

History of Sarah Ann Stanley Miller

by Sarah Ann Nielsen Allen
for Christmas 1978

I've always been really proud of my Grandmother and felt right close to her and proud that I had her name. As I knew her, she was quite a short, round little lady. When I made her a dress one time and took her measurements, I think her measurements around her waist were just as big as she was tall. But she was so neat, and so kind to me. She had a little black coal stove that just shone like a looking glass. I never saw anything untidy about her or her home. The place I visited her first was out across, south of the Hyrum Dam. She had a rock house out there where they lived. That was the first home that I remember her in. On the side of the hill they had a little rock spring house where a spring ran through, and there they had built shelves to cool their milk and butter, and things like that. We used to have some good times going out to see them. She has meant so much in my life. And I remember her telling me about her experiences crossing the plains, and how I used to feel as she told me some of the serious situations they found themselves in. I would wonder if I would ever have done anything like that. And then I'd feel this warm feeling and I'd think "Oh yes, I think I would." (But I don't know if I would have had the courage.) Anyway, I would like to leave you this story of my grandmother, and I hope that you appreciate it and find a little of the value that I have found in her and knowing her life.

She was born in Bolton, Lancashire, England on March 14, 1837. She had one older brother whose name was Samuel. They at that time, had not met the missionaries because the first missionaries went to England in June of that same year. But the family joined the church before Grandmother was old enough to be baptized. She had to wait in an L.D.S. home to become 8 years of age to be baptized. When Grandmother was just three months old, her father died. Now, he probably had not heard the gospel because it was too soon after the first missionaries had gone there. But her mother married soon after to Paul Richard Bradhaw. I remember in some of the histories that they said he was like Paul, the Apostle. He was very faithful.

It has always been with a feeling of deep gratitude that I have listened to the stories of the first missionaries going to England. They were called under such severe circumstances. Their families were sick, and they were not settled in any condition. There was so much persecution at that time around Missouri and Kirtland, Ohio. Parley P. Pratt was not one of the very first of the missionaries, but when he went, he said that he didn't have a coat of any kind. He took a crib quilt and threw it across his shoulders and used it until somebody gave him a coat. They had a real hard time getting money enough to go to England, and had a bad time when they got there. They had a real struggle, those first missionaries that went. But when the Lord finally found the faithful, they were blessed with a lot of conversions. I've always been grateful that those first missionaries went through all that they did in order to go to England, because that's where my family came into the church in March of 1840.

As Grandmother was leaving with her mother and brothers and sisters in a sailboat,

here came a rowboat with her mothers well to do brothers, who were clock makers. They begged Elizabeth not to take her children to that "God forsaken place." If she would stay, they would educate her children and give them a good life. She was a widow with five children. She said no, that she'd had a patriarchal blessing which said that she would get them all there safe. She knew the gospel was true and she wanted to be with her people.

The following quotation describes the journey to America.

"Even the swiftest of the sailing vessels required nearly a month to cross the Atlantic. The long journey in cramped quarters gave the emigrants a taste of hardship and difficulty even before the arduous trek across the plains.

Scarcely a voyage passed without at least one funeral, and one company buried nine little ones at sea.

Preparing food for several hundred people was one of the problems with the limited facilities aboard ship. Some groups selected men from among their number to do the cooking while the women busied themselves making tents and wagon covers for the last stage of the journey. Ship's rations included salt pork, salt beef, sea biscuit, flour, rice, oatmeal, peas, sugar, condiments and water.

Most of the emigrants traveled in the steerage, where the men were housed in one large compartment and the women in another. The berths were described as being "about six feet by four feet six, and made of rough boards to hold two persons each ." There were "two tiers in height, nailed up along the sides of the vessel."

The monotony of the long voyage was relieved with dancing "to the music of a violin and a tamborine."

Everyone assembled for evening and morning prayers, and Sacrament Meeting was held each Sunday.

The Latter Day Saint emigrants often were commended by the ship's officers and port officials for their orderliness. One captain commented that he had not heard "a single oath" during the time that the "Mormons" had been aboard. At the end of the same voyage, "A meeting was held on deck, and in response to three cheers for the captain, he said that the company was the best he had ever brought across the sea. He further said the passengers sang, "We'll marry none but "Mormons" but for his part he would "carry none but Mormons."

--taken from the Church News

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The voyage took six long weeks in the sailing vessel. They landed at Boston, Massachusetts and went by train to Iowa. Here they waited for the handcarts to be built before they began the long trek of 1400 miles across the plains to Utah. They left Iowa City on July 28, 1856.

