Green Flake was born in January 1828 in Anson County, North Carolina. He was the Slave of James Madison Flake, a Southerner who converted to the Church. Green was given to James and Agnes Love Flake by James''s father, Jordan Flake as a wedding gift. He took the last name of his master and was known thereafter as Green Flake. He was baptized a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at the age of 16 in the Mississippi River by John Brown on April 7, 1844, but remained a slave. He accompanied the Flake family to Nauvoo, Illinois.

From family diaries and the memory of a grandson, it is believed that was Green who drove the carriage and team that brought President Brigham Young into the Salt Lake Valley.

Brigham Young had Flake freed in 1854. Flake died a faithful member. (Margaret Young was the source of much of the information on this page.)

Green Flake and Abraham - Poem

Here is a tribute given to Green Flake at the July 24th 2007 Pioneer Commemoration at the Levine Museum of the New South in Charlotte NC. It included artwork and photos.

When Brigham Young said ""This is the right place, drive on"", he most likely said it to a trailblazer from North Carolina named Green Flake. Green Flake was a 19-year old slave who joined the church in Nauvoo, Illinois. He was a bodyguard for the Prophet Joseph Smith in 1844, the year when Joseph ran for president. A key platform of Joseph''s campaign was to free the slaves by selling public lands to compensate the owners and help the South make the economic transition. As you look at this museum''s exhibit ""From Cotton Fields to Skyscrapers"", think about how much smoother and quicker that transition would have been if this plan had been used and war had been avoided.

A poem called ""Green Flake and Abraham"", in the style of Dr. Seuss, is a tribute to our North Carolina pioneer. It refers to past Biblical rationalizations for slavery and discrimination as the Curse of Ham. It then witnesses to the full blessings of Abraham that have come to Green Flake and other Black Pioneers through our unfolding Constitution and the spirit of connecting all families. It will be read by Elder Rambo from Kelso, Washington who is serving a mission in the Charlotte area.

This is the right place, drive on he said,

A Salt Lake view from Brigham''s bed.

And who drove on and lead the way?

Was me, Green Flake, …… *plus Oscar Crosby and Hark Lay.*

Three strong young men, I was nineteen.

Both saint and slave, I served the team.

We blazed the trail and sang our songs,

With hope the Lord would right all wrongs.

I am Green Flake, Green Flake I am.

I do not like the curse of Ham.

As pioneer, was glad to work,

Just set me free, and bless my curse.

How did I get to Great Salt Lake?
I'*'ll tell the tale of this Green Flake,*
Who was born in 1828.

From Carolina just north of South,
In Anson County, I came out.

Plantation fields were my green home.
We served master and did not roam.

A wedding gift at age of ten,
To James and Agnes Flake, so then,
This Green young boy became a Flake,
And all a move to Mississippi take.

Then Mormons came to preach God'*'s Word,*
James and Agnes the spirit heard.
Up river we move to Nauvoo,
And there I get me baptized too.

I was washed in Old Man River,
Set free from sin, sweet Lord deliver.
John Brown'*'s the man who baptized me.*
No, not the Brown of song history.

I, Green, was Black, and Brown was White,

Yet brothers we by gospel light.

The year was 1844.

I was sixteen, slave ten years more.

That year kept me a workin'' *hard,*

For Joseph Smith, a bodyguard.

That year he ran for president,

To set slaves free with payment sent.

The Mormon Book says this land,

Should sure be free for every man.

Joseph Smith had a plan,

To pay for freedom — *would that be grand!*

But Carthage Jail would end his life,

And set our course for joy and strife.

By 46 we left Nauvoo,

As Brigham''s lead, I blazed the view.

We found the place that God prepared,

Brown land turned green with water shared.

I built a cabin for the Flake''*s.*

Then trekked back East for goodness sakes.

I brought more Saints to Utah''*s life,*

And found dear Martha for my wife.

I paid vegetables for the right,

My sweet potato both day and night.

