

Isaac Fox, My Great-Grandfather: A Three-Time Missionary to the Hawaiian Saints

by Melanie Fox Harris



My purpose today is to introduce my great-grandfather, Isaac Fox, to you as an example of missionary work in Laie during the 1880's and commend us all to follow his example of journal writing. Isaac was born one year after his parents and other siblings of age joined the church in Leeds, Yorkshire, England. The date was 17 May 1849. He served two missions to Hawaii in the 1880's and another mission to Iosepa in Skull Valley, Utah in 1895. There is much more to this story, but first I would like to share the story about the path that led me to him.

In 1961 as I was completing high school I wanted to apply to a college for further education. Though I was raised in Salt Lake City, Utah, I didn't want to go to the University of Utah because it was too pagan. I didn't want to go to BYU Provo because it was too big. I didn't want to go to Ricks College because it was too much "Idaho." But then I heard there was a Church College in Hawaii and knew it was just "right." Small enough, church enough, and far enough away from home. My roommates were from all over the world—Hawaii, Samoa, Tonga, New Zealand, Asia, United States, etc. I count them as my friends even today. My eyes opened to the varied cultures of the world and I went home after that year determined to earn a degree in English and return to the islands to teach. However, I took a detour in that quest because I met Carl Harris, a returned missionary from Samoa, at the University of Utah and we married in 1964. In 1968 Carl was offered three different opportunities, Ph.D. work at Cornell or Illinois or teach psychology at the Church College of Hawaii. Using prayer and fasting, we felt prompted to accept the CCH opportunity and that has made all the difference based on other things that have happened in our lives.

During our time at CCH raising our young family, Jerry Loveland mentioned to me that my great-grandfather, Isaac Fox, was an important missionary to Laie in the 1880's and had a lot to do with establishing the Laie Band and had a marvelous journal. I was surprised because my parents had never mentioned anything about him. All I knew was that they would go to Iosepa on Memorial Days now and then with my Dad's brothers and sisters, but they never took us children with them. When we left Hawaii and returned to Utah, I went to the Salt Lake City Archives of the Church and read for two hours in his journal and wept with the saga of his life—losing wives and children in childbirth, going on missions while trying to farm a piece of land to make a livelihood, and being willing to answer yet another call to go on a mission. At the time they would not allow me to make a copy of this journal.

Fast forward now to 2006, when Carl and I were able to be service volunteers at BYU-Hawaii where I met Matt Kester, the Archivist who was preparing a presentation on the

early days in Laie for the 2006 Mormon Pacific Historical Society Conference. I asked if he knew my great-grandfather, Isaac Fox. “Yes,” he replied, “and I have his journal in the archives.” Of course, I was thrilled and asked how I could get a copy. “I’ll make you one.” In reply I asked what I could do to express my appreciation for something that was so special for me. “You could index it if you would like to.” So for the next two months, I worked diligently to accomplish the task. The whole process was thrilling to me because I didn’t know this man at all and felt so thrilled to discover each new detail.

One of the first steps in indexing is to read through the journal and highlight names, places, and events. As I began this process, my brother came to visit us in Hawaii and the first place I took him was to the Pali. We went on a day when the wind was blowing fiercely. Here is my brother, 6’4,” 200+ pounds, with his 60’s ponytail blowing behind as he faces into the wind. We look over the edge of the railing and see this tiny little road cut into the rock wall and marvel that anybody would ever go over that in such a wind. The very next day as I continued my indexing work, I read the following passage and ran to share it with my brother.



Honolulu is on the Island of Oahu. We left Honolulu this morning to go to Laie. We went on horseback and we went over a mountain called pollie (Pali) and we gradually ascended until finally we find ourselves on the top of the pass and the sight is grand. Hundreds of feet down a perpendicular wall of rock, you see the beautiful fields—rice and cane and all kind of trees—and the road to go down is cut in the solid rock and it appears almost impossible to get down. And I never felt a more heavy wind—Chinese with the loads had to lay right down to save themselves from being blown off the dugway. Brother Young’s children was (were) lifted from the ground. After arriving at Laie the natives came with wreaths of flowers and put them around our necks and sang for us.

(Entry from Isaac Fox’s Journal #1, May 14, 1883, page 4.