There was in the church at that time, (and I don't know if my family was involved in it or not, but they probably were) what was called the Perpetual Immigration Fund. The people would contribute; and the immigrants could draw from it; and then when they became settled would pay it back. This carried on for quite a while, while the saints were immigrating. But at the time the polygamists were being persecuted, and the United States Authorities came. They tried to look for the Funds. They had a box, but there was not one

cent in it when they came to hunt for it . The Perpetual Immigration Fund enabled many to come to Utah who otherwise would have been unable to..

There had been other handcart companies leave that year. They had to wait for new handcarts to be made; and there was no seasoned lumber. So they made the handcarts out of green wood, which was not only much heavier to pull, but also fell apart when they got out into the heat of the desert and the long prairies that they walked over . They had some discussion and wondered if they should wait. But they decided that they did not have enough money and enough food, and they thought that they had better be on their way. The first part of the journey was quite fun. They walked through green valleys; and the children played; and they had a good time. The weather was warm, and everything was all right. But after a few weeks they were out in the desolate places and the circumstances were not so pleasant..

"President Brigham Young figured that the trip from England to Utah could be made for less than \$12.00 per family. The handcarts were built from native oak and hickory. To make the wheels last longer, they were bound with iron rims. The carts were just large enough to hold a few cooking utensils, supplies and a minimum for personal belongings. Each adult was allowed 17 lbs. for his possessions and each child 10. Four to five persons were assigned to each cart. Ox-drawn wagons carried extra supplies. A small herd of milk cows followed. The first handcart companies out-traveled the usual ox teams and often complained of being slowed down by the accompanying wagons. But the latter companies did not leave Europe until May. By the time they arrived in Iowa City, there wasn't enough seasoned lumber for handcarts, so they made them from green wood. This made the carts heavier than usual. Although it was late in the year for such a journey the Mormons believed they would run out of food and money if they delayed."

President Young had devised a plan whereby emigrants could sail to America, make their way to Iowa City and there each family would be assigned a handcart in which to carry its belongings. The 1,400 miles would be traversed by foot.

"Let them gird up their loins and walk through and nothing shall hinder or stay them. President Young said."

From 1856 to 1860, nearly 3,000 emigrants traveled to Zion by handcarts. They employed 653 carts and wagons. The eight companies that left the Missouri River in June or July came through sucessfully and without undue casualties. In fact they out-traveled the usual ox team and often complained of being slowed down by the accompanying wagons.

Only the two late companies caught in the unfortunate combination of a late start and an early winter, suffered terrible loss of life.

Most people, in looking at the handcart emigration, have seen only the tragic misfortune of those late companies of 1856. This was indeed a pitiful episode, one of the most pathetic chapters in the history of the West. But taken in its normal operations, with adequate preparations and proper scheduling, the handcart plan was an economical, effective and rather beneficent institution. The economy of handcart travel is undisputed.

It enabled hundreds to emigrate who, in all probability, never could have come to America. #2

The Martin handcart company consisted of 576 souls, with 146 carts and 7 wagons. They left on July 28th and did not arrive until November 30, 1856. Between 135 and 150 people died and they traveled 1,400 miles. Can you imagine that many people walking that many hundred miles together and the problems that they came to?

There were no bridges. One story that has been told and retold is the story of wading the rivers. My grandmother was quite strong and young. When they would come to a river that she could help with, sometimes she would go forward and back six times to help the weaker people. Quite a story has been told of a river that they were wading when grandmother Elizabeth Bradshaw had Uncle Richard, then a boy of about six on her shoulders. As they waded through the river, the current was quite strong and she began to wash farther and farther down the stream. The men on the sides were yelling "throw the boy in, you'll never make it with him on your shoulders, save yourself - let him go." But before she left England she had received a patriarchal blessing that told her that she'd get all of her family to Utah, and that none of her posterity would ever want for bread. So she clung on but was washed down to where the bank of the river was so high that the men had to come and lift the boy off her shoulders. When she got out on the bank, she raised her arm to the square, and thanked the Lord that he had given her the strength and help to fulfill the blessing that had been given her.

Another time Samuel was brought into camp, apparently dead. I don't know the reason, but they administered to him and he too survived and came on to Utah.

I remember hearing from her own lips how they used to wade the rivers. Their dresses would become frozen, and the icicles would tinkle as they walked along. There was no chance for a change of clothing. They slept on the ground every night in all types of weather. Then when the snows came, their shoes were so worn that they left bloody foot prints on the snow as they walked along. The rations became so low that later on when the weather was cold and their clothes were worn and they too were very much worn out, their rations were just a little flour stirred in water in a rusty tin cup. That was all the nourishment they had.