Master Flake went on a mission,

California, his position,

But a mule kicked his head and he was dead

Poor Agnes, his wife, came west in his stead.

I, Green Flake stayed in Salt Lake,

And worked for Flake''*s tithing sake.*

1854, I was set free,

With Brigham Young befriending me.

Our children would sit on Brigham''*s lap,*

For this and more I tip my cap.

I only wish for temple rights,

To say goodbye to Ham''s cursed plight.

I listened to a Bible plan,

At least as taught to me by man.

I do not like that Cain-Ham curse,

Could you please rethink that verse?

I raised my family in Salt Lake,

Till death did dare my Martha take.

The year was 1885.

I know in heaven she is alive.

I, Green Flake, moved to Idaho,

Faithful saint where e''*er I go.*

October 20, 1903

Is when the earth buried me.

In Union Cemetery, with Martha dear,

Is a Green and Black suit of a pioneer.

I am Green Flake, Green Flake I am.

I am now full blessed by Abraham.

On to heaven''*s great expansion,*

Father''*s house has many mansions.*

I am Green Flake, Green Flake I am.

Full blessed I am by Abraham.

Miriam B. Murphy
Beehive History 22

The names Green Flake, Hark Lay, and Oscar Crosby are inscribed on monuments and remembered by Utah school children as the three African American slaves who came to Utah with the first company of Mormon pioneers. Beyond that, most children and adults know little about the three men and even less about the free blacks, members of the James family, who also immigrated to Utah in 1847.

Green Flake, pioneer

Green Flake was born in Anson County, North Carolina, ca. 1828. In 1841 he traveled with his owners, James Madison and Agnes Love Flake, to Kemper County, Mississippi, where the family cleared land for a farm. During the winter of 1843-44 Madison, as he was called, and Agnes were baptized as members of the Mormon church and so was their servant Green. When the Flakes decided to join the main body of the church in Nauvoo, Green accompanied them. For a time he served as a bodyguard for Joseph Smith.

According to historian Leonard J. Arrington:
When Brigham Young organized the pioneer company in the spring of 1847, Madison Flake volunteered to send Green and his fine white 'mountain' carriage to carry the leader. Green was instructed to build a nice log house for the Flakes during the winter and have it ready for occupancy by 1848 when the family would begin the trek from the Missouri.

The log cabin on the left was reportedly built by Green Flake on his farm in Union. The other structures were built by a later owner. From Steven K. Madsen's A Union, Utah History (1981).

When Brigham Young became ill near the present Utah-Wyoming border on July 12, Green

Flake--as well as Hark Lay and Oscar Crosby--joined a group of men under Orson Pratt's leadership to find the best route through the mountains to their destination in the valley. They formed what is known as the advance company. Behind them were the main body of pioneers and a smaller group with the ailing Brigham Young.

The advance company proceeded down Echo Canyon, around Little Mountain, and through Emigration Canyon. The men used shovels, axes, and other tools to create a passable road for the main body of wagons to follow. Orson Pratt and Erastus Snow rode into the valley on July 21, and the following day, July 22, all of the immigrants, except Brigham Young's small group, entered the valley. Plowing, planting, and digging irrigation ditches occupied almost every man, including the African Americans. Green Flake, as instructed, also built a home for Madison and Agnes Flake. Some sources suggest that Green accompanied Brigham Young east in the fall of 1847, taking the Flakes' wagon and then returning to Utah with the family in 1848.

In 1850 Madison Flake went to California where he was killed in an accident. When his widow Agnes decided to go to California with the Charles C. Rich company, she left Green Flake in Salt Lake City to "work for the Church, as a way of paying the family's back tithing."

Arrington stated:
Green worked for Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball in a variety of capacities for a year or two, and then was given his freedom and a plot of ground at Union Fort, in the Salt Lake Valley....He thereupon married Martha Crosby and at Union, on the east side of 9th East, they grew garden crops, maintained an orchard, and bread fine livestock. They had two children.

