

INTERVIEW WITH: Joseph Wallace Thompson
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DATE OF RECORDING: About 1950
PLACE OF RECORDING: Cannonville, Utah
SUBJECT OF RECORDING: Speaking in Church (80th Birthday)
TRANSCRIBER: Rosa Lee White
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JT: I'm really happy to be here this afternoon. Even though I am eighty years old. Yesterday I had a salvation. It wasn't my birthday. It was merely the anniversary of that birthday. Some eighty years ago according to what they tell me, I really had a birthday. I don't think I was any more active than I am today. I think I stayed in bed most all day. Yesterday evening, George asked me if I would speak today and I said, "me speak, I don't know what I'd speak about." But you know, King Solomon said one time, "In a multitude of council there is wisdom." And I have councilors right around there. One little child said, "Grandpa, tell about the boy that hit the old man in the head with a rock and killed him or else tell about Jack and the bean stock." My little two year old piped up and said, "Grandpa, you tell about the little dog under the wagon." So you see I had plenty of advisers. But I didn't choose any one of them. George said it might be better to speak about the early days, the pioneer days in this part of the country. Well, brothers and sisters, I'm the oldest man under the hill today. Not only that, but I'm the last one of the old pioneers, the first that come into the country. There wasn't a house in Cannonville nor in Henrieville, nor Tropic. There was one little cabin made of pinion pine and cedar down below here about two miles, something like that. That's the only habitation there was. There was no roads. There was no bridges. There were no canals. There were no patches of alfalfa nor anything of that sort. I saw the first house built in Cannonville and the first school house. And the same with Henrieville. And I well remember marking and branding calves on what is now the townsite of Tropic when there wasn't a house there. So you see really I was a pioneer. The roads were nil. Wagons right a meandering around down through the sagebrush goin' by a big ol' oxen. Under circumstances surrounding us were very crude indeed. In the daytime, we had the Indians [nuse?] with their squaws and papooses come begging for bread. Then at night, the air was made musical by the sounds of the night, the owls and the coyote and the cougar and all the different creatures that make night hideous at night, they were here. Grass was abundant. Foliage was plentiful in every direction. Deer were plentiful likewise. Many other things but very, very few humans. I had no companions, only my little brothers and sis... and one or two other families of children. And then the multitude of little papooses, they were here. Well, brothers and sister, I enjoyed those days even though I was bare-footed and my mother had to cut old wagon covers or seamless sacks to keep our little hides from getting suntanned from the bottom up. But I was happy. And we enjoyed those beautiful sunny days and the wildflowers. It was great to be a boy. And after I got bigger, I got to thinkin' well, that toy of blessings on me little man, barefoot boy with cheeks of tan with your turned up pantaloons and your merry whistle tunes. You are my pomp and joy who wakes upon the barefoot boy. But the later on when realization came to me and a sense of the, where we were at and the conditions under which we lived and the prospects that lie ahead, I wasn't so happy. And a feeling of bitterness came into my heart when I was a younger, a young man not a young man but a big boy. To think that I had been brought into this forsaken country where there seemed no opportunity for development, no chance

for a boy to get an education or to achieve anything in this world. I was, I don't know. I didn't feel good about it. And it continued in my heart for years. Then I got out as soon as I could, but the where I went was no better. I went to the sheep herd or the cow camp. And then I didn't get very much there that was beneficial. But early in life, there came to me a desire for knowledge. And I heard someone speak in public meeting right here on this lot a man from Salt Lake City. I don't remember whether it was Brother Amasa Lyman, George Q. Cannon, or which one of the apostles it was but he came here and spoke in that little schoolhouse with a dirt roof and a dirt floor. And that brother told something there that was sunk deep into my heart and set me to reading the scriptures. Among other things he said, "Search the scriptures and you will learn why Almighty God brought this people into the valley of these mountains where there seems no chance for you to develop. Thank the Lord because the day will come," he said, "when you'll be glad you were surrounded by the ramparts of these everlasting hills." He said, "The Lord didn't bring you here to make you rich. He brought you into these valleys to mold characters that the Lord, himself, might own and accept of your labors." I begun to search the scriptures. Somehow or another I got a hold of a little Bible and I carried it away off to the sheep camp with me and I read in that Bible. And I found a lot of things that were beneficial. In fact, I don't remember that I ever found anything that wasn't. But among other things, I wish to say, I found a statement of how we come to be here. The Lord said to the Prophet Jeremiah, "Son of man, I will speak to you." And I'll try to tell these words nor quote scripture as it is exactly. But they [prodigious?] what I want to give. "Son of man," he said, "Tell the children of Israel that in the later days I saw a great multitude of people coming into the heights of Zions, bringing with them their agent and their infirm and their cripples and their women with little children and they came with weeping and with wailing in a straight course into the heights of Zion and there," the words went on the story, "they would multiply them and make them a wonderful people. They would bless them in their labors and men and women from all the world, from all the island of the sea and the coasts of the ocean, from every land he'd bring them into the heights of Zion and there he would make them a great people. But he saw them coming in a straight course by the rivers of water and he would lead them and they would come with weeping and with lamentation." Now and to tell you the fulfillment of that, I don't know that even our church history depicts the conditions under which all those people came. They had come from what we call, what is called the windows of [warriors?]. There they had buried numerous of the number, many many men, women and little children. And among those who laid loved ones away was one of my grandmothers who buried three of her dear ones in this cemetery at Winter Quarters that winter. There were hundreds of them that died there. They had only dugouts in which to live. And the winter was not good. It was damp and cold. And they suffered untold. Their parents, there many of the husbands and soon to go leave their children their wives and children behind and take up the long, long march to Mexico to the coast of Mexico now known as the state of California. They left their wives and children out on the prairie. There was more than a thousand graves made between Nauvoo City and the Salt Lake Valley. Now, if you can imagine, you still wonder why they came with lamentations and sorrow. But they came nevertheless, led by the hand of Almighty God. Brothers and sisters, the day is not over for their coming. The Lord said to [those?] about those people, "I will bring Ephraim first to the mountains and there he will be established and he will give the law of the gospel to all the tribes of Israel