They got a lot of courage as they camped at night. They would often have dances and somebody would play an accordion or a fiddle and they would dance. It seemed to revive their spirits a lot. And throughout all this as they walked along, they would sing the Handcart Song.

For some must push and some must pull,
As we go marching up the hill,
So merrily on our way we go,
Until we reach the valley -oh.

When you get there among the rest,
Obedient be and you'll be blest,

And in God's chambers be shut in,
While God shall cleanse the earth from sin.

That was always an inspiration to them and they felt that they would be safe when they arrived in Zion.

The following quotation describes some of the tragic problems they faced as their journey progressed.

"To make the food supply last, rations were cut again. Three quarters of a pound of flour was the allotment. The trail became tougher. The forced marches were harder to bear. The handcarts crept at a snail's pace.

Gone were the laughter and hearty songs. Some occasionally intoned hymns to summon lost spirit. They were watched by sunken eyes staring vacantly from gaunt, pinched faces. Exhausted in mind and body they pushed ahead mechanically.

When one man fell, others lifted him painfully to his feet. No smile of thanks lighted his face, no sign of recognition, yet they all understood. They might be the next to fall - or die.

As strength ebbed, many had to throw away belongings to lighten their load. Now with cold weather and snow falling, the Saints realized their costly mistake. Raw, biting winds blew icy blasts. With head bent against the freezing winds, they staggered on. Westward - ever westward.

One day, the emigrants awoke to a foot of snow and had to break new trails. The going was slow, painful-shocking to their numbed minds. They stopped and camped at a patch of willows. The next morning fresh snow covered the entire countryside. Some of their animals had drifted from camp, but the Saints were too exhausted to look for them.

Death hovered over the determined pioneers now like an ominous cloud. Each day's dead were wrapped in blankets and consigned to a common grave with the prayers of the survivors.

At times the ground was too frozen for digging. The men buried their dead in snowdrifts.

One woman found her husband dead beside her in the night. She didn't cry, she was already past tears. She lay beside him all through the icy night, staring dry eyed in the darkness. In the morning, she turned what little energies she had toward the care of her three children." #1

The snow and the winter came early that year, and it was just October when they began finding themselves wading through snow, and it was very cold. They had camped along the river in the willows. The snow was deep and they were frozen, some people had their feet frozen real badly. So many had died and they were just in despair, thinking that probably none of them would reach the valley. It was about that time that Willard Richards coming from England passed these pioneers and saw them and the condition that they were in. He was traveling in some kind of outfit with horses. He went on to Salt Lake. There he made the report to President Brigham Young, and told about the condition of these people out on the plains. President Brigham Young postponed the conference and told the people to go home. He said, "We must save those people, go get those people in." My grandfather was one who was at that conference. And he tells in his journal how he

went home and had his horses shod, and gathered up food and clothing and bedding and whatever he could, and went out to meet the pioneers.

"The church authorities were much surprised to learn that so many Saints were far back on the trail.

We had no idea there were any more companies upon the plains, said President Brigham Young, until our brethren arrived, presuming that they would consider their late arrival in America and not start them across the plains until another year.

The semi-annual conference was about to convene. Some 12,000 of the faithful had gathered into Salt Lake City from the scattered settlements, to hear the word of the Lord from the Prophet Brigham Young and the Apostles.

News of the late departure of the fourth and fifth handcart companies had spread among the people, and the air was tense with expectancy.

I will now give this people the subject and the text for the Elders who may speak today and during the conference, he announced.

It is this. On the 5th day of October, 1856, many of our brethren and sisters are on the plains with handcarts, and probably many are now 700 miles from this place, and they must be brought here, we must send assistance to them.

The text will be, to get them here. I want the brethren who may speak to understand that their text is the people on the plains. And the subject matter for this community is to send for them and bring them in before winter sets in.

That is my religion, that is the dictation of the Holy Ghost that I possess. It is to save the people. This is the salvation I am now seeking for. To save our brethren that would be apt to perish, or suffer extremely if we do not send them assistance.

I shall call upon the bishop's this day. I shall not wait until tomorrow, nor until the next day, for 60 good mule teams and 12 or 15 wagons. I do not want to send oxen. I want good horses and mules, that are in this territory. We must have them. Also 12 tons of flour and 40 good teamsters, besides those that drive the teams.