Green probably developed at least a small herd of cattle, for he had his own registered livestock brand--his initials, GF, with a bar above them.

Another account says that Green, Martha, and their son Abraham purchased some 20 acres of land in Union for $1,880 from James Godfrey ca. 1881. Although the Flakes raised much of their own food, Green also "worked for others who needed a good man. He was a big man, weighing nearly 200 pounds."

The energetic Green may also have tried his hand at prospecting. Historian Ronald G. Coleman states that Green and his brother-in-law Miles Litzford (or Litchford), after limited success in the Bingham Canyon area, located several claims in the Big Cottonwood Mining District: Evergreen, Abraham Lincoln. Lake Cross, Union Blue, and Rainbow. Lack of capital to develop the claims led the men to sell out in 1871 to the Elevator Prospecting Company, one of two mining companies organized by blacks that year.

Green and Martha Flake were active members of the LDS ward in Union. In addition to tithing, he made donations to building funds for the Union Ward and the Salt Lake Temple. He was a good neighbor by all accounts, extending a helping hand without being asked. He was also noted for his fine singing voice. Some accounts claim that Green maintained the friendly relationship with Brigham Young that began on the overland trek and that when the pioneer leader died in 1877 Green helped to dig his grave.

Although children of African American descent could and did attend school alongside whites in Utah, territorial law prohibited blacks from voting and from serving on juries and in the legislature until the "free, white" qualification was deleted on February 5, 1868. The 1870 census

shows four black children attending school in Union. Some half-dozen black families lived in the area, and Green Flake seems to have been the leading figure among them.

Sometime after his wife's death in 1885, Green moved to Idaho to live with his son Abraham, until his own death on October 20, 1903. Both Martha and Green Flake are buried in the Union Cemetery. Arrington wrote:

An exciting event in Green's later life was an invitation to attend the Jubilee Pioneer Celebration of the settlement of the Salt Lake Valley in 1897. One of the small handful of persons who were in the Pioneer Company who were still alive, Green was given a special certificate which he proudly hung in his home.

Much less is known about Oscar Crosby and Hark Lay. Both men traveled to Utah with a group of Mississippi Mormons that made a difficult journey from the South to Winter Quarters and then west with the first pioneer company in 1847. Like Green Flake, Crosby and Lay helped forge a road through Emigration Canyon and worked to establish the initial settlement in the Salt Lake Valley.

Oscar Crosby, born in Virginia ca. 1815, left Utah in the early 1850s with William Crosby, his owner, who was headed for the Mormon settlement at San Bernardino, California. Since California was a free state, Oscar could have claimed his freedom upon arrival there. He died in Los Angeles in 1870. Hark Lay (Wales is sometimes shown as another surname) was born in Mississippi ca. 1825. According to Coleman:

Hark Lay, the slave of William Lay, was married to a slave owned by either George or John Bankhead. William Lay was planning to move to San Bernardino and did not have the funds to purchase Hark's wife. He attempted to find other solutions to the problem, but the record is unclear as to whether or not the couple were able to avoid separation.

Isaac and Jane Manning James and their sons Sylvester and Silas were the first free blacks to settle in Utah. They immigrated with the Ira Eldredge company, arriving in the Salt Lake Valley on September 19, 1847. Both Isaac and Jane had embraced the Mormon faith before they met in Nauvoo, Illinois. Jane and her brother had worked for Joseph and Emma Smith, and after the Mormon prophet's murder she "resided in Brigham Young's home." She was living there when she met and married Isaac.

In the spring of 1848 the Jameses became the parents of Mary Ann, the first black child born in Utah. Coleman noted:
Like many early pioneers, the James family experienced difficult times and sought assistance from more fortunate neighbors, a consideration they returned by sharing their later good fortune. Slowly the family's financial status improved, and by 1865, they were doing relatively well. In addition to a land claim and a home, they owned household items and a small number of livestock. Isaac listed farming as his occupation, but between 1849 and 1851 he also worked as a coachman for Brigham Young. Sylvester James was listed in 1861 [he was then about age 16] as a member of the Nauvoo Legion and was in possession of his ten pounds of ammunition and musket.