Edited for punctuation and spelling)

After reading, my brother got this sweet look on his face and we had this nice little bond of turning hearts to each other and turning us to our fathers. I thought—“There is one really good reason for keeping a record.”

It also made me curious to know more about my great-grandfather’s life before and after his mission. I know from my grandfather’s journal that Isaac’s family was baptized into the church in Sheffield, England in 1848, a year prior to Isaac’s birth. In 1860 when Isaac was 11, his family emigrates from England to America. They stay a few days in New York then travel to Winter Quarters where the family stays while his father goes to Florence, Nebraska to buy a wagon and oxen and supplies to cross the plains. On the

plains Isaac entertains the company with his songs. Again from my grandfather John's journal I learned that in later years, George Q. Cannon asks Isaac if he was the young man who sang across the plains. They arrive in Salt Lake in time for October conference and then head to Lehi to begin their life among the saints in America.

The following information and pictures are supplied by Russell Felt, a great-grandson of Isaac and Lucy Hartley living in Lehi, Utah. I found Russell as I continued to ask questions at a Fox family reunion—another marker on this path to learn about Isaac Fox.



Christiana Gaddie
(1st Wife died in childbirth)



Elizabeth Zimmerman
(2nd wife had 4 children
died in childbirth)



Lucy Hartley
(3rd wife raised 3 children
from 2nd wife and had 4 more)

Isaac marries his first wife, Christiana Gaddie, 22 September 1876. She dies in childbirth a year later. In 1881 he marries Elizabeth Zimmerman, my great-grandmother. They were blest to have a first son in 1882. When Isaac receives his first mission call to the Sandwich Islands, their son is 11 months old and Elizabeth is pregnant with my grandfather, John, which I didn't recognize until much later into the indexing process. While on his mission Isaac is frantic to receive mail from home and his journal mentions awaiting the mail and being so disappointed when the letters do not come. Later I could understand his concern. He doesn't want to lose another wife in childbirth and is anxious for a letter to reassure him that everything is all right. Fortunately, the birth takes place safely for both mom and babe—a joyous letter, indeed.

After this mission, Isaac returns home to Lehi, Utah in 1886 to greet his beloved wife and son, Isaac Jr, three years old and John now two years old. Their reunion is sweet and they begin once again to gather materials so they can build their own house. By December, 1886, a third son is born, Clyde Samuel. Three years later in 1889, Isaac is called again to the Sandwich Islands. This time he leaves Elizabeth with three little boys to care for so she goes to live with her parents again. Both sides of the family are very proud that Isaac can serve a mission and do all they can to support this effort. When he returns from this mission, they are able to have one more child, Libbie, but Elizabeth dies

a week later due to complications from the birth. Isaac feels that he can't care for a small baby and still provide for the family, so he sends baby Libbie to be raised by Elizabeth's cousin and her husband while he and John and Clyde go to live with Grandmother Fox. His oldest son, Isaac Jr., goes to live with the Zimmerman's to help them with the chores and yard work. After three years, he is called on a mission to help the Hawaiians settle in Utah so they could be close to a temple. So he marries Lucy Hartley and immediately goes to Iosepa taking his three boys and new wife to begin his third mission. Isaac and Lucy go on to have four more children of their own. My grandfather, John, as one of the children being raised by Lucy remembers the great love that she showed to all the children of Isaac and he, personally, was grateful for her generous spirit.



Isaac Jr., John, Clyde, Libbie



Isaac and Lucy Hartley Family including children of Elizabeth Zimmerman. Children from left: Rulon, Isaac Jr., Norine, Melba, John, Harold, Christie, Clyde

Now back to the process of indexing Isaac's journal. After I read through the two journals underlining names, places and events I set up a table to note the various categories and list the page numbers. With each of these examples I have only included the first page of a larger document. As I continued with this process, I also felt a timeline of Isaac's mission would be helpful so I began one of those. See Appendix A and B.

Isaac spends one week in Laie, then begins a mission tour of Kauai which is a real challenge. He goes alone on the boat, is seasick, and can't speak Hawaiian. The missionary that is to meet him, does not. A Hawaiian family notices his plight and invites him into their hale. He tries to make them understand that he needs to find Elder Gardner, that he is seasick and can't eat. It is very disheartening for him. After several days of going from place to place, he finds Elder Gardner and they go to various villages convening meetings and trying to build up the gospel in the lives of the people. This takes about 2 ½ months and then they return to Oahu. For another 2 ½ months he works on the plantation, wrestling cattle, repairing fences, making mortar for the chapel, etc.



