

## The Miracle of the Missionary Journals of James McArthur 1871

By James A. McArthur

Little did we know that Andy would someday be serving in the very area that his great-grandfather served his mission. When Andy decided to dig deeper he did not know that the Lord wanted him to find out about the part his Great grandfather played in establishing the gospel in Kentucky. James never knew of the success of his missionary labors. His children never knew of the success of their father as he served. But today we can truly see the personal hand of the Lord in bringing about a miracle for our family.

The making of a miracle

\*\*\*1972\*\* May 5, 1972 – Jim and Denise were living at the home of Andrew and Merle McArthur remodeling their entire home. We were working in the kitchen when a knock came at the door. A man handed me three leather bound Journals and a small statistic and record book. He said he thought they belonged to our family. I read grandfathers name on the inside cover of one and I told him I was sure they belonged to my grandfather.

He indicated that while he and his wife were walking they saw them in the road and picked them up. They had been run over a few times and were indented with gravel marks.

Dad returned from the temple and I told him about the missionary journals. Dad said, “yes, these are my fathers missionary Journals, I have seen these on his book shelf for years.” I told dad about the man that brought them by and he seemed content with the explanation.

The hand writing was beautiful and well preserved

\*\*\*2004\*\* 33 years later October 2004 my son Andy wanted to earn some extra money. I suggested that he could take the Journals of James 1871 and type them so we could make copies for all of the family. Andy proceeded to begin this process. He made photo copies of each page and then typed it up to make it more reader friendly. Andy completed the project in April of 2004.

The Journals were completed and copies were made. We felt disappointed that we did not have the last journal. We were missing the information from February to the end of his mission June of 1901.

\*\*\*Dad Died October 9, 2005 – we left everything about the same at his home. One day I went into Dad’s bedroom and there on the top of his chest of drawers in the center was volume three of James’s Journal! I was amazed and surprised. I gave it to Andy and said to finish the process. And he did.

\*\*\*2008 January Jim and Denise left for the Japan MTC. I took the journals and would tell the missionaries that James walked 4378 miles but never had a baptism. I thought I was telling the truth and then near the end of the mission I began reading James's journal and found that he did have some baptisms but it was too late to tell anyone.

\*\*\*2010 January 24, We had returned from our mission about 2 months earlier. Andy called me and said dad I have felt that there is a reason that we have these journals. So Andy did a search on the web of one of the 9 baptisms – Lizzie Lee Shrout ---Bingo her name came up showing her as a mother of 11 children, 9 of which lived and all nine had been baptized at age 8! Andy said she had to have married a member and stayed active!

The person submitting the web page was David Orr from Idaho. So we called them that Sunday evening and left a message. A few days later David called and said that his mother was a daughter of Lizzie Lee Schrout. His mother had passed away over 6 months earlier. He said that his dad had more information. I called his father and he told me that Lizzie's baby boy was still alive and living in Kentucky. He was now 87 years old. He gave me his phone number and I called him.

I called brother Woody Hatten\*and found that he was active and working in the temple as a sealer. I told him that I thought my grandfather had baptized his mother Lizzie Lee in 1901. He told me to call his son because he had the baptismal certificate. He then asked, "did you say you were from St. George, Utah? Yes I answered, "Well I have a granddaughter attending Dixie College!"

\*(Woody Hatten was one of the first young men to be called on a mission from Kentucky. He served in the California mission. After returning he married a return missionary, raised a family and is now a sealer in the Kentucky Temple.)

I then called the son living in Kentucky, the father of the daughter at Dixie College. He answered and I told him the story again. He said let me get the certificate. He then read Lizzie Lee Shrout was baptized by James McArthur on May 14<sup>th</sup> 1901. (Just three weeks before his release.) We both were so excited. He then told me that his daughter was attending Dixie College. I told him to call her and let her know that an old man was going to call her and have her over for dinner.

He gave me the number and I called her and we had her over for Dinner. It was so fun to see this unfold. Elder and Sister Evans were also at dinner that day. A few days later we took Victoria to see the original James McArthur home, his picture at the city office and then to visit with Alma Spendlove and her children. It was an absolute celestial experience!

Victoria then told us of her decision to come to Dixie College. A missionary from Enterprise serving in Kentucky suggested that she attend Dixie. So that's how she came here. She had been here for 4 years and was graduating in 3 months.

Her father came to St. George for her graduation. He stayed with us and we had a wonderful time showing him around and sharing the story.

Andy typed up a shortened version of the baptism that took place and gave it to brother Hatten. When he returned to Kentucky he sent it out to all of the Lizzie Lee descendants to share the story of her baptism as recorded in the James McArthur Diary.

Mid summer I received a call from Ralph McArthur who said that a lady in his ward by the name of Floretta Flake told him that one of the McArthurs in St. George baptized her Grandmother Lizzie Lee Shrou. He read the information that she had and he realized it was from our family so he called me. I immediately went over to his home and he showed me her information. I then stopped by her apartment but it was late so we set up a time to meet her and her daughter.

We met later in the week and I had a wonderful visit. This sister has kept a wonderful diary of all of her family activities. She has several volumes in binders that have family information, newsletters etc. She puts out a monthly newsletter keeping everyone informed of the happenings of the family. She is about 78 years old and still very bright. I then set up another appointment to bring Victoria over to meet them also. At this meeting she had her daughter and son in law Art Troyer.

As we were visiting with Art we learned that he was teaching seminary here in St. George and knew Andy. Small world isn't it. We also learned that Floretta Flake's son had served a mission in St. George and surrounding areas. After his return from his mission he returned to St. George, married and has served as a General Contractor for more than 20 years.

Sister Floretta Flake lives in the temple cottages and has pictures of all of her children and grandchildren that have served mission. She has frames without pictures for her grandchildren that are future missionaries. She is very missionary minded and an absolute amazing person.

Andy has met many descendants of the Shrou and Hatten families in his work. He just recently had a home teacher, brother Effington indicate his family was one of the early baptisms. Andy looked in James's Journal and found that James had taught this family the gospel also.

During our visit with Andy and Marsjon in Kentucky we had the privilege to visit several of the sites where James served. One of the most sacred sites was the baptismal site on the slate creek. It is a slow moving calm beautiful stream. It is located near the Shrou property. We saw the Shrou home, the family cemetery, the site of the first Church and the site of the barn where the first large meetings were held.

We visited the town square where the missionaries were teaching when a mob gathered and a then non member brother Hatten rode into the middle of the mob and after cracking his whip had the missionaries get into his wagon and then took them home with him.

We also went to Ringo Mill and crossed the bridge that was a regular path James and his companions crossed as they would proselyte and get the mail.

Sister Flake has had work done to determine the members of the Church that have joined in the Church as a result of sister Lizzie Lee Shrout – the Count is over 800.