Jane Manning James became the matriarch of Utah's black community. Poised and dignified, she was widely admired. Mormon leader Joseph Fielding Smith spoke at her funeral in 1908.

By the end of 1847, Coleman estimates, there were perhaps a dozen African Americans living in Utah. From that small number the black community would grow and change during the next century and a half. Although they shared the pioneering era with Euro-Americans and participated in Utah's later development, African Americans faced difficulties and challenges unknown to most of their white neighbors. That they endured these with remarkable courage is their monument to the human spirit.

Sources: Ronald G. Coleman, "A History of Blacks in Utah, 1825-1910" (Ph.D. diss., University of Utah, 1980); Leonard J. Arrington, "Black Pioneer Was Union Fort Settler," *The Pioneer* (SUP), September-October 1981

Black side bar 2 - green

Daily Herald

Green Flake

Green Flake is one of the three black pioneers whose names are immortalized on the back of the Brigham Young monument in Salt Lake City.

He was born in North Carolina as a slave and was given as a wedding present to James and Agnes Flake when he was 10 years old. Green and the Flake family later moved to Mississippi where the Flakes joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"My sense is there was not coercion to make the slaves join," said historian Margaret Young. "I do not know how much they were taught, but they did not have to join."

A few weeks after James and Agnes Flake were baptized, records show Green and one other Flake slave were baptized, too. The Flake family records, which include a biography of William Jordan Flake by Osmer Flake, state that the family decided to travel to Illinois to gather with the Mormons in 1844.

They gave each slave a choice whether or not to stay in Mississippi. Green Flake and another slave named Liz Flake chose to make the journey.

Green and the Flake family arrived in Nauvoo, Ill., in April 1844.

Three years later, Green Flake was pointed out as one of the stronger slaves and chosen to join Brigham

Young, then president of the church, and the Vanguard Company as the first pioneers to reach the Salt Lake Valley.

Later in his life, Flake taught himself to write and recorded some of what he saw on the pioneer trail. His exact words, with many spelling corrections, were printed in "The Book of the Pioneers," a publication of the Utah Semi-centennial Commission.

Flake wrote about meeting up with the Pawnee who acted "war like" and demanded pay for crossing the country.

"After President Young counseled with them by paying them something, they give us permission to cross the country," Flake said.

Many folklore records indicate that Green Flake was driving Brigham Young's wagon when he first spotted the valley.

"When Brigham Young said, 'This is the right place. Drive on,' guess who those words were directed to," Margaret Young said. "The driver, Green Flake."

Green built a cabin for the Flake family and returned to Nebraska to lead them to their new home.

On this second journey, he fell in love with Martha Crosby and paid the Crosby family with vegetables for the right to marry her.

After the family settled in the Salt Lake Valley, James Flake left for a church mission to California and was killed when he got kicked in the head by a mule, Margaret Young said.

Agnes Flake left Green to the care of Brigham Young and moved to California. Multiple sources indicate Green worked for Brigham Young for about a year, but it is unclear whether or not he was considered his slave. Other sources indicate Green was used as tithing to the church from the Flake family.

Dale Bills a spokesperson for the LDS Church, said many pioneers offered time and labor as tithing to the church, but there are no records to indicate if they served for themselves or other people.

In 1854, Amasa Lyman, an LDS Church leader in California, wrote Brigham Young a letter on behalf of Agnes Flake. Flake was sick and poor in California and wanted Young to sell Green and send her the money.

