

Born: January 11, 1840, in Exeter, Illinois, to Jonathan Calkins Wright and Rebecca Wheeler Wright.

Died: February 24, 1915, in Bennington, Idaho, at the age of 76.

At the age of 10 Amos walked across the plains (1500 miles) from Missouri to Salt Lake City, Utah. As his pioneer company rested at Ft. Laramie he became fascinated with the Indians, a fascination that lasted a lifetime. He moved with his parents to Brigham City, Utah in 1854, and he and his brothers and sister played with the Indian children near their home. He learned from the Indians when he was young, and when not working or doing chores, he could usually be found in the Indian camp at the edge of town. As an adult he dressed in buckskins and moccasins and his hair was long most of the time.

The Indians taught Mose to track. He learned to ride a horse, bareback, Indian-style that made it possible to ride by holding on to the horse's mane and neck with his hands with one foot over the back of the horse, and then switch and ride on the other side while going full speed. He learned the Shoshone language fluently; some Bannock, Nez Pierce, the universal sign language of the Indians, and understood Arapahoe. In Wyoming his Indian name was Peah Tibo (meaning Big White Man). In Lemhi, Idaho, his name was Toop-Si-Po-Ide (Young Man From Above) and two of his friends were Anka-Toah (Red Boy) and Tab-Boots (Rabbit). His horse was named Toshats.

In May of 1855 and at the age of 15, Amos was called to be a missionary to the Indians for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS), commonly known as the Mormons. He and Lewis Shurtliff, along with a few others, were called to explore and settle the Salmon River country of Idaho. The company went by way of Bear River City, through Malad valley and crossed the Snake River at a point south of Idaho Falls. Arriving in the Salmon River valley a fort was established and stockades built. Early in the spring of 1856 crops were planted at what is now known as Ft. Lemhi. Mose's knowledge of the Shoshone Indian language served as a great help to him and his companions during their stay in that section, and later on in his life.

During this mission an incident occurred which showed the bravery of Amos. It was the custom to place all of the stock in a corral at night. One morning just as the stock was turned out, a band of about 25 Indians rushed from the nearby river bottom, and drove all of the animals off to a bluff, about two and a half miles distant, leaving only one old mare. Amos was asked to go and meet with the Indians and try to induce them to return the stock. As was customary with him, the only point he considered was, "it is my duty," not considering the

danger in connection with the undertaking. He was able to negotiate with the Indians for the return of the animals and they entered into a treaty with the little band of whites, which lasted during the life of the mission.

He subsequently served several missions to the Indians (as many as seven) and lived among them from age 15 to 61, mostly in the Wind River country of Wyoming. When called on his first mission to the Shoshone Indian reservation in Wyoming, Amos was refused admittance by anti-Mormon Indian agents. He preached to the Indians anyway, after sneaking onto the reservation through a remote mountain pass. The agents were furious, but could not catch the Mormon missionary who hid out during the day and taught the gospel at night. Within a 10-day period, he converted and baptized more than 300 Indians, including Chief Washakie, to the LDS faith.

Amos returned from the Salmon River country, at age 16 ½, and the mailmen who carried mail through the northern settlements of Utah needed an interpreter for the Indians. The men who were contracted to carry the mail hired Amos to act in this capacity and shared their wages with him.

Amos' next job at age 18 was with the Pony Express, where he rode from Salt Lake City, Utah, carrying the U.S. mail west 500 miles by way of Ruby Valley and Carson City, Nevada, for a period of two years. He had many varied experiences. Once in bringing a cargo of gold from the mines in Nevada, they came to a fork in the road and debated which way to go. Amos was impressed to go one way, but there was a difference of opinion. He said, "Let's stop here and meditate while the horses rest." When they were ready to start again, Amos said, "I'm impressed to go this way," and almost in unison they agreed. At the end of the day they were overtaken by some riders who told of a group of bandits seeking gold. These outlaws had attacked a party on the trail that Amos and his group had rejected.

The following story shows Mose's physical endurance: Major Howard Egan was one of the Pony Express riders on the very first run and a pathfinder who laid out 300 miles of trail for them. He was superintendent of the line from Salt Lake City to Carson City and also Amos' boss. Major Egan brought a valuable pair of mules from Kentucky and shortly afterwards the mules were stolen. Mose was offered a big reward if he could find out who did it and bring the mules back to him in Salt Lake City. It took him almost a year to find out they were at a ranch in the Sierra-Nevada Mountains.

It was the habit of those who had stolen the mules to turn them loose in the evening to water at a spring about a half mile from the ranch. He notified his

employer and upon being asked if he could devise some way of recovering them, replied in the affirmative. He was given a lay-off, and after proceeding to the place he secreted himself in a bunch of tules waiting the time of watering the mules. Being a good hand with the lariat he roped one and mounted it; the other one followed. After riding about two miles, he dismounted and put the other end of the lariat on the other mule, and continued his journey. He rode these mules alternately, bareback, for nearly 250 miles without stopping to feed himself or the animals. After covering this distance, he traveled by night and hid during the day. He traveled this way until he reached Salt Lake and delivered the mules to an elated Major Egan. When asked why did he not travel the same during the forepart of the trip, he said, "I didn't have time to stop until I got a safe distance from that watering place."