Photos courtesy of BYU-Hawaii Archives

One of the big things for which they prepare is the dedication of the new chapel and a visit from King David Kalakaua. This is what he writes.

... We expect the King will be at our conference on the sixth of October and we are making great preparations for him. Tonight I was appointed on a committee with four others to receive the King at the house... Wednesday, October 3. Today I have been decorating gates and preparing for the King... Saturday, October 6, This morning all was (were) up by daylight stirring around. At eight-thirty o'clock the King's vessel was in sight. At nine-thirty the procession began to form. Brother Marchant was appointed pilot. Brother Reed received the King on the shore with a speech. Twenty-four horse



men under the supervision of H A. Woolley was to escort him from the beach to the house. The Relief Societies and Mutuals was (were) formed in two lines one on either side of the road by Brother Gardner. The Sunday Schools was (were) formed into line in the front of the house by Brother Pack. The Kahana choir met him also on the Beach. The Laie choir was at the house. The king landed at ten forty and after the reception on the beach came on horseback through the two lines of people and under arches beautifully decorated and the people

cheering him as he past and the church bell tolling as the marched along. The distance from the beach to the house is a mile. President Partridge and wife, brother, and Young and others—myself also was appointed to receive him at the house. When he came to the door the President was introduced to him then President introduced us to him, and I had the honor of shaking hands with him

Photos courtesy of BYU-Hawaii Archives



After changing his clothes he took lunch then went to meeting and as the King entered the house the people all raise to their feet and the choir sang a hymn the composed for him. After singing, prayer and singing, the dedication prayer was given by the President. Then the King spoke, and he spoke well. Was pleased with the reception. Told the people to stick to the church and hearken to the counsel of the Elders. The choir sang. A short speech by Mr. Cummings, the King's friend. Song. Remarks by the President. Hymn. Benediction by Brother Reed. The King and party and the elders went to the old meeting house to the feast which was native in style. All sat on the floor and ate with our fingers. After dinner all the people escorted the King to the beach. We all shook hands with and bid him goodbye. When he got in the boat he stood up, took off his hat and gave three cheers. The natives gave him two pigs, a barrel of poi and a lot of bananas. The King was very free. He is a fine looking man.

Entry from Isaac Fox's Journal #1
September 29, 1883, pages 30-33

Then Isaac is assigned to do a mission tour of the Big Island of Hawaii with Elder George Cluff which lasts another 2 ½ months. Again they travel from place to place encouraging the people to live the gospel and to have their meetings. They also check out the working of sugar mills as they traveled in order to use the information when they return to Laie to get sugar production started again.



Photos courtesy of BYU-Hawaii Archives

Isaac returns to Laie in December 1883 and repairs a water flume for the mill, fights off the fleas which are terrific, and uses his musical talents to plan a Christmas program, organize a choir, and sing a comic duet with Sister Young.

Back to the indexing now. I noticed themes which represented the work that Isaac did, the variety of talents and skills he developed, and his priesthood work. Consequently, I developed another table where these themes were emphasized as well as an Interesting Stories category. Again, this is just the first page of each index. (See Appendix C and D.)

Now back to Isaac. His mission continues with much hard work in the sugar mill in Laie—fixing boilers, repairing centrifugals, sacking the dried sugar, shipping the sugar, and planting more cane for the next year. He alternates this work with the work of the plantation—driving cattle to be slaughtered, meeting with the butcher, branding calves, gathering the work oxen, retrieving strays, shoeing a horse, skinning a cow, and a phrase he uses frequently, “out among the stock learning as much about them as I can.” He spends the first year of his mission laboring very hard, trying to learn Hawaiian, missing his family keenly, and having numerous opportunities for baptizing and rebaptizing the saints. He is anxious to be given more priesthood responsibility but because he is weak in speaking Hawaiian when April Conference business is read and assignments are given out for the next six months here is what he heard: “W. G. Farrell to teach school at Laie and Isaac Fox to take care of the stock.” He records: “Brother Brim spoke for the first time in native and occupied about one minute. Then I was called up and spoke in native but did not occupy one minute which made me feel very bad.” (Journal, 1, p.86.)

However, by the 3rd year in the mission, he is speaking enough Hawaiian to take charge of meetings, give a speech and, consequently is no longer in charge of the stock. He is instead leading the Laie choir, playing his fiddle, repairing the organ, teaching band, buying instruments, writing choir lessons and music for the band. He is appointed President of the Oahu conference and given authority to extend callings in the work.

One of the things that pleases me most about being able to index Isaac’s journal is to note his increased involvement with the Hawaiian saints in the missionary work. He learns who they are and what they can do. He tries to spell their names. He writes of the great faith of the Hawaiian elders who are helping on Oahu. “A native by the name of Kekuewa has just come from Laie to help us with our meeting tomorrow. He walked all the way a distance of 20 miles.” ... “I learned the president of the mission, by President Smith’s suggestion, called two natives to assist me in the ministry. Their names are Kealaka’ihonua and J. L. Kanikapu.” (Journal 2, p. 72-73.)



Photo courtesy of BYU-Hawaii Archives

In conclusion I would like to say that as I have made preparations for this presentation, it has been very satisfying to revisit the indexing I did last year and look at the various types of writing that Isaac used in his journals. So, of course, I had to create another table to represent what I found. (See Appendix E.)

This process is giving me an idea of how I can spread the spirit of Elijah to our family when we have a family reunion. For instance I can pick one of my charts and ask, “What do you want to hear from great-grandpa’s journal? Do you want to hear something funny.” I can go right down to my humor category which I will continue to build, and pull out a story. Or how about the Low Days? “Do you think everything was good for great-grandpa. No, do you realize on Christmas Eve everyone left and went to Honolulu and no one was left but him to take care of the stock all by himself? He felt so bad. And not long after they all got a “setting up” by President Smith. But then there were the High Days to be able to sit at the feet of President Smith as he gave powerful sermons.”

I would like to bear you my witness even though this is not a testimony meeting that this good man and all good men and women in the church who are willing to have faith, to sacrifice and be led by the Spirit are blessed with good lives. Even if you lose your family—your children, husbands or wives, He provides other ways for you to serve and care. I have seen this in my own life and have seen it in the life of my great-grandfather, Issac Fox, and bear you this witness in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

First page of Index – Isaac Fox Journal #1 from May 1, 1883-Dec 18, 1884

Indexing completed by Melanie Fox Harris, a great-granddaughter of Isaac Fox
(while serving as a volunteer at BYUH Jan 2006-July2006)

Administer	129,139
Allred, Sanford	97,98,100,104,105,108,110,111,132,140
Anapai	13
Apela (native)	8
Ashton, Jos.	80
Australia	1,2
Awa	45
Baker, W. O.	45
Baptize	13,19, 21,23,30,55,120,136,142
birthday	22
Bonapart	40,41,44
Brim, A.A.	1,3,27,65,67,70,71,72,76,77,84,85,86,88,89,91,92,96,100, 119,122,126,132,140
Campbell, Mrs.	117,133
Canoe	13,
Captain Cook	44
Caves	16
Choir	30,32,33,82,84,122,131,
Cluff, George	27,28,34,35,36,37,38,39,41,42,43,44,47,48,49,50,51,53,55,56,58,59,62,63,64,77, 85,86,91,92,94,97,98,100,119,120,121,122,122,134,134,135,138
Coles	9,11,26
Concert	84,
Conference	33,84,120,123,125
Culler, Bishop	80
Cumings	32
Donated	21,25,45,63,85
Eclipse	41
Farr, Enoch, Jr.	135, 136,138,146
Farrell, Wm G.	30,67,68,70,82,85,86,92,94,96,97,98,104,105,108,110,111,112,113,115,116,117,119, 120,121,123,128,129,132,133,139,140,141
Fleas	47,48,65,66,69,70,71,77
Food - feast	4,7,8,9,10,15,16,17,22,24,32,33,37,38,40,41,42,44,45,47,50,53,54,62,66,73,80, 81,87,88,100,104,108,109,111,115,118,119,120,126,129,130,131,132,133, 135,141
Fox, A.M. (brother)	101,102,139
Fox, Elizabeth Z. (wife)	30,45, 67,68,75,80,81,88,101,105, 112,126,129,
Fox, George (brother)	45,81,127
Fox, Isaac Wilson (father)	45,76,111
Fox, Mary Ann (mother)	112,139
Fox, Robert (brother)	81
Gaddie, Mrs.	127
Games/Celebration	108 (24 th of July),114,115,119,120,126,128,137
Gardner, Jas. H.	6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 21,22,23,24,25,26,27,32,34,67,74,81,85,86,89,142
Golden Gates	2
Haena	15
Halikikai	14
Hanamaulu	11, 18,22
Hanapepe	9,24

Hansen, E.M.	28,34,76,85, 86,91,92,94,118,121,122,126
Harris, Hyrum	135,136
Hawaii Island	35,36,81,104,118

APPENDIX B: EXAMPLE OF TIMELINE
First page of Isaac Fox Timeline 1839- 1934

Date	Event	Place
29 June 1839	Isaac Wilson Fox and Margaret Ann Slinn marry	Sheffield, England
	4 children born before Isaac—Charles, Alfred, Martha Ann, Robert	
17 May 1849	Isaac born	Leeds, Yorkshire, England
5 May 1860	Age 11 sails with his mother, father and 5 siblings from Sailed on boat William Tapscott	Glasgow to Liverpool, England
11 May 1860	Arrives in America	
20 June 1860	Within days travels by train and boat Family stays here Isaac Wilson, father, goes to buy wagon, oxen and supplies to cross plains Isaac sings songs as they cross the plains in a wagon train George Q Cannon asks him later in life if he was the young man who sang (John Fox journal item)	Liverpool to New York\ Winter Quarters Florence Nebraska Crossing plains
22 Sep 1876	Married Christiana Gaddie- first wife	
1877	She and baby die in childbirth	
22 Sept 1881	Married: Elizabeth Zimmerman	Endowment House Salt Lake City, Utah
10 Apr 1882	Birth of first son, Isaac Jr.	Lehi, Utah
1 May 1883	1 st Mission	Sandwich Islands (Hawaii)
	Lehi to Salt Lake – set apart by Wilford Woodruff	Salt Lake
	Travels to meet other missionary companions Travels by train crosses the Sacramento River Takes ferry boat Sees Woodward Gardens and Palace Hotel Takes passage on Steamship Australia- Arrives May 13—went to Mission Home had first poi Traveled over the Pali to get to Laie	Ogden San Francisco Oahu Laie
20 May 1883	Travels by horse back and boat - tries to meet up with Elder Gardner Stays in Koloa with Apela Finds Gardner in Makaweli Holds meeting at Popii Then Hanapepe Wahiawa where met Brother Coals (Kohls?) Trip to mountains with guide and Sister Kohls Koloa Branch Ihulaia Hanamaulu Wailua Traveling of east side of Island from south to north p. 13 Anapai Halikikai	from Laie to island of Kauai

	Henele Waipa Haena Papa Hanamaulu Koloa Beach of bones Hanapepe Makaweli Kalihi at north end of island p. 21 Hanamaulu Koloa Wahiawa	
--	--	--

APPENDIX C: EXAMPLE OF TYPES OF WORK
First page of Isaac Fox Types of Work

Building		
	Building new house	J2/96
	Made a ruler	J1/29
	Mortar making for foundation of new meeting house	J1/28
	Moving old houses	J2/94
	Patching up old house	J2/95
	Put up windmill to pump water	J2/95, 106
	Putting rafters and sheeting on barn	J2/43
	Putting up fence	J2/28,92
	Quarrying rock for a new house	J2/95
	Rebuilding a kitchen	J2/90,92
	Shingling shed	J1/65,91
	Tacking down the carpet in meeting house	J1/29
	Wheeling dirt in wheelbarrow	J1/65
Farm Equipment		
	Helping survey the rice field	J2/109
	Making a lasso	J1/91
	Set a wagon tire	J1/90
	Surveying for Queen's lot	J2.109
Hauling		
	Getting load of sand	J1/28
	Moving water flume	J1/89,90
	Picking up goods from the wharf	J1/89,94,134, J2/23,24,25
	Traveling to Punaluu for goods	J1/134
Mending- Repairing		
	Carts	J1/86,131
	Garments	J1/114
	Mending saddle	J1/138
	Plow	J1/5
	Reset flag pole	J1/28
	Saddle	J1/138
	Water flume	J1/65
Misc Work		
	Business for Pres, i.e. banking, taking horses, trading	J2/36,49
	Copying Spaulding Manuscript	J2/48
	Decorating Gates in preparation for king	J1/31
	Store- taking care of	J1/113

Music		
	Band lesson	J2/95
	Conducted singing	J2/20,
	Directing Laie Choir for conference	J2/87
	Fiddling	J2/21,70
	New instrument comes	J2/109
	Organ repair	J1/28
	Receiving new music for band	J2/107
	Sang and played guitar for Pres. Smith	J2,14,18
	Sing song request of Pres. Smith	J2/26,
	Singing and playing the organ	J294
	Taken charge of choir	J2/91
	Teaching band	J2/99,108
	Teaching girls and boys to sing	J2/108
	Teaching native boys a song	J2/11,92
	Training choir	J2/10,27,73,75,77,80,82,84,108

APPENDIX D: EXAMPLE OF INTERESTING STORIES

First page of Interesting Stories from Isaac Fox Journal—in chronological order

First poi	J1/4
Shark Story Meldrum	J1/27
Gathering Wild honey	J1/38
Saints living on the Lava	J1/39
Bonepart – his horse on Hawaii	J1/40,41
Dreams of home	J1/42
Thought he was going to die	J1/43
Wife pregnant when he left, with John A. Fox	J1/45 letters on Big Island
Overcome with sadness at not being able to speak language	J1/51
Making war with fleas and mosquitoes/2 parts/ dream at bottom	J1/70
Processing of sugarcane	J1/73
Election day	J1/78
Hula Description	J1/78
Gathering ferns and oranges	J1/80
Description of a wedding	J1/82
Description of fishing experience	J1/83
Appointments	J1/86
Description of Farewell dinner	J1/87
Kicked by a mule	J1/88
Brother Cluff --s birthday panorama	J1/92
First year thoughts	J1/93
Bringing the beef	J1/93
34 th Birthday and lame arm	J1/96, J2/43-44
Shipping sugar	J1/98
Catching the cow with Tilby	J1/106-107
Horses in the pasture	J1/108
Red Letter Day, Oct 12	J1/126
Accidents	J1/101,105,113,116, J2/22,90,91,97
Photos of his family	J1/133
Lady at the steamboat	J1/135
Getting sugar to wharf	J1/138

Teasing Farr and Tilby	J2/13,
Getting stock over the Pali	J2/16,
Playing tricks with mail delivery	J2/17
Strychnine and Wilcox child	J2/18,
Handling wild cattle- JF Smith advice and help	J2/23,
Appointment to preside over Island of Oahu	J2/26,
Woman with hat-Long Live the Hawaiian Nation	J2/26
Term ended for looking after stock report	J2/28-29
Getting cattle to Honolulu	J2/30
Being bought new suit of clothes by pres.	J2/31
Spaulding Manuscript	J2/31-32, 36-37
First time meeting with branch after calling as Pres	J2/33
2 years in the mission	J2/34-35
Assigned the brethren to different branches	J2/35
Queen Emma Funeral	J2/40-41
Sisters missed him	J2/42,
Trouble with natives	J2/46

APPENDIX D: EXAMPLE OF TYPES OF WRITING

Isaac Fox Journal

Type	Item	Reference
Descriptions	Over the Pali	J1/7
Cultural Events	First Poi Learning language issues Going to Kauai Hawaiians involved in missionary work	J1/4 J1/10 J1/7-26 J1 & J2
Daily Events	Types of Work	See chart
Personal Reflections	First year, Homesick- letters, Food Hawaiian Band	J1/93
Historical Events	King Kalakaua visit to Laie Queen Emma funeral Queen Kapiolani visit Joseph F. Smith coming	J1/30-35 J1/40 J2/40 J2/7
Humor	Mail and tricks	J2/13
Interactions	Missionary companions Farr, Tilby, Brim, Cluff, Davis, President Joseph F. Smith	J2/
High Days	--First letters from wife Announcing birth of son (My grandfather) --Pres Smith Sermon	J1/45 J2/101
Low Days	--On Christmas Eve all leave for Honolulu except Isaac --"Setting up" to all missionaries by Pres. Smith --Not being able to speak language	J2/99 J2/105 J1/51