The letter recorded as "letter number 185" in the Brigham Young files of letters at LDS Church Archives reads: "Sister Agnes Flake wishes me to inquire of you if there is any chance for her to receive any help by way of the Negro man she left when she came here. She has a family on her hands for which to provide. Her health is also very delicate health and if she could realize something from this quarter it would be a benefit to her. Thomas I. Williams told me if he could, he would purchase the Negro and pay for him."

Margaret Young said Brigham Young's reply skirted around the issue.

"Brigham Young wrote back and said something like, 'Yes, Green Flake worked for me for about a year, but that last I heard he was poor in health,'" she said. "But the truth is they were good friends, and Green and Martha's children have memories of sitting on Brigham Young's lap."

This story appeared in The Daily Herald on page A2.

Article views: 4

Documentary chronicles history of blacks in LDS church

Jennifer Dobner - THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MURRAY -- Elijah Abel, Jane Manning James and Green Flake hold a unique, but rather obscure place in Mormon history. All three were members of their church in the mid-1800s and all three were black.

They also stayed faithful when The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day denied blacks full membership in the denomination.

Abel was the first black man ordained to the church priesthood in 1832. James worked in the home of church founder Joseph Smith and followed the faith's next president, Brigham Young, across the frontier to Utah in 1848. Flake came to Utah as well, but as the slave of white members. He was freed by Young in 1854.

Now, filmmakers Darius Gray and Margaret Young have chronicled those stories and the struggles of other black Latter-day Saints in a new documentary, "Nobody Knows: The Untold Story of Black Mormons."

"To me it's parallel with the story of African-Americans, period," said Gray, who is black and has been a member of the church since 1964. "We talk about the black history and contributions being either lost, stolen or strayed generally, and it's the same within the LDS Church."

Nearly six years in the making, the film is an extension of a longtime partnership between Gray, a former broadcaster, and Young, who is white and a writing teacher at the church-owned Brigham Young University. Together, the pair have written three books on black Mormons.

Wrapped in soulful, black spirituals, the 72-minute film takes viewers on a journey from the days of Mormon pioneers to the 1960s civil rights era, when some university athletics teams refused to compete against BYU because of the way blacks were treated by the church. It ends with current black church members sharing their own stories -- good and bad.

"We're not hiding anything, we're not sugarcoating anything," Young said. "We're telling a very difficult history, but the people who are telling it have come through it."

Tamu Smith, of Provo, is one of those storytellers.

"It's liberating," Smith said of sharing her struggle to fit in and find other people of color in her

faith. "We don't talk about black Mormon history and it's sad. Every person in the church needs to see this."

Church history shows that founder Smith granted blacks full membership in the faith not long after founding the church in 1830. Brigham Young reversed the policy after the Latter-day Saints came to Utah.

On June 8, 1978, a revelation announced by then-president Spencer W. Kimball extended the priesthood to every worthy male member "without regard for race or color."

Since 1978, the church membership has grown significantly in Brazil, the Caribbean and Africa, where the church now claims more than 250,000 Saints. Worldwide, the church has 13 million members.

An interview subject in the film in addition to his behind-camera role, Gray said black Mormons needed to tell their own story instead of letting others continue to interpret their history.

"It's important to be validated, and it's important to share it with our white brothers and sisters so [they] can have an appreciation for who we are and from whence we've come," he said. "Part of it is sweet, part of it is bitter, but it's our story."

Young said a goal of the film, which was not produced in conjunction with the church, is to build a bridge between blacks and whites both in and out of the church.

Gray and Young have been shopping their project to film festivals across the U.S. To date it's been shown in Dallas, Detroit and San Diego, where so many turned out that festival organizers had to move the showing to a larger theater. They hope to find a distributor that will allow the film, which was funded largely through a University of Utah grant, to be widely seen.

Earlier this month, the film drew a crowd of more than 100 at the Foursite Film Festival, in Ogden.

"This was very impressive," schoolteacher Tamara Lei Peters said. "There have been so many questions about black people in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It made me weep in a few places."

Peters said she knew nothing about black LDS history before seeing the film.

David Rowe, who teaches at the Salt Lake Theological Seminary, knew the history, but said he was surprised by the film.

"I would say it was bracingly forthright about the black Mormons's struggle," said the self-described evangelical. "I didn't expect them to allow quite as much criticism along with the commendation. I expected a bit more of P.R. gloss, but I didn't find it overly romanticized."

Mormon Jeanette Lambert of Salt Lake City said perhaps the film can begin to heal the divisiveness wrought by the past treatment of black church members. Sadly, some old doctrines that support the idea that blacks are less than full church members are still taught, said Lambert, a hospice nurse.

"I think there needs to be a concerted effort made to acknowledge that some things were wrong. It's a part of the repentance process," said the mother of two teenagers.

Early Latter-day Saints like Abel, James and Flake, "should be some of our heroes," she said.

On the Net:

http://www.untoldstoryofblackmormons.com/

Article views: 114

Black Youths Helped Blaze Mormon Trail

Will Bagley

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In most ways, Lizzie Flake was a typical young pioneer of Utah. Born in 1833 in North Carolina, she followed the James M. Flake family to Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1843, to Winter Quarters in 1846 and to Utah in 1848. The Flake family lost a son at Nauvoo and buried an infant daughter at Winter Quarters. At age fifteen, Lizzie walked 1,100 miles from the Missouri River to the Salt Lake Valley, tending babies and driving cattle along the way. There was one striking difference between Lizzie Flake and most Mormons: She was among the twenty black children who crossed the plains to Utah in 1848.

Legally, she was not a member of the Flake family. She was their property. Yet the Flakes considered Lizzie an invaluable member of their family. After Brigham Young in 1850 sent James Flake on a gold-mining mission, during which a recalcitrant mule threw him and fatally broke his neck, Lizzie followed Flake's widow, Agnes, to California. They crossed the Mojave Desert in 1851 and helped found San Bernardino.

Slavery was legal in Utah Territory, but California was a free state. Lizzie was now a free woman. Agnes Flake had grown up in the comfort of a North Carolina plantation. When she arrived in San Bernardino, her family's fortune was wrecked and she had tuberculosis. Lizzie stayed with her former mistress until Agnes died, running the household and caring for the children. "She was the best woman that lived," Lizzie mourned when Agnes died. "I love her better than anyone in the world."

When he returned to Utah, family member William Flake encouraged Lizzie to stay in California and build a family of her own. She married Charles Rowan, a barber and teamster, and together they helped found San Bernardino's still-thriving black community. The Rowans prospered and had three children. Their daughter, Alice, was said to be the first black woman to teach in a white school.

Lizzie Rowan died in 1903 and is buried beneath an impressive granite marker in San Bernardino. The Flake family of Snowflake, Arizona, still cherish the silver set she gave William as a wedding present. Lizzie Rowan's story is only one of dozens told in Violet T. Kimball's just-published *Stories of Young Pioneers in Their Own Words*, aimed at readers ten to fifteen years

old. Kimball describes what daily life was like on the trail and how children gathered buffalo chips and hauled water. Chapters describe the dangers, animals, chores, romances and Indians they met on the way West, and how after an exhausting day, pioneers could dance and sing.

The epic of the Sager family tells a lot about America before the coming of malls. Rocky Mountain fever struck down both parents on the way to Oregon in 1844. "In twenty-six days both our parents were laid in the grave, and we were orphans, the oldest fourteen years old and the youngest five months old," recalled Catherine Sager.Theophilos Dagon drove the children's wagon to the Whitman Mission near today's Walla Walla, Washington. But even there they could not escape the danger of the frontier. Cayuse Indians killed Francis and John Sager at the mission in 1847.

In the old days, when every other movie and television show was a Western, kids grew up playing cowboys and Indians and living in the past. In the computer age, our children live in the future. Violet Kimball has done young and old a great favor.