

## *The Swasey Boys QR History*

Charles "Charley" Harold Swasey (1851-1923) married Brighamina Hancena Olsen on August 11, 1878, in Emery. They had five children together. Charley passed away in Green River, Utah, at the age of 71, and Brighamina died at the age of 72, also in Green River. Both are buried in Elgin, Grand County, Utah.

Sidney "Sid" Lorenzo Swasey (1853-1907) married Mary Rowe on December 22, 1878, in Mount Pleasant, Utah. They had two sons. Sid died in Mona, Utah, at the age of 53 and is buried in Claresholm, Alberta, Canada, at Willow Creek No. 26. Mary passed away on January 13, 1923, in Castle Dale, Utah, at the age of 61, and is buried in the Castle Dale City Cemetery.

Rodney "Rod" Degraass Swasey (1859-1927) and Martha Eveline Miles were married on December 3, 1885, in Orangeville, Utah. They had five daughters together. Rod passed away on November 27, 1927, in Moore, Butte County, Idaho, at the age of 68, and he was buried in Lost River Cemetery in Butte, Idaho. Martha died on January 1, 1906, in Moreland, Bingham County, Idaho, at the age of 35, and she was buried in Moreland.



*Mary Etta and Joe, about 1890*

Joseph "Joe" Amos Swasey (1861-1930) and Mary Etta McDonald (1868-1941) were married on July 25, 1887, in Mona, Utah. They had nine children. Joe died on October 16, 1930, at age 69, in Ferron, Utah. Mary Etta was born in Manti, Utah, on September 7, 1868, and died on April 22, 1941, at 73 in Ferron. Both are buried in the Ferron Cemetery.

The Swasey boys learned how to survive in the wilderness at an early age. They knew how to live in a very sparse desert area with little food and water, and they learned all the skills and lore of cowboying and horsemanship and all that goes with that type of life. They adapted to these sorts of things at an early age, so as you hear of their exploits later on in Castle Valley, remember that these boys grew up in this type of country and these types of adventures. It was not unique to them, though it is to us today.

The Swaseys arrived in Castle Valley between 1872 and 1874. They likely first entered Joe's Valley and moved their livestock there before reaching the desert.

They built one of the first cabins in Castle Valley, and from that vantage point, they overlooked the vast terrain below. Their adventurous spirit compelled them to explore the area. Early on, they discovered the expansive grasslands now known as Sinbad Country. More inclined to a nomadic lifestyle, they followed the cattle and camped wherever it was convenient. The cattle roamed from Joe's Valley to Green River, which meant they had to navigate a lot of rugged terrain while chasing them.

The Swaseys were dedicated horsemen rather than cattle ranchers. Their preference for horses led them to chase wild ones, but that wasn't their only focus. They also worked diligently at breeding horses. To support their efforts, they purchased top-notch blooded stallions, and their livelihood primarily came from trading and selling horses. Moreover, the Swaseys were exceptionally skilled horsemen. If you talk to an old-timer who knew them, one of the first

things they will mention is their remarkable horsemanship. Some of their feats on horseback have become nearly legendary among those who remember them.

The Swaseys were quite an interesting family. Joe, who tamed a wildcat, was notable, but his older brother Sid was undoubtedly the most carefree of the group and had a remarkable story of his own. Sid once fought a young bear in hand-to-hand combat. He and his friend Charlie had a little rivalry, constantly teasing and egging each other on. Amidst all the banter, Sid eventually went into the cabin with the bear. As he entered, Charlie locked the door behind him and laid down the ground rules. "Fight him, Sid! Fight him fair!" Charlie's instructions were fitting, as he knew Sid had a quick wit and a knack for handling challenges. Sid did win the fight, as far as the story goes.

Another interesting aspect of the Swaseys is their passion for chasing wild horses in the desert. They had their own horses, which they brought in and crossbred. This illustrates the toughness and recklessness of these individuals. When someone is on an unbroken horse, they take every precaution to ensure success. They secure the horse in a well-built corral, use saddles and bridles, and may even employ a hackamore or snubbing rope. However, that wasn't the Swasey style. They sometimes round up desert horses into a corral or horse trap for a thrilling adventure. Once gathered, they would open the gate and let the horses run free. At that point, someone would leap off the gatepost onto the back of a horse, quickly grabbing the mane with one hand and the tail with the other, letting the chips fall where they may.

Sid's Leap is another story you have probably heard about a lot. Many people will tell you that they use the word craziness a lot. In this situation, the Swaseys made a bet, and they seem to do anything on a bet. A lot of people have wondered if Sid leaped. Other people have wondered why he did it. There has been a story going around quite prevalent that he was trying to escape from the posse when he jumped that particular spot. I disagree because you can easily cross the river in less than a quarter-mile upstream.

No, I believe Sid leaped. As his son, Royal Swasey, stated, "Father told me Sid jumped, and I never knew Father to lie." It is that simple: he jumped the leap. This isn't as far-fetched as it might seem today, given the abilities of these men. Sid was an experienced horseman with an excellent horse, and the two were well acquainted. They spent many days in the desert together, successfully jumping over ravines and washes larger than the one in question. So, when Sid faced that canyon, he couldn't resist the challenge. That was his nature. With a little wager placed on the outcome, he had all the incentive he needed to take the risk, and indeed, Sid jumped the leap. We have never known Joe Swasey to lie about it.

You can find their names on many features in the Swell, including Sid and Charley Tower, Joe and His Dog, Sid's Leap, Joe's Office, and more. The stories and places they explored have contributed to their larger-than-life personas. Imagine wandering through the Swell when it was so remote and little known.

*A Peach of a Place, p. 366, 367*

*Excerpts from the lecture given by Wes Curtis  
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