



Gustavus Adolphus Perry

The most recent shared ancestor that Elder L. Tom Perry and I have in common is Gustavus Adolphus Perry, which makes the apostle and I third cousins, three times removed. Elder Perry's family has done a good job of saving stories about their ancestors, and they have been kind enough to share them with others. Excerpts from some articles about Gustavus Adolphus Perry, as well as some of my own research, follow.

Gustavus Adolphus Perry was born January 4, 1797 in Wilton, Hillsborough, New Hampshire. He married Eunice Wing (born July 8, 1797 in Hinsdale, Berkshire, Massachusetts) in Lewis, Essex, New York in or around 1816, and worked as a farmer in the area. Here is an account of how they were prepared to join the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints:

Elder [L. Tom] Perry's great-great-grandfather, Gustavus Adolphus Perry, and his family shared in a wonderful experience while living in Lewis Essex, New York, in 1830, which ultimately prepared them for the coming of two Mormon missionaries two years later. In the Perry family history is written:

The front door opened and they heard someone coming through the house toward the kitchen where the family was assembled. When he entered they saw that it was an old man with a white flowing beard. Although it was a stormy night there were no signs of raindrops on his clothes. He said, 'God bless you' and asked for food and if he could spend the night with them. Although they were poor and had little bread they gave him food and shelter. When he came in he had a knapsack on his back with a little pup which he gave to the children to play with. During the evening he took from his pocket a book from which he read to them, telling them it was soon to come forth and telling them to get one at their first opportunity. As he was leaving them the next morning he promised them that they would never want for bread, which promise was literally fulfilled. That very day a man who owed them some money asked if they would take wheat for the debt.

Sometime after the visit of the old gentleman two elders came with a Book of Mormon and the family obtained one. In reading the book they recognized passages of scripture the stranger had read to them on the night of his visit. In the year 1832, the family joined the LDS Church.

Gustavus Adolphus Perry and his family later joined an independent company of Saints and crossed the plains, arriving in the Salt Lake Valley in 1853. They settled in Three

Mile Creek in what is now Box Elder County and did much to pioneer that area. The name was later changed from Three Mile Creek to Perry in honor of the Perry family.⁹

Another version of this story was given by Elder L. Tom Perry in a speech at Brigham Young University. Since it has details not contained in the prior account, it is worth including as well:

We experienced a special day in our family on January 4, 1997. My brother organized a party honoring the 200th birthday of Gustavus Adolphus Perry. I am certain we were the only family holding a party for one born 200 years ago. Gustavus Perry was an important member of our family tree. He was baptized in 1832 and became the first of our family to embrace the gospel. The Perry family history records this remarkable event:

On a beautiful farm in the state of New York, Gustavus Adolphus Perry and his good wife, Eunice Wing, with their three sons, Orrin Alonzo, Lorenzo, and Henry Elisha, and their four daughters, Rosalie Alvira, Alvina, Amanda, and Lucy, were living very peacefully and happily. Close to the year of 1830 (we do not know the exact date) one evening after a light snow had fallen, the family was all in for the night. It was dark and the latchstring was drawn in so no one could enter the house. Then suddenly without warning, a stranger walked into the home and greeted them with these words: "God bless you." He spent the night with them explaining the principles of the gospel and told them of a new book called the Book of Mormon and quoted passages from the same. He then told them on what pages they were to find the quotations and that elders would soon visit them. The messenger disappeared in the morning just as suddenly as he had appeared the night before, leaving no tracks in the freshly fallen snow. They inquired of their neighbors to see if anyone had seen him. They had not, and no trace of him could be found.

This good family was ready for the gospel when it came to them, and they joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1832.

The Perrys were like other families who joined the Church in the early 1800s. They moved from their home in upstate New York to Ohio, then on to the gathering in Missouri. Forced from their Missouri home, they moved to Illinois. Again driven from their home, in the very cold winter of 1846, they made the painful trip across Iowa to settle in the Lake Branch at Winter Quarters. Here Gustavus served as a counselor in the bishopric until they were instructed in 1852 by Brigham Young to close the ward, join a wagon train, and make the long trek across the plains. Upon their arrival in Utah, he moved his family north into Box Elder County and settled at Three Mile Creek. In a few years his son, Orrin Alonzo, became the first bishop, and, as was the custom in those days, the community was named after their first bishop--thus, Perry, Utah, was named.¹⁰

As mentioned above, the Perry family traveled by wagon to Utah. They joined the John B. Walker Company and started west from Iowa on July 5, 1852. They arrived in the Great Salt Lake

9 <http://bellsouthpwp.net/w/o/wol3/perryt1.htm>, Adapted from "Elder L. Tom Perry of the Council of the Twelve;" *Ensign*, Feb. 1975, p.9. This article was published in the *Ensign* shortly after Elder Perry's call to the Twelve, and was written by Lee Perry (Elder Perry's son).

10 http://members.fortunecity.com/info100/church/byu_speeches/9697/perryw97.html, *The Value of a Good Name*, L. Tom Perry, 2/11/1997.

Valley some time between October 2 and 7, 1852.¹¹ Gustavus Adolphus Perry died on May 2, 1868 in Three Mile Creek, Box Elder, Utah. Records indicate that his wife Eunice Wing Perry died before 1863, also in Three Mile Creek.

¹¹Ancestry.com, Pioneer Immigrants to Utah Territory, submitted by Karen Young Christensen.