumption is made in the story of her life appearing in the next chapter.

In the preceding chapter [chapter six of The Mormon Drapers], it is...concluded that Thomas Jr., brother of William Jr., died before 1838, but there is evidence that he was in Missouri in 1839. It appears that a William Draper and a Thomas Draper both made claims to the government in 1839 for property destroyed by mobs in Missouri in 1838.⁸

However that may be, they all suffered privation, hardship, and some of them sickness and death, from the time they left Kirtland in 1838 until they found a haven of sorts in Utah and California after 1848.

When the dispossessed Saints returned from Missouri to Illinois, most them, after crossing the Mississippi River, went northward to Commerce (later Nauvoo), but William Jr. went south and settled near Pleasantville in the wide Mississippi River bottom. It is a place of beauty and great fertility.

⁸*Life of Zemira by Estella Draper Magnus, op. cit.*

It appears that William Jr. was able to get word to his father, mother, brothers, and sisters concerning the apparent opportunities at Pleasantville, because they soon joined him there and in due time they built a thriving village, which they appear to have named Pleasant Vale. That is the way the place is referred to in the autobiography of William Jr. and also in the obituary of William Sr., but it is possible that -the present Pleasantville in Pike County, Illinois, and Pleasant Vale are one and the same place. The surrounding country is so lush with corn and fruit and timber that upon viewing it one can hardly suppress regrets that they ever had to leave there. They were fast becoming economically independent, and they enjoyed the full measure of religious liberty. Their non-Mormon neighbors were impressed with their industry, character, and religion, so much so, that before the summer was over large numbers became converts to Mormonism.'

In the meantime, hostility against the leaders of the Church began to develop at Nauvoo, in Hancock County. By 1842 mob aggression became so great that Joseph Smith and his counsellors thought it wise to call all the Saints into Hancock County for mutual protection. This was sad news for the Saints at Pleasant Vale, but most of them responded to the call. Ebenezer Brown and his wife, Phoebe Draper, went directly to Nauvoo, but the rest of the Drapers lodged at Green Plain in Hancock County, between Carthage and Nauvoo. There they had two more good years enjoying the goodwill of the nonMormons in the neighborhood; but tensions built up at Nauvoo to an alarming extent. Hostility against the leaders of the Church grew until it culminated in the assassination of the founder of the Church and his brother, Hyrum, who were the most powerful figures in the organization.

Further concentration of the Saints at Nauvoo followed the assassination. For a time, it seems that the mobs, appalled by the enormity of their crimes, subsided; but it was not long until a state of "cold war" existed. William Sr. and his son Zemira moved their families into Nauvoo, but William Jr. remained at Green Plain. There, at the end of 1845, mob operations began again in earnest. So intense were the assaults, it became manifest that the Saints would have to leave the settled parts of the United States if they were ever to attain security.

The general evacuation began in February, 1846. William and Lydia had then passed the age of 70. They remained in Nauvoo until August, 1846,⁹ but the strain and anxiety was too much for Lydia. She got no further than the west side of the Mississippi where she died and where she still lies buried. William remained in a camp near her grave until the spring of 1847, when in company with his son and daughter-in-law, Zemira and Amy Terry Draper, he moved on to the Missouri River camps. Here he was ordained a Patriarch, where he bestowed "the virtues and benefits of his office" upon the Saints until the spring of 1852, when he departed for the "valley" with the Robert Weimer Co. Mary Mosier Draper, whom he married in 1848, accompanied him. They reached Salt Lake City September 15, 1852.

It appears that William Sr. was the orals son of Thomas and Lydia Rogers Draper to reach Utah, but the following of his own children preceded him there: Phoebe, Fannie, William Jr., Lydia, Zemira, and possibly Alfred. Of these, Zemira was the first to arrive in the "valley." The father, William, lived on a couple of years after his arrival, but he kept in harness to the last. Under date of February 22, 1855, the Deseret News summarized the salient features of his life, which reads in part as follows:

⁹History of Zemira Draper, *up. cit.*

Having, by his industry, accumulated an outfit, he started for and arrived in these valleys in 1852. And in April 1854 united with the High Priests in Great Salt Lake City; and since then has administered about 250 Patriarchal Blessings.

Notwithstanding his age, and the many severe scenes he has been called to pass through, he continued to labor with his hands, to within a short period of the time he was summoned to pass behind the veil, which happened at Draperville in Great Salt Lake County on the 24th day of December, at the advanced age of 80 years, 3 months, and 18 days.

He went calmly to his rest, as only the faithful can, and his works will follow him, and his spirit is rejoicing and operating in a wider sphere of intelligence, preparatory to receiving a glorious body in the resurrection.

A later note in the same paper, under date of March 1, 1855, adds:

He left a numerous posterity, his children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren numbering about 150.

It may astonish even his descendants to learn that his posterity now probably exceeds 10,000. The Drapers of Utah have a family organization which is doing excellent work in gathering names and histories of Drapers, past and present. Enough has already been discovered to show that few families have been confronted with greater problems in winning through in a competitive world.

Children of William and Lydia Lathrop Draper¹⁰

NAME	BORN	PLACE	DIED	PLACE
Charles	Sept. 9, 1795	Rome, N.Y.		Upper Canada
Phoebe	Oct. 9, 1797	" "		Draperville, Utah
Carson	About 1799	" "		Canada
Lucretia	April 15, 1802	" "		
Fannie	April 2, 1804			San Bernardino, CA
William, Jr.	April 24, 1807	Frontenac Co. Canada	May 28, 1886	Freedom, Utah
Lydia	Oct. 7 1809	Newcastle Canada	Dec. 6, 1893	San Bernardino, CA
Zemira	Feb. 27, 1812	Northumberland Co., Canada	Jan. 9, 1876	Rockville, Utah
Marvin	About 1814	Upper Canada		
Alfred	About 1817	Upper Canada	About 1845	Missouri

Five of the foregoing children did not reach Utah. They were Charles, Carson, Lucretia, Marvin, and Alfred. It seems that the first four died in Canada and the last, Alfred, in Missouri. A daughter of Alfred, however, reached Utah in about 1878 in company with her son William Fletcher and an old lady 95 years of age.

¹⁰Compiled from records of Terry Draper, Sabrina Draper Durfee, and Artemesia Draper Anderson.