

John Gerrans

John Gerrans was born 1 October 1851 in Perranarworthal, Cornwall, England. He was the second of seven children of Josiah Gerrans and Mary Tolliston. The family lived in Kea, Cornwall, England, in 1861 and 1871. John and his father were tin miners.¹ John emigrated in 1872, sailing from Liverpool to New York on the ship *City of Montreal*.² He was living in Santa Clara, California, in 1875.³ John moved to Silver Reef, Washington, Utah Territory, by 1879.⁴

On the 1880 census, John was a miner, living in Silver Reef in the home of James Hill and his family.⁵ John would eventually marry the Hill's daughter. John moved to Salt Lake City by 1885, where he was granted a retail liquor license with John Williams. The license was renewed several times over the next six years.⁶ Both Johns ran a bar under a shed at the horse races at the inaugural opening of the Utah Driving Park Association. They had the sole right of handling liquors and cigars for the association. A few months later they opened their Turf Club House at the track with a full stock of wines, liquors and cigars.⁷

Williams and Gerrans also opened the Palace Saloon in the Wasatch Building near the post office on south Main Street in Salt Lake City.⁸ Being saloon owners brings a plethora of problems, such as the burglary by Brown and Beardsley, who were arrested, tried, and found guilty.⁹ In 1886, John was accused of "visiting" Mr Rolfson's wife, taking her to the theater, taking her to her home from town, and giving her a valuable ring. On night Mr Rolfson visited the saloon and then followed John home and fired a shot at him. John testified in his behalf, saying he was drunk and that he was not involved with Mrs Rolfson. The judge held Rolfson to await the action of the grand jury.¹⁰

The headquarters of the Salt Lake City Brewing Company moved to the Palace Saloon; where "orders for beer will receive prompt attention".¹¹ A year later, two policemen heard a tremendous disturbance coming from Palace Saloon. The doors were locked, but looking through a small hole they discovered a wrestling match. They knocked on the door but were denied entrance for ten minutes. There was a crowd of about twenty men, and not seeing the fighters, they asked to go in the rear room. John demurred, saying it was a private apartment. He later testified that the men had been engaged in a friendly tussle, and he had warned them they must stop it. John was found guilty and fined \$20.¹² Keenan and Collins also fought in the saloon, but the court could not determine who was at fault so the case was dismissed.¹³

¹ England Census, 1861, 1871.

² New York, Passenger Lists, 1820-1957.

³ US and Canada Passenger and Immigration Lists Index, 1500s-1900s.

⁴ Adolphus Rennie Whitehead Journal, 1878-1991.

⁵ United States Census, 1880.

⁶ *Salt Lake Evening Democrat*, 10 June 1885, p. 4; 9 September 1885, p. 4; *Salt Lake Herald*, 9 September 1885, p. 8; 14 December 1887, p. 8; 4 February 1891, p. 5.

⁷ *Salt Lake Evening Democrat*, 12 June 1885, p. 4; 18 June 1885, p. 4; *Salt Lake Herald*, 18 June 1885, p. 8.

⁸ Salt Lake Directory, 1885.

⁹ *Salt Lake Herald*, 26 November 1885, p. 8.

¹⁰ *Salt Lake Herald*, 2 May 1886, p. 12; 6 May 1886, p. 8.

¹¹ *Salt Lake Evening Democrat*, 14 September 1886, p. 4.

¹² *Salt Lake Herald*, 29 January 1887, pp. 1, 4.

¹³ *Salt Lake Herald*, 1 April 1887, p. 8.

A Mr Costello had just been married when his wife was arrested and jailed for vagrancy. He haunted the jail until they told him that \$30 bail would set her free. He approached John Gerrans in his saloon with a note requesting the bearer be paid \$30 from a \$400 deposit placed by Mr Nelson. John promptly gave him the \$30 and Costello returned to jail to bail out his wife. As soon as they left the building, Costello was arrested and jailed for forgery. Costello claimed that he did not know where he got the note, that he could neither read nor write, and that it must have been a joke by some fellows in the crowd.¹⁴ A more serious case involved McMannamy, who killed Charles Stokes after a fracas in the saloon.¹⁵

John married Mary Jane “Marie” Hill about 1890 in Utah Territory. They had one daughter. John was repeatedly tried for selling liquor on Sunday, but usually the case was dismissed. In 1890, he and his partner asked for a rebate on their liquor license as they had been ejected from their place of business before the license expired.¹⁶ They moved their business to Second South Street, making it one of the largest saloons (with space for club room) in the entire city. The new quarters were styled in hard cherry with a magnificent mirror, a huge ice chest, a complete stock of imported goods, fine whiskies, and Californian wines and cigars.¹⁷

John died of consumption on 25 April 1892 and was buried in the Mount Olivet Cemetery in Salt Lake City.¹⁸ He was only forty years old, and left his 21-year old wife with a baby. He had done well in his business. He had loaned Robert Gardiner and his wife \$500 in 1889, secured by a mortgage on a property in Salt Lake City. After John’s death, the mortgage was sold and assigned to his wife Marie. She filed complaint against the Gardiners for \$500 and interest, costs, and attorney fees, in 1893. The property was foreclosed and sold at public auction to Marie for \$900, leaving the Gardiners owing her \$67.¹⁹ Marie continued living in Salt Lake City with various family members, never remarrying.²⁰ She moved to California by 1930²¹, and died in Los Angeles in 1933.²²

¹⁴ *Salt Lake Herald*, 23 January 1887, p. 5.

¹⁵ *Salt Lake Herald*, 4 September 1888, p. 8.

¹⁶ *Salt Lake Herald*, 8 September 1889, p. 8; 15 September 1889, p. 8; *Deseret Evening News*, 7 May 1890, p. 4.

¹⁷ *Salt Lake Herald*, 6 February 1891, p. 8.

¹⁸ Utah Cemetery Inventory, 1847-2000; Salt Lake City Cemetery Records, 1848-1992; Utah Death Registers, 1847-1966.

¹⁹ Robert Gardiner Timeline, by Nathan Frederick Gardiner, 2011; *Salt Lake Tribune*, 11 February 1894; *Salt Lake Herald*, 8 March 1894.

²⁰ United States Census, 1900, 1910, 1920.

²¹ United States Census, 1930.

²² California Death Index, 1905-1939; *Salt Lake Tribune*, 18 May 1933, p. 28.

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(Image from the *Salt Lake Herald*, 25 November 1885, p. 3)

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