Once when he had station duty, a famous author, Richard Burton, from London came through on a stagecoach. After learning that Amos could speak the Shoshone language, Burton stayed for two days and took lessons. Mr. Burton mentioned him in his book named "[City of the Saints](#)." After the pony express went out of business, Amos herded cattle for the LDS Church near Promontory Point, Utah.

Mose was quite a storyteller, dramatizing stories as he went. He was barred from dances in Brigham City for showing off and twirling the girls around too many times. It made him mad because the charge was so trivial. He took a dare to ride a mule up the mill-race of the grist mill in town. This was a large wooden and metal open culvert, down which the water ran to turn the water wheel and furnish power for the mill. He not only rode up, he rode back down too, which was the talk of the town.

Amos married Catherine Roberts in 1861. During the summer of 1862 he and his brother, David, freighted provisions to Fort Boise, as it was then called, and during the following year he worked in the mines at Helena and Virginia City, Montana. In August 1864 he moved to Liberty, Idaho, and remained there until May 1865, when he moved to Bennington, Idaho, with their first two children.

In 1867 Amos was called to act as a mediator between a band of Utes and Shoshones bent on driving settlers out of Round Valley (Idaho). When the early settlers, sent by Brigham Young, first arrived in the Bear Lake Valley, they had an agreement with the Indians to stay out of Round Valley and the Big Spring area. The Indians fished and hunted in this area, and were promised that the settlers would leave it alone so that the Indians could continue to come there and spend the summers collecting food.



Round Valley is at the southern end of Bear Lake, near Laketown, Utah. There are hills surrounding most of the valley. Big Spring originates almost opposite the entrance to the valley, and runs from there into Bear Lake.

Not long after the early settlers started to move into the area, some of the settlers decided that Round Valley was too desirable to leave alone, and began moving into the valley and building cabins etc. The Indians were outraged. They had been promised that the settlers would stay out of Round Valley. One night, near the entrance to the valley, the Indians put on their war paint and started their rituals, preliminary to attacking the settlers in the valley. Chief Washakie had vowed to annihilate all people and had his warriors ready. Amos was sent for to resolve the situation. After establishing his bravery by tearing open his shirt and daring the Indians to shoot him in the chest, Amos negotiated peace and prevented what would have been a bloody attack on the Bear Lake settlement.

Amos loved and understood the Indians. His field in Bennington was reserved for the Indians as they passed through the valley each summer. At times he would ferry as many as 600 of them across Bear River at Pole Ford. They built large fires of willows and did the bear dance; he was right in the middle of it. Mose would kill a beef for a feast. He said of them when they camped on his farm, "They saved my life many times, hence so long as I have anything I will share with them."

From the time of his settlement in Bennington until his death, Mose was busy, both in political and religious affairs. Amos was the Bennington schoolmaster for many years and served as Bishop of the Mormon Church there for 30 years.

Amos was quite an orator and in demand to speak at funerals and 4th of July celebrations, which made him popular enough to get elected into the Idaho Legislature twice. The Test Oath Act allowed any qualified voter to challenge any other voter to sign an oath that he was not a polygamist or was not affiliated with any religious sect that believed in it. This took the right to vote and hold office away from the Mormons. There were only three Mormons in the House before Amos was elected and they asked Amos to give a speech in their defense, presenting their side of the issue before the third reading of the bill. They went to see the Speaker of the House, Mr. Baldwin, just as a group of anti-Mormons were leaving. Their ears pricked up and they hung around to hear what was going on.

Mr. Baldwin denied the request for Amos to give a speech, but the Mormon-haters heckled Mr. Baldwin into letting the country clod make a fool of him. Amos' temper flared and he decided he'd dress the part of a country clod! He took off his suit, dressed in his plaid shirt, no tie, homespun pants, beaded belt, and moccasins. He was threatened at gunpoint not to make the speech, but he did. The vote was taken and he had persuaded four voters besides the Mormons to vote against it. This was remarkable considering the tense and bitter situation. James H. Hawley (a future governor of Idaho) congratulated him, wanted to know where he gotten his education, and said "That was the greatest oration I have heard in my life. Although I was risking my political career, I voted against the bill a few minutes ago." Others who heard the speech told him privately they agreed with him but didn't dare change their vote. However, the bill did pass and became law on February 3, 1885. Amos, who was very patriotic, felt bad because for the next 10 years he could not hold office or vote because of his religion.

At age 45 Amos married his second wife, 16-year old Martha Loella Weaver. He began a second family while avoiding and outsmarting anti-polygamist U.S. marshals for years. He had 24 children, 12 by each wife.

(Submitted by great grand-daughter, Linda Stephens Walker, June 2000)

