

The following is taken from Orson Whitney's book "History of Utah" Vol. IV, 1904, pp. 353-354:

The educational work done by Mr. Griggs has been mostly in connection with Sabbath Schools and musical organizations. He is an experienced choir leader, a talented singer, a pleasing composer, an able business man. and a winning and affable gentleman. He was born at Dover, Kent, England, June 19, 1845. His parents were Charles and Charlotte Foreman Griggs, and he was the youngest of three sons. His father, who was a channel pilot, died when Thomas was nine years old leaving him to be reared by his mother, a most excellent woman, a thrifty housewife and a proficient worker with the needle. The family were in moderate circumstances. Thomas had a taste for reading, and studied the Bible through when quite young. Before his father's death he attended a boy's academy for about eighteen months, but had no schooling afterwards. Becoming acquainted with the Latter-day Saints, both missionaries and converts, he attended their meetings, and was baptized into the Church on the 17th of May 1856 His mother and other relatives were also converts to the faith.



Soon after his baptism he emigrated with his mother to America, landing at Boston, July 11, 1856. He remained there nearly five years, working at various employments, helping to get means to come to Utah. In his earlier boyhood, his father being a mariner and himself in the habit of visiting ship-yards and seeing vessels, he had cherished a strong desire to become a ship builder; instead of which. after acting as a peddler's assistant, an employee in glass-working and rope-making establishments, and as a cash boy, he became a salesman in the large dry goods house of George Turnbull and Company, Boston. At the same time he was an ordained Teacher in the Boston branch of the Church.

With just enough means to pay their emigrant fare from Boston to Florence, Nebraska, Thomas and his mother, on the 10th of June, 1861, started for Utah, traveling by rail and steamboat by way of New York, Cleveland, Chicago and St. Joseph. They were in time to cross the plains in a company of Church teams led by Captain Joseph Horne. It was the year the Civil War broke out and large bodies of troops were encountered, moving to the front. Says Mr. Griggs, "Some of the soldiers, who were drunk, abused us, and one of our company, James Slack, was killed while resisting an intruder. In Missouri bridges were burned before and behind us, trains riddled with bullets, troops under arms and places under martial law. We met the Camp Floyd soldiers from Utah going to the seat of war. In an accident my dear grandmother as killed by being run over, and was hurriedly buried on the plains."

The company arrived at Salt Lake City on the 13th of September. Mr. Griggs spent a short time under the friendly roof of Mr. and Mrs. John Nash. His first work in Utah was digging potatoes on shares. He then hired out to William Hapgood, assisting him to make beet molasses, and afterwards entered the employ of William Eddington, who kept a small general store on Main Street. Among his duties was that of instructor to Mr. Eddington's son Henry. Afterwards he entered the employ of Chislett and Clark, and was in charge of their business at Logan, until it closed out, when he returned to Salt Lake City, walking the entire distance, to secure employment at Walker Brother's new store. He remained with that firm about six years, spending a portion of the time at their branch store in Fairfield - old Camp Floyd. He returned to Salt Lake in 1866, and settled permanently in the Fifteenth Ward, where he still resides. He was successively in the employ of Eldredge and Clawson, William Jennings and Z.C.M.I., beginning with the last-named institution at its inception and continuing with it for five years. He then became connected with the Fifteenth Ward store, of which he was for many years the manager.

While at Fairfield Mr. Griggs received his first lessons in vocal music. B.B. Messenger being his tutor. He became the choir leader at that place, and after his return to Salt Lake, renewed a previous connection with the Tabernacle choir, continuing it to date. He was a member of Eardley and Croxall's brass bands, the Philharmonic and Zion's Choral societies, and the Union Glee Club. He studied harmony under Professor George Careless. For many years he conducted the Fifteenth Ward Choir and engaged in much other musical labor. As a member of the Tabernacle choir he sang in the great musical contest at the World's Fair, September 8, 1893, and three years later accompanied that portion of the choir which made the tour of California. He was in the publication of the Latter-day Saints' Psalmody, and assisted in the publication of the various works issued by the Deseret Sunday School Union.

Mr. Griggs has been twice married, first to Jeanette S. Ure, February 2, 1870, and next to Mary A. Price, February 23, 1879. He has quite a large family of children. He was arrested during the anti-polygamy crusade, but was acquitted. His successive offices in the Church are those of Teacher, Elder and Seventy. He is now one of the presidents of the Second quorum of Seventy. In earlier days he served as a lieutenant of militia and a school trustee.

In 1876 he took a trip to England, touching at the Centennial Exhibition en route; and in 1880-81 he performed a mission to his native land. His mother, with whom he had been very closely associated all his life, died, to his great grief, soon after his return home. For nearly seventeen years he was superintendent of the Fifteenth Ward Sunday School and in 1891 he was called to be superintendent of Sunday Schools for the Salt Lake Stake. Since 1878 he has held a position on the General Board of the Deseret Sunday School Union, and is still acting as the business manager of that splendid organization.