

History Question of the Month

Previous histories written of Butlerville, indicate that a Thomas Wilkins or Wilkinson was the first person to build a permanent home in Butlerville. In actuality, his name was Thomas Wilkerson. Who was he and when did he move to the area.

Answer

Thomas Wilkerson was born January 17, 1797, in Richmond Kentucky. His grandfather was a close friend of George Washington and was with him in the same boat when they crossed the Potomac in December of 1776. Thomas' first wife died in 1825. He married Eliza Followell on September 21, 1827 in Indiana. They moved to Illinois where they had nine children. They joined the Mormon Church and came to Utah in 1852 as part of the Robert Wimmer Company of 130 wagons and 230 people. They left Council Bluffs during July of 1852, arriving in Salt Lake on September 15, 1852. The family settled in Salt Lake. In 1869 Thomas applied for a 160 acre Homestead Grant. The property was located on the top of Butler Hill, on the Butler Bench. Thomas would have been 72 years old. In 1870, his son-in-law, who was married to two of his daughters, was called to settle Kanab. In December of that year, one of his daughters was killed in a fire at Kanab, while trying to rescue 7 children from a burning room. The rigors of homesteading gravelly, sandy land were probably too much for an older couple. After receiving a patent for their property in July of 1874, they moved to Payson, Utah. While in Payson, they had a son accused of murder, tried, found guilty, sentenced to death and executed in 1879. They then moved to Kanab to live with their daughter. Thomas died December 10, 1882 and his wife, Eliza, died January 4, 1883, both are buried in Kanab, Utah.

While it is not known for certain if Thomas Wilkerson was the first to build a home, others were also living in Butler in 1869, he certainly was one of the first. He was the first to receive a patent under the Homestead Act.