

Elizabeth Simpson Haigh Bradshaw
A Member of the Edward Martin Handcart Company of 1856
Written by her granddaughter, Sarah Astle Call

Elizabeth Simpson Bradshaw, twice widowed, with five of the six children born to her in England, Samuel, Sarah Ann, Robert, Isabella Jane (Belle Jane), Jonathan, little Richard Paul, only 6 years of age, walked across the American prairie pushing all her family possessions in a handmade, wooden handcart.

Elizabeth Simpson Haigh Bradshaw was born at Bolton, Lancashire, England. She was christened at the Bolton Parish Church on the 10th of February 1808, the daughter of Thomas Simpson and Ann Briggs. The Simpson's were clock makers by trade and were the inventors of the famous grandfather clock. They were formerly Yorkshire people, who, at an early date, moved to Lancashire County where they owned and operated large factories in the manufacturing of time clocks.

At the early age of nine years, Elizabeth was left an orphan along with several brothers and sisters. She was reared in the family of an aunt, her father's sister, and little is known of childhood experiences.

In 1836, she was married to William Haigh, and to them were born two children, Sarah Ann and Samuel. Her husband died about 1840. Soon after his death, she met the missionaries of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and was converted and baptized into the Church. She suffered persecution and abuse by relatives and friends for having joined a religion so unpopular as the Mormons.

In 1841, she was given a blessing by a patriarch that proved a great comfort to her. One remarkable statement was that her posterity should never want for bread.

On the 11th of March 1844, she married Richard Bradshaw. The ceremony was performed in the Manchester area. This was the headquarters, as they termed it, for all rites in the Bradshaw family. Richard Bradshaw was also a member of the LDS Church, and they were prepared to leave England for America and Utah, when the news of the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith reached them. They were advised to remain in England until affairs quieted down after this great tragedy.

In the meantime, Elizabeth again was called to part with her husband. He died December, 1849, or January, 1850, months before she was to give birth to a son. This son she named Richard Paul Bradshaw because the name Paul was the name Saints called Grandfather Richard Bradshaw. They likened him to the Apostle Paul, as he labored so diligently and faithfully in the Church of his choice, and was so greatly beloved by all. He was a professional player of the flute.

In this, her second widowhood, she was left with three more children; one other son had died at birth. She never gave up the hope of gathering to Zion. She worked, waited, and prayed most earnestly that God would open up the way. The opportunity came, and in May, 1856, she found herself and five children, ranging in age from six to nineteen, aboard the ship *Horizon* ready to set sail for America.

While they were waiting in the harbor at Liverpool, a row boat was seen to approach the ship, and soon her two brothers came aboard to make one more effort to persuade her to remain in England. They pleaded most earnestly and said, "Elizabeth, don't take these little children at this time of the year and go to those God-forsaken Mormons and to such a despised place as Utah." They promised her she would never want for anything money could buy, as they were financially wealthy and would gladly care for her and her children.

She turned to them and said, "I am going to Zion. The gospel is true, and Joseph Smith is a prophet of God."

Her brothers returned home and she started on the voyage of six long weeks in a sailing vessel. They landed at Boston, Massachusetts, and went by train to Iowa. Here they waited for handcarts to be built that they might begin the trek of thirteen hundred miles across the plains to Utah.

Little could they imagine what was before them in this long journey. Grandmother left with plenty of clothing and other personal belongings, but only enough for necessity could be packed into the one handcart for the family. Most of her supplies were given away to those in need. She did keep her two dresses, and later gave them to her daughters.

The journey, although late in the season, began with unwavering faith and a prayer for guidance. This was the Edward Martin Handcart Company. It was composed of many nationalities; many were from Scandanavia, all with the same religious purpose of gathering to Zion and following the teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

Much has been written by others of this journey, so I shall write mostly of the personal experiences of Elizabeth and her family. Many were the heart rending scenes she witnessed of death and burial. One place, fifteen were buried in one grave; another time, a two year old girl was buried and the wolves were digging for her body before they were out of sight. Some of the men stood guard over the graves as long as possible to keep the wild animals away.

They traveled onward, even the children walked. Bridges across the streams were scarce, and to ford or wade was the custom. When the Company reached the banks of the north branch of the Platte River, everyone had to cross, and quite a problem arose. Some were too old and weak, and others too small; who could, carried them over on their backs. Grandmother's eldest daughter, Sarah Ann Haigh, a girl of 19 years, carried sixteen people across the river.

Here Elizabeth Bradshaw proved the great faith she had in her God. She, a very small woman, took her youngest son Richard, a lad of six years, seated him upon her shoulders with legs around her neck, and holding to her head. She started across the stream, was caught by a ripple in the water, and was carried some distance down the stream below the ford. It looked as if death was inevitable for both mother and son. Several called, "Let the boy go from your shoulders or you will both be drowned. Save yourself and let him go into the water."

She refused and struggled on and on. She finally reached the opposite side, but at a place where the bank was very high and steep, and she could not possibly climb out. Others came to her assistance and someone reached down, took Richard from her shoulders, and pulled him up the steep bank to safety. Others helped her out of the water, and in her exhausted condition, she raised her right arm to the square as a witness of the testimony she then bore to the waiting crowd that God had protected and saved both mother and son.

She related to them that before she left England to go on this trip, a servant of the Lord had pronounced a blessing upon her head and promised that she should take all her children to Zion. This incident was related in a testimony meeting in sacrament meeting by this very son, Richard, when he had grown to manhood. At the close of the meeting, a man in the audience arose and said, "I am the man who lifted that little boy from his mother's shoulders out of the Platte River."

Another time her seventeen year old son Samuel was brought into camp and pronounced dead, and to all appearances it was true. But Grandmother's faith remained unchanged. She still insisted she would take all of her children to Zion. So she asked the Elders to anoint him with oil and administer to him, and they did. He recovered through this blessing and the tender care of his mother.

It was late in the season, and conditions became such that the food had to be rationed. Grandmother's share was one level pint of flour per day for six people. Two tablespoons full was the amount for a boy of six years.

Conditions grew steadily worse. Clothing and shoes were in rags. The cold and storms of approaching winter were severe, but they traveled on, making at the most only a few miles a day. The suffering was intense, and one morning they heard sobbing, and discovered that in the tent next to theirs a lady had awakened to find her husband and little child dead, one on each side of her.

Another case was of a little boy whose feet were so badly frozen that he lost both of them, and yet later learned to climb a ladder faster than most boys with feet. The writer, in relating this story to the Relief Society Teachers, was surprised to have one of them say, "That was my own Grandfather, he has a large posterity."

This belated handcart company was finally met by men and teams sent out by Brigham Young, who also sent food. They arrived in Salt Lake City on November 30, 1856. Grandmother and her family were sent to Bountiful, Utah, and their first meal was eaten at the home of Bishop Stoker. They remained there six years until they moved to Hyrum, Utah, in 1862.

Here they endured pioneer life in Cache Valley. Their home was a small log building, with dirt floor and roof, and a sheepskin covering on the bed to help keep them warm.

Through all this, she was never heard to complain, but taught her children that if they only had a piece of bread, to ask the blessing of the Lord upon it and thank him for it. She always said, "The Lord knows best."

Shortly after moving to Hyrum, her eldest son Samuel was killed in a sawmill. As her children became older, financial situations improved, but her faith never wavered.

She, who had been born to people of wealth and influence in her native land, England, died a humble member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1873 at Hyrum, Utah, and was buried in the cemetery of that place.