

James Abraham

Pioneer of 1852

compiled by Stephenie Flora
oregonpioneers.com

James Abraham

b. 29 Jul 1811 Isle of Wight, England

d. 07 Feb 1893 Portland, Oregon

buried [Lone Fir Pioneer Cemetery](#), Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

m. 01 Aug 1849 Johnson County, Indiana [Indiana Marriage Records]

Jane St. John

b. 15 Feb 1829 Pleasant Ridge, Ohio

d. 13 Jun 1904 Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

buried [Lone Fir Pioneer Cemetery](#), Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon

d/o Jacob St. John and Polly Chandler Wood

1821: came to America

ODLC: #3417 Multnomah Co, James Abraham, b. 1811 Isle of Wight; arr OR 01 Nov 1852; settled claim 04 Mar 1853; m'd Jane 01 Aug 1849 (he thinks); Johnson County, Indiana; Citizenship awarded 12 Oct 1840 Court of Common Pleas, Belmont County, Ohio. Oath of John Potts, that Abraham had resided within U.S. 3 years before arriving at age 21. Citizenship papers were signed by St. Clair Kelly, Clerk & sent to District Court of Clackamas County. Aff: Archon Kelly, Plymplin Kelly, Samuel Nelson, Levi W. Nelson.

1860: Multnomah Co, OR; Jas Abraham, 49, nurseryman, \$800 \$300, England; Jane, 31, IN; Wm J., 9, IN

1870: East Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon, no date, Jas Abrams (sic), 59, farmer, \$15,000 \$150, Eng; Jane, 40, keeping house, OH; Edwd, 45, farmer, OH [brother & family??]; Rachel, 40, at home, OH; Thomas, 19, at home, OH; Fremont, 15, at home, OH; Tipton, 12, at home, IN; Ellsworth, 8, IN; Mary, 5, IN; Harriet, 2, OH

1880: Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon, June 17, 1880; James Abrahams, 68, farmer, Eng Eng Eng; Jane, 57, wife, gen disability, OH OH NJ

CemL: ; buried Lone Fir Cemetery, Portland, Multnomah Co, OR

JAMES ABRAHAM, one of the most eminently respected of Oregon's noble pioneers, a prosperous citizen of Portland, and a generous philanthropist, is, we regret to say, not an American by birth, for we would gladly claim all that is great and good. However, he is the next thing to it, that is, a native of the Isle of Wight, England, where he was born July 29, 1811.

His father was a merchant miller, who, by the loss of several vessels, with their large cargoes, was financially ruined, and, in 1821, emigrated to the United States, intending to make a new start in life. He located in Ohio, then a new and undeveloped country, where he engaged in farming, meeting with deserved prosperity.

James Abraham remained with his parents until he attained his sixteenth year, when, possessing a muscular body and an ambitious mind, he determined to be self-supporting. Going to Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, he was variously employed until nineteen years of age, when he engaged in the trade of carving and gilding, in the shop of John D. Morgan, manufacturer of frames and mirrors. By his energy, industry, and adaptability, he made rapid and efficient progress in his new business, and in a few months acquired the skill of a journeyman. He then went to Louisville, Kentucky, as foreman of a shop which employed many workmen who were both older and more experienced than

he, the push and enthusiasm of Mr. Abraham securing for him the position. He subsequently purchased an interest in another company, and gradually built up a handsome business, continuing with unabated prosperity until 1834, when he returned to Ohio, where he joined his father in the erection of a sawmill, which they operated together for twelve years. To this enterprise Mr. Abraham devoted much laborious and earnest work, but made little financial progress, and, accordingly, in 1846, sold out his interest and returned to Louisville, where he resumed his old trade.

He was married in Johnson county, Indiana, August 1, 1849, to Miss Jane St. John, an estimable lady, and a native of Ohio. He then engaged in clearing a farm from timber, and set out an orchard, but being too ambitious to wait for his orchard to grow, and hearing in the meantime most glowing accounts of the marvelous opportunities of Oregon, he started, in the spring of 1852, with an invalid wife and one child, for the El Dorado of the West. They came all the way across the desolate plains with an ox team, which slowly and laboriously crept along.

Arriving in Oregon in the fall of 1852, he located a donation claim of 320 acres, near East Portland, on which he built a small shanty, and, after comfortably installing his family in their new quarters, he began to work for Meek & Luelling, nurserymen, with whom he learned the process of grafting and caring for trees. Subsequently, Mr. Abraham engaged in the nursery business on his own account, making his start without money, by picking up the discarded roots from other nurseries. From this small beginning he extended his interests until he succeeded in building up an extensive and profitable trade.

Accumulating means, he engaged in the purchase of real estate, thus becoming the proprietor of the town sites of Sunnyside and Mount Tabor, in both of which localities he resided for a number of years. In 1870 he made the first effort ever effected toward the establishment of a town at Sunnyside, which consisted in his planting trees upon Maple avenue. In his real-estate speculations, he has been a wise and successful dealer; foreseeing the future great destiny of the country, he adhered closely to his convictions, and the results have fully verified his fondest hopes. He was one of the active promoters of the Mount Tabor railroad, for

which he, by his usual energy and perseverance, secured valuable right-of-way privileges.

Mr. Abraham has been as earnest in promoting public and charitable interests as he has in securing his own. This is exemplified in the case of the Portland Methodist Hospital. To this institution he sold the magnificent site on which it is built, for the sum of \$20,000; but, when it became embarrassed for lack of funds to complete and open the building, cancelled the obligation of its trustees for the entire amount, thus making his donation to this institution, \$25,000. Another incident in point is that of the erection of the Centenary Methodist Episcopal Church in East Portland. On the commencement of this edifice, in 1890, Mr. Abraham donated \$20,000, to which large sum he added, at the time of the dedication of the building, in 1891, \$25,000 more; thus enabling its trustees to dedicate it free of debt, a thing which could not possibly have been done without his princely giving.

Mr. Abraham has been an active member of the Methodist Episcopal Church since 1853, and much of the time has held important official relations to it. He is now one of the Board of Trustees of the Centenary Church, and also of the Portland Hospital.

Mr. and Mrs. Abraham had one child, William Jay, a promising youth, but who died in 1864.

Thus is briefly given the most important events of an active and useful life, whose efforts have all been in the line of advancing the condition of his fellow-men, and have earned the gratitude of thousands of this and coming generations.

[Illustrated History of the State of Oregon p. 976-7]

File: Abraham; James Abraham died 07 February, 1893 leaving only his wife to survive him. Upon his arrival in Oregon James Abraham had obtained a Donation Land Claim in the Sunnyside area of Portland. The 1860 census lists his occupation as a nurseryman. During his years of residence in the Portland area he had always been a generous benefactor to the local Methodist church as well as other institutions. He sold all but 5 acres of his land to built a hospital on and upon construction of the hospital donated \$25,000 toward its construction. Upon his death his estate of \$200,000 was sued for charitable bequests that he had reportedly

made. Mrs. Abraham, at the time of her husband's death was in ill health herself. By the time she died in June 1904 the constant litigation had left her penniless.

Children of James Abraham and Jane:

1. William Jay Abraham

b. 14 Aug 1850

d. 02 Sep 1864

buried [Lone Fir Pioneer Cemetery](#), Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon