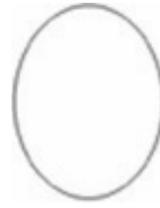




*Elizabeth Ann Birch* (1822-1899)  
&  
*Arnold Potter* (1804-1872)



My Grandmother my  
mother's mother made  
this for Elizabeth Birch  
Potter Brown  
Mary A. Richey

**Their children:**

**Wallace Edwin Potter**  
b 1850 in Mill Creek, UT

**George A. Potter**  
b 1853 in San Bernardino, CA

**Mary Adaline Potter**  
b 1854 in San Bernardino, CA ▶

**Eliza Ann Potter (Brown)**  
b 1858 in Beaver, UT

◀ Elizabeth made these quilt blocks.  
The note says:  
"My grandmother, my mother's  
mother made this. She is Elizabeth  
Birch Potter Brown. Mary A. Richey"



Mary Adaline Potter  
married [\(their page\)](#)



Welcome Chapman Jr.

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**Stories, etc.**

**Arnold's History**  
**About Elizabeth**

**Documents:**

- **1840 census - Nauvoo, Hancock, IL**  
Arnold Potter age 36 -  
woman over 40 less than 50 (not Elizabeth Ann Birch who was 17)  
children: two boys under age 10, four girls under age 15
- **1850 census - Salt Lake City ?, Salt Lake, UT**  
Arnold 46 - farmer  
wife Elizabeth 26  
son John 17, laborer  
son Wallace 1

Elizabeth Ann Birch divorced Arnold Potter.  
She married Francis Brown in 1858

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## Elizabeth Ann Birch

Elizabeth Ann Birch was born on 22 Mar 1831 in Radnoirshire, Wales. In the IGI, her birth date is listed as 2 Nov 1821, a more plausible date if she married Arnold in 1843. Another recorded birth year is 1822. The 1850 census lists her as age 26 which would put her birth year about 1824.

She was baptized in 1840 at Stanley Hill, England by Wilford Woodruff. She and her mother and brother had come to Nauvoo from Herefordshire, England. They had been among those converted by Wilford Woodruff and his companions at the Benbow farm. The family arrived at New Orleans May 16, 1841.

She married widower Arnold Potter in Nauvoo on 10 December 1843. By 1845 they were living at Sand Prairie, in Lee County, Iowa, just across the river from Nauvoo, where he was the Presiding Elder of the Saints living there. Crossing the plains for the first time in 1848, Arnold arrived in Salt Lake in September of that year. Elizabeth had remained behind in Iowa. Four of his children by his first wife were already in Utah, having come with Daniel Spencer's group about a year before, in 1847. Their ages that year would have been somewhere between 14 and 20 something.

Arnold spent the winter 1848-49 in the Salt Lake Valley and returned to Iowa in the spring of 1849. Leaving Iowa under Silas Richards in July, he and Elizabeth arrived in Salt Lake in October, 1849. Elizabeth was at this time expecting their first child. They settled in Millcreek where Wallace Edwin Potter was born in April of 1850. John, his youngest child from his first marriage was living with them at age 17. (1850 census)

The family was definitely in San Bernardino by March 16, 1856. This was the date when he was called to serve a mission to Australia.

Upon his return to San Bernardino to his family and the Saints in 1857, he caused enough notice to be recorded in the "Manuscript history of the San Bernardino Settlement," found in the LDS Church archives. Between September and December of 1857, several entries were made concerning his activities there:

"Wednesday 21 October 1857 - Arnold Potter, who calls himself Potter Christ, appeared in our streets today with a brand on his forehead which had been put in with India ink. The words, which can be read at quite a distance, are 'Potter Christ The Living God Morning Star.' To the right of the inscription is a star, below a cross. He appears very desirous of winning followers. It is said there are several apostates about to join him."

By the spring of 1858, Arnold's family now numbered 2 children and Elizabeth was expecting a third. Apparently, she didn't have faith in Arnold's revelations and his special calling, for she left him in San Bernardino and returned to Utah with the children. Arnold provided Elizabeth with a team and wagon and bade them farewell, never to see them again.

Where their children were born:

Wallace Edwin Potter b 1850, Mill Creek, UT  
 George A. Potter b 1853, San Bernardino, CA  
 Mary Adaline Potter b 1854, San Bernardino, CA  
 Eliza Ann Potter (Brown) b 1858, Beaver UT

Elizabeth Ann Birch divorced Arnold Potter.  
 She married Francis Brown in 1858

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Many details are from an article in *Pioneer*, a journal published by the Sons of Utah Pioneers: "Arnold Potter: From L.D.S. Convert to Pioneer to Missionary to Sect Leader" by Steven R. Parkes, City Creek Chapter (*Pioneer*, Vol. 32, January-February 1985, pp. 11, 14.),

- above info also found in a history of Arnold Potter compiled by Alvin C. Rencher, *Mary Ann Chapman Richey, An Arizona Pioneer*, 2008

## **Arnold's History - Convert to Apostate**

**Arnold Potter (January 11, 1804 – April 2, 1872) was a self-declared Messiah and a leader of a schismatic sect in the Latter Day Saint movement. Potter referred to himself as Potter Christ.**

**Potter was born in Herkimer County, New York. At age 19, he married Almira Smith. By 1835 Potter had moved with his wife and children to Switzerland County, Indiana. On November 10, 1839, Potter and his family were baptized by missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.**

**In April 1840 Potter and his family moved to Nauvoo, Illinois to join the main gathering of Latter Day Saints. On April 24, 1840 Potter was given the Melchizedek priesthood and ordained to the priesthood office of elder by Joseph Smith, Jr. On June 1, 1840 Potter received a patriarchal blessing from church patriarch Joseph Smith, Sr. He married Elizabeth Ann Birch 10 December 1843 in Nauvoo Ill. Potter settled in Sand Prairie, Iowa, where Potter was the presiding elder of the church. In January 1845 Potter became a seventy in the church.**

**In 1848 Potter traveled to the Salt Lake Valley as a Mormon pioneer. By 1856, he had moved his family from Utah Territory to San Bernardino, California. On March 16, 1856 Potter received a call to serve as a missionary in Australia from LDS Church president Brigham Young. Later that year, Potter left California for Australia on the ship Osprey.**

**Potter later claimed that during his trip to Australia, he underwent a "purifying, quickening change" whereby the spirit of Jesus Christ entered into his body and he became "Potter Christ, Son of the living God". During his time in Australia, Potter wrote a book which he said was dictated to him by angels; it was described by Potter as the book from which all people were to be judged at the Final Judgment.**

**Potter returned to California by October 1857. A Latter-day Saint observer described Potter's re-appearance in the community:**

**Wednesday 21 October 1857—Arnold Potter, who calls himself Potter Christ, appeared in our streets today with a brand on his forehead which had been put in with India ink. The words which can be read at quite a distance, are “Potter Christ—The Living God—Morning Star”. To the right of the inscription is a star, below a cross. He appears very desirous of winning followers. It is said there are several apostates about to join him.<sup>1</sup>**

**By the spring of 1858, Arnold's family now numbered 2 children and Elizabeth was expecting a third. Apparently, she didn't have faith in Arnold's revelations and his special calling, for she left him in San Bernardino and returned to Utah with the children. Arnold provided Elizabeth with a team and wagon and bade them farewell, never to see them again.**

**By 1861 Potter and some of his followers had left California with the intention of settling**

near Independence, Missouri, the traditional location of Zion for the Latter Day Saints. They settled at Saint Marys in northwest Mills County, Iowa. When Saint Marys was destroyed by flooding in 1865, they moved to Council Bluffs, Iowa. Potter spent his days wandering the streets in Council Bluffs wearing a long white robe and became a local oddity.

One newspaper interviewed Dr. W. H. Nipps, who had known Potter Christ at this time. He said: "The converts were few but devout. The men wore long black robes, and the women dressed like it was a sin to be pretty. They held enthusiastic prayer meetings.

At one time Potter decided it was time to make his 'ascent.' Some packing house workers made up a purse to buy the self designated holy man some golden slippers befitting the occasion. Some other kind soul donated a donkey, and before long the entire Potter Christ group made a pilgrimage to the bluffs from which Potter was to leave for his home in the heavens. Apparently the weather or the signs were not right for the ascension, because Potter never took off, and there is no report of the descent from the bluffs."

In 1872 Potter announced at a meeting of his church that the time had come for his ascent into heaven. Followed by his disciples, Potter rode a donkey to the edge of the bluffs, whereupon he leapt off the edge. Potter died in the attempt to ascend into heaven and his body was collected and buried by his followers.

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#### Sources:

1. Manuscript History of the San Bernardino Settlement, LDS Church archives.

#### References

- Manuscript History of the San Bernardino Settlement, LDS Church archives.
- Steven R. Parkes. *Arnold Potter: From L.D.S. Convert to Pioneer to Missionary to Sect Leader* (unpublished manuscript)
- Russell R. Rich (2d ed. 1967). *Those Who Would Be Leaders: Offshoots of Mormonism* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arnold\\_Potter](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arnold_Potter)

- above info also found in a history of Arnold Potter compiled by Alvin C. Rencher, *Mary Ann Chapman Richey, An Arizona Pioneer, 2008*

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Arnold Potter in Nauvoo

1840 census - Nauvoo, Hancock, IL

Arnold Potter age 36 -

A woman over 40 less than 50 (not Elizabeth Ann Birch who was about 17)

children: two boys under age 10, four girls under age 15

Arnold and Elizabeth Potter in Salt Lake Valley

**1850** census - Salt Lake City ?, Salt Lake, UT  
Arnold 46 - farmer  
wife Elizabeth 26  
son John 17, laborer  
son Wallace 1

Arnold back in MO

**1860** census - Lewis Township, , MO  
William Kimball 25, basket maker  
Arnold Potter 55, basket maker  
Sarah Potter 52  
William Wilson 16, basket maker

Arnold back in Iowa

**1870** census - Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie, IA  
Thomas Wilson 66, laborer  
Susanna 66, keeping house  
Arnold Potter 65, laborer

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