# Transcribed from the James Downs Record Book:

I was born in Harrison County, Indiana, July 14th in the year of our Lord 1815, son of Ezekiel Downs and Charlotta, daughter of Charles Rawlins. My great grandfather, Zacheriah Downs, emigrated from Scotland to North Carolina before the War of Independence. Being an elderly man and owning a grist mill he was exempt from service. My grandfather, Thomas, enlisted in his 17th year and served during the War and marched in the hot sand till his feet bled, and dripped water in his hat as he marched along and gave to the wounded soldiers. He enlisted under General McDowel and fought under Washington.

My father was uneven tempered, rather the extreme both ways. My mother was even tempered, kind, affectionate. They were well respected by their neighbors. They labored and made a good living.

We emigrated to Illinois in the fall of ‘28 and settled in Adams County in the spring of ‘29, 12 miles below Quincy, one of the most beautiful countries I ever saw. The land was very rich, the prairies interspersed with beautiful groves of timber with singing birds and the country abounded with wild game, wild fruit, fish, and honey.

My father bought calves and raised for market, bought land, fenced 160 acres, broke 100 acres and raised large crops of corn, wheat, oats, beans, potatoes, pumpkins, melons, and raised hogs for market.

And in the spring of ‘38 the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was driven from Missouri. The main body crossed at Quincy and some at Hannibal. Five families came to our place with one old wagon and a poor span of horses. We looked upon them as a poor persecuted people, took them in, gave them work and helped to feed and clothe them. They began to predict that I would become a Mormon. I laughed at the idea, but when I heard the Elders set forth the first principles of the gospel I received it with joy, the first one of the family.

I was baptized in October 1840 by Bishop David Evans and confirmed and had manifestations of the truth of what I had received from time to time.

In a short time after that I went to West Virginia with my sister [Amy Emily] and brother-in-law, Absalom Smith, and spent the winter with his relations and taught school two months.

Bought dried fruit, 120 bushels, and returned in the spring and raised a crop. And in the fall Bro. Isaac M. Stewart married my sister [Matilda Jane] and Elder Hide [Hyde] was sent from Nauvoo to council us to swap farms with the anti-Mormons in Hancock County and gather. (In the summer of ‘42 I was ordained a Priest by Jacob Myers) I moved up and lived with them in Noltums Settlement 12 miles below Nauvoo. By this time my mother, father, and 3 sisters had joined the Church. This was in the Spring of ‘44 and in the month of June I had been down to my fathers and as I was returning home I was a body of armed men in a little town called Lima and supposed it was training day, but as soon informed that it was a mob gathered to make an attack on Father Morley’s settlement that night about 3 miles distant, but before I reached the settlement I saw a black cloud rising in the northwest. I increased my speed and reached a house just as the storm set in. It blowed down fences, uprooted trees, and the rain fell in torrents, and the next morning the road was so filled with timber I had to pick my way through the woods. I speak of this children, that you may see that the Lord chose the storm to save his people, for the mob had laid their plans to an attack on all the settlemtns, as well as Nauvoo. When I got home I was told that all the able bodied men was called to Nauvoo. I went up with my old shotgun to see what was wanted. The Prophet rode along the ranks and saw some of the boys barfooted, and he rode to some shoe shops and told them to let the boys have shoes and he would foot the bill, but he was pressed upon by his enemies, backed up by apostates, that he fled to Montrose across the river with the intention of making his way to the Rocky Mountains, but his wife Emy sent for him to come back and save the people. He then said he would give himself up and die for his brethren and sisters, and as he went to Carthage Jail he said he was going like a Lamb to the slaughter.

I can not describe the sence that followed. Mobs marched through the country. I told the brethren that if we did not raise men and take them out of prison that they would be slaughtered. And when the word came, I went to the woods to pray to know who was to lead the Church, and when I rose a still small voice whispered to me “Brigham Young” and that gave me comfort. The heavens seemed to weep over the horrible deed, for it rained so much that it drowned the crops, and all nature seemed to wear a gloom.

In the Spring of ‘45 we swapped farms with Eli D. Walker 4 miles east of Warsaw. Ours was the best farm but he wanted boot and said he would not trade and started off, and I went to the woods and prayed that he might change his mind and return and trade with us. And when I got to the house he rode up and said he would trade.

My father moved up and put in a crop, and in the summer the mob began to haul a wagon load of armed men past my father’s door and fired their guns and yelled like demons, and early in the fall old Co Williams, a Baptist preacher, raised 60 men, camped in the woods 2 miles from my father’s place, and commenced buring houses. He sent out 12 men, well armed, with a bottle of whiskey in each pocket, with orders to the Mormons to take their sick folks and leave. We done so, and let them burn. It was a frame [house], paninted, and done off in good style with four good rooms and cost about $800 where labor was very cheap. We sold the farm for $1,133, less than half its worth, and glad to get that to make an outfit to leave such civilization.

The Prophet Joseph Smith appeared to my Father in a dream and said to him, “Follow me.” He followed him some distance up hill and came to a beautiful little stream of water. “Now,” said he, “Stoop down and let me wash your face.” He did so, then he said again, “Follow me.” He went on a piece but the mountain was so steep he got tired and stopped.

He [my father, Ezekiel] departed this life at Council Bluffs, in his 70th year, I think. In the forepart of the winter of ‘45 I dreamed that I was standing in Nauvoo, and saw the Saints crossing the river to go west and others fitting up for the journey, and a council of Elders was called to transact some business. Then I stood near the Temple and saw a battle fought with the mob. Then I traveled west with the main body of the Church a long distance to a large body of water. There we stopped, raised crops, feasted, thanked and praised the Lord for our deliverance - all of which I have seen fulfilled.

In the Spring of ‘46 I started with the main body of the Church and my father, mother, brothers and three sisters. We all stopped at Council Bluffs to winter when 500 men were called to leave their families to go to fight Mexico. I wanted to go, but my mother was sick and thought she would never see me again if I did.

Here I married in the spring of ‘47 [Mary Ann Greathouse] and in the spring of ‘50 started to Salt Lake with 2 children, and reached there September 15th, 1850.

Since that time I have passed through many scenes of afflictions, joy and sorrow. Since the year ‘51 I have made three farms and planted two orchards.

I first settled at Mill Creek, Salt Lake County, where I remained 5 years, sold out, and moved to Lehi, stayed 5 years and then moved to Cache Valley, Smithfield, and have been trying to make a permanent home 10 years, but time passes on like a river that bears us on to the Ocean of Eternity.

At Lehi, in the spring of 1859, I dreamed I saw two great Eagles meet in the air. One from the south and one from the north, backed up by vast armies of men. They fought a terrible battle then the one from the south retreated south followed by the other. The worst of battle and sight so terrible that the beasts and creeping things fled and hid, and I saw spiders run in their holes.

Ages of children:

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| Naomi Jane | Fegruary 1, 1848 | Pottawattamie County, Iowa |
| Lorena Ann | April 23, 1849 | Pottawattamie County, Iowa |
| Mary Charlotte | September 17, 1850 | Millcreek Ward, Utah |
| James Alma | March 4, 1852 | Draper, Salt Lake County, Utah |
| Susan Ellan | May 16, 1853 | Draper |
| Margaret Emily | January 24, 1855 | Draper |
| Deseret | August 19, 1856 | Draper |
| Lucina | May 5, 1858 | Draper |
| Printha Olive | June 9, 1859 | Draper |
| Joseph Ephraim | March 10, 1861 | Smithfield |
| Wm Seamore | January 11, 1863 | Smithfield |

[Written by] James Downs

September 17, 1871

Smithfield