

HISTORY OF SARAH ANN HAIGH STANLEY MILLER MARTIN HANDCART COMPANY 1856

(Written by Sarah Ann Allen, and compiled from other histories and *Daughters of the Utah Pioneer* lesson on Handcart Companies.)

In Bolton, Langshire, England, in the year 1845, just eight years after the gospel was first taken to England by Brother Heber C. Kimball and his company of missionaries, Sarah Ann Haigh and her family were baptized into the Church by Elder William Haslam.

The little family at that time consisted of a widowed Mother, Elizabeth Simpson Haigh, and her two children Samuel, 10 and Sarah Ann, 8. At about this time Elizabeth met and married Richard Bradshaw. From this marriage three children were born...two boys and a girl. (Robert, Martha, and Richard*) Again Elizabeth was left a widow. Richard died before the third child was born, leaving the family in quite a meager circumstance.

Like all other Latter-day Saints, they were very anxious to come to Zion and be with the Saints. The opportunity came in the summer of 1856, eleven years after they had joined the Church.**

Knowing the strong desire of so many Saints to come to Utah, President Brigham Young sent instructions to Brother Franklin D. Richards, then presiding over the British Mission, as to the course they were to take. They were to understand before they left their homes that a good part of the journey would be made on foot and pulling their handcarts, in which they were to carry all their belongings.

According to plan, on May 3, 1856, the ship *Thornton* sailed from Liverpool with 765 Saints. Twenty-two days later the *Horizon* left the same port with 856, making a total of 1620 people in all. They landed in New York about the middle of June. There they continued the journey by rail through Chicago and on to Iowa City, arriving on June 26.

They were met by men whom the Church authorities had sent to supervise the building of handcarts. They met with some difficulty finding suitable lumber. Consequently, unseasoned lumber was used, which dried out in the heat of the August sun, causing many carts to fall apart.

On July 28, 1856 they began the 1300 mile journey. There were in the company 576 people, 146 handcarts, 7 wagons, 30 oxen, 850 cattle and cows. Sarah Ann was 19 years old at the time, her brother Samuel was 21...then there was the Mother and three small children.

For the first 200 miles the country was beautiful. Grass and game were plentiful. They were very happy to...at last...be on their way to Zion. Perhaps it was because she was young, full of health and the sheer joy of life that Sarah Ann remembered, and often told of evenings around the campfire, of singing:

"Come, come, yet Saints, No toil no labor, But with Joy,
wend you way....."Etc.

And of their own handcart song:

"For some must push and some must pull, as we go marching up the
hill, as merrily on our way we go until we reach the Valley-O."

Other times she would tell of the worn shoes, of the tired aching feet which, later in the journey, left bloody footprints in the snow. Of the lack of food, perhaps a feast if a bull buffalo were shot...of Indians, of death in camp, and shallow graves left by the wayside while wolves howled nearby.

Near the end of the journey their portion became a little flour stirred in water in a tin cup. When she told of this, she always added, "Even that didn't make me thin..most of the camp were just skin and bones." (Sarah Ann was of the short, heavy type.)

September came, and with it came cold nights. Stormy days slowed their progress. Often they trudged on while fierce winds blew about their ears, but they must find water and wood for their campfire before night fall.

By October, winter had really set in. Sarah Ann told of wading ice-filled streams, then going on with her wet skirts freezing so that icicles jingled as she walked. Elizabeth, weakened from lack of food, was not able to withstand the force of the stream (she was also carrying her youngest child, Richard) and would have drown had it not been for Sarah's young strength. The children tramped through the mud, which, when night came, froze to their feet.

The darkest day of the journey came in October. It snowed for three days and three nights, their provisions were gone, their clothing worn and thin, and their bodies weakened from exposure and lack of food. To many this looked as if this were the end. Of the 576 people who began the journey with the Martin Handcart Company, 150 had been left by the wayside in hastily made graves. As many as 15 died on one night.

Now they sought refuge in hollows and in willow thickets where they waited the fate which seemed inevitable. Sarah said she thought in her mind "Could this be the end?" "Would the Lord lead them over that long, hard road just to let the whole company perish in the storm and cold?"

It was at this time Elder Franklin D. Richards, enroute to Salt Lake City, saw what a terrible condition they were in. When he reached Salt Lake, a general conference was in session. But he managed to let President Young know about the situation. After making the request for twenty men with teams and wagons to start as soon as possible to rescue the Saints, the conference was adjourned.

Women immediately got busy and gathered food, warm clothing, quilts, etc. and soon the boys were on their way. Franklin Stanley was among the rescue party. In his journal under the

date of October 26, he writes: "This evening I received word that a number of teams were wanted to go back and meet the handcart companies. Quite a number of teams were offered, among which, I volunteered to go and take a span of horses. It is expected we will return in about eight days. October 27..."We gathered up a few necessities for the journey and went as far as the city to get the horses shod." October 28..."We organized under Captain Call and started on our journey." November 30..."We returned after a tolerably comfortable journey of about five weeks. We encountered some storms and witnessed a great deal of suffering among the Saints of the handcart companies."

Imagine, if you can, what it meant to those starved, freezing Saints out on the plains not far from the North Platte River, when one evening...just as the sun was leaving a beautiful rosy afterglow...to see silhouetted against the evening sky, several covered wagons coming over the hill in their direction. News spread through the camp like wild fire, and all who were able to leave their beds were out to meet them. Tears ran down the cheeks of men and women alike, while the young men who came to their rescue were deluged with kisses.

So it was on November 30, 1856 that the long hard journey was over. Sarah Ann found refuge in the home of friends in Bountiful. There on April 5, 1857 she became the bride of Franklin Stanley, the young man who had come to her rescue. The ceremony was performed in Brigham Young's office by him. Sarah Jane Stanley was born on October 30, 1858. Her father died on February 7, 1859 when she was just three months old. So the little lady who had suffered through the long hard journey was now a widow with a baby.

Later Sarah Ann married Louis F. Miller. They moved to Hyrum, Utah, where they lived together for over 50 years. They were the parents of five sons and a daughter. (The daughter died when just an infant). At the present time a large posterity are very proud to be the descendants of *Grandma Miller*. We are proud of her courage and strength of character, and of the culture she brought with her from old England. This culture showed itself in the very neat way she always kept herself and her home, in her love of beautiful handiwork and dainty nice things...lovely flowers as well as in the lovely way she cooked and served her meals. She was a real lady.

The five sons were: Fred, Louis Frederick, Albert, Samuel, James.

She died in Hyrum, Utah on November 13, 1910.

* NOTE FROM BEVERLY WISE...Baby Richard was my father's very beloved Grandfather.

** " " " " I remember my grandmother telling about Elizabeth Bradshaw's leaving England. She and her husband, Richard, had planned to make this journey together. But he died before they were able to go. So, she decided she and the children would carry on with their plans. However, her parents...or her inlaws, I can't remember which, didn't want her to leave England. (They were not members of the Church.) They promised her they would take care of her and the children...and they would never want for anything...if she would only stay in England. But she wanted to go to Zion.....And she did!