and they shall come from every land and from the north countries and shall bow themselves down and receive their blessings unto the hands of Ephraim, my servant. And they shall receive their blessings. This is the blessings said of Almighty God upon Israel and the greater blessing upon Ephraim and his fellows. Now we know why we are here do we. Who are we? My brothers and sister, I have learned through hard knocks and much suffering that it doesn't matter nearly so much where a man is and where he raises his family as it does how he does it. It don't matter so much where you are as it is what you are. The spirit of the Lord is with us if we try to be obedient to it's councils. And we came here for a purpose and our fathers come here and as I said in the beginning and established themselves here first in a little cabin, later with better ones. And they raised their families. And will you what the Lord said to one of his, one of his prophets, "it shall be a land of refuge." The mountains shall be our guardians. The world is now in such a condition of turmoil and strife and contention that another prophesy may be fulfilled before we go out. The Lord has said to his prophet that men and women should flock to the mountains in great multitudes so great that they wonder how they're gonna live and survive from famine and starvation. But He also said, if they are hungry it will not be because they'll not be a seed time and a harvest. If my people will observe my commandments, keep my laws, and live the gospel they shall always have a seed time and a harvest. People may put flock in here in multitudes so great that we may wonder if the food supply will hold up. But I remember in my own recollection almost that kind of a condition. In those early days when we were here and only just barely established and probably had enough food to last through the winter if we was careful, there came an influx of men and women and children. There came an excitement where this men sought for gold. Somebody had found some rich ore out in the hills and the world went all over that there was gold in these hills. And they came here in multitudes and we thought we had just enough to survive on. But there was no one starved to death that winter although the people that lived here were multiplied at least five or six times. We lived too. We had to grind barley. We had to do it anything we could. When I was a little boy, we used to get out with straw side with a big long whip and swap the birds when they came to pick up the wheat seeds. When we got enough little birds, we'd go somewhere and one of the bigger boys would make a fire and we'd have birds roasted. We'd roast the little birds. When springtime come, we caught the little fishes and we dug [sea gold?] we done anyway. But we survived, that is none of us starved to death. And we'll do it again, my brothers and sisters, the Lord brought Israel across the sands of Egypt and up into the atlands of midium and fed them on mana. They didn't have anything else. He furnished the food and they lived and they survived and they went into the promised land eventually and redeemed it. He'll do it again, don't be afraid. Let us have no fear. March forward with your chins up and your eyes forward because the Lord is God today as he was in the days of old and as he was when the people crossed the plains from Illinois, Missouri, and has been doing ever since. People have come here in poverty and many of them today are wealthy. But let us you and I remember this one thing, he didn't bring the Latter-day Saints here on purpose to make us wealthy. We could have went, our parents could have went on to California and become wealthy perhaps and just as like President Young said to 'em, "if you do that, he'll drive you out just like they drove you out of Missouri and out of Illinois, but if we stay here in this forsaken country, why they don't want it. They don't want to stay here, but if you'll stay here, we'll become independent

and we'll grow into a mighty people.” Brothers and sisters, that day has arrived and that day is upon us. But the days of tribulation are also upon us. Let us not fear, but keep the commandments of God. For according to His word, he is going to chastise the nations and this nation will not escape. President Clark just a few days ago gave a talk before a crowd of man and people in their, one of the northern chapels and he said he dared not look over the edge. He could see it a comin'. He said, our freedom will be taken from us. I dare not look over the edge, he said, the times that are coming. When he... we have had it from the disciples of our Master that He will take care of his children who are obedient to Him so lets you and I my brothers and sisters, we live obedience unto the Lord. Keep His laws and keep His commandments and he'll take care of us. He's done it before and He's promised to keep on. For said He this gospel is upon the earth today, never to be thrown down or given to another people. “Stand ye in holy places,” He said, “and be not moved.” For the chastisement of the Lord is upon this nation. And He is going to scourge the nation into repentance or annihilation. Let us be faithful. Let us remember the Lord is God today and that this is His gospel and in the multitude of council such as he gives unto us today, there is really, truly safety for those who will obey and keep his commandments. May the Lord help us to do so is my earnest humble, daily prayer all through life. In the name of Jesus, amen.

[Congregation singing]

Extra information about Joseph Wallace Thompson:

Born February 23, 1872 in Kanarra, Utah.

Died December 5, 1952 in Cannonville, Utah.

Parents: John Orson Thompson and Lucy Maria Groves.