I will tell you all that your faith, religion, and profession of religion, will never save one soul of you in the Celestial Kingdom of our God, unless you carry out such principles as I am now teaching you.

Go and bring in those people now on the plains. And attend strictly to those things which we call temporal, or temporal duties. Otherwise, your faith will be in vain.

The preaching you have heard will be in vain to you, and you will sink to Hell, unless you attend to the things we tell you.

I want the sisters to have the privilege of fetching in blankets, skirts, stockings, shoes, etc., for the men, women, and children that are in those handcart companies. Hoods, winter bonnets, stockings, skirts, garments, and almost any description of clothing." #2

They tell quite a story about how the pioneers felt. They were weak, sick and discouraged thinking about their situation. I remember Grandmother saying how they would say to each other, "Did we leave our homes, and everything for this? Could this be the end? Surely the Lord will help us get to Zion." Then one night during the snowy situation, they looked toward the west, and there silhouetted against the setting sun they saw these men and their teams coming. What a shout of joy went up as they realized that they were going to be saved. What a welcome those young men had, when they came with food and with clothing. How they hugged them and kissed them, and they really were their

Saviors. They took them home from there into the valley in their wagons. Some of them were in very bad condition, and you can imagine how badly they needed a bath and food, and rest after having slept on the ground from the last of July until they arrived in Salt Lake City in November.

November 30th was a Sunday. The faithful Saints were assembled in the Tabernacle, with President Young presiding. Having been apprised of the imminent arrival of the belated emigrants, he spoke to the congregation.

"When those persons arrive, I do not want to see them put into houses by themselves, I want to have them distributed in the city among the families that have good and comfortable houses, and I wish all the sisters now before me, and all who know how and can, to nurse and wait upon the newcomers and prudently administer medicine and food to them. To speak upon these things is a part of my religion, for it pertains to taking care of the Saints.

As soon as this meeting is dismissed, I want the brethren and sisters to repair to their homes, where their bishops will call on them to take in some of this company. The bishops will distribute them as the people can receive them.

The afternoon meeting will be omitted, for I wish the sisters to go home and prepare to give those who have just arrived a mouthful of something to eat, and to wash them and nurse them up.

Some you will find with their feet frozen to their ankles, some are frozen to their knees and some have their hands frosted. We want you to receive them as your children, and to have the same feeling for them. We are their temporal saviors, for we have saved them from death."

The response to President Young's call for help was magnificent. But only when the freezing and starving companies were reached, did the real rescue operation begin. Many of the chilled handcart pioneers had lost all love for life and could not be aroused. As the fatigued company with their rescuers made their way, mile after mile, through deep snow or ice filled streams and against freezing winds, the harvest of deaths from hunger, cold and exposure continued, almost unabated. Even after the relief wagons descended into the Salt Lake Valley with their pitiable loads, the suffering was not over. Indeed, for many, it was continued through life.

Grandma and her family arrived in Salt Lake on the 30th of November 1856. They were taken out to Bountiful. There they found the rest that they needed. Not too many months after that, my grandmother was married to Franklin Standley. He was one of the young men who had gone out to bring those people in. He recorded in his journal that he expected to be gone only a few days, but the hardships were worse than he thought and the traveling was slow. They did not arrive until late November. On April 5, 1857, my grandmother and Franklin Standley were married. He told in his journal a cute story about a little romance. He said that he knew a girl by the name of Ann Hansen and he asked her if it was "according to her mind and will to be married." She replied in the affirmative. Then he stated that they went to Salt Lake to be married, but they didn't find Brigham Young in so they came home again. He tells of a little more about how many adobe bricks he'd made, how the blind cow got into the creek and different things like that. Then he says that he'd heard that there was a misunderstanding with Ann Hansen about their postponed marriage, "I guess I'll have to go to see her." So then, he didn't ever mention

Ann Hansen again. But the next thing about his romance was that he'd met Grandma Bradshaw, and he'd asked her if it was all right if he paid attention to her daughter Sarah Ann, who of course was my grandmother. So I almost lost him as a grandfather. It was a good thing that President Brigham Young wasn't in that day, or he'd never have been my grandfather. He and Sarah Ann were married for time and eternity in President Brigham Young's office on April 5, 1857.

My mother Sarah Jane was born on October 31, 1858. When Sarah Ann was just three months old her father (William Haigh) died. Her husband Franklin Standley died February 7, 1859. So this young mother who had pulled her handcart across the plains, and who had also been left fatherless when she was three months old, was left a widow now, with a baby three months old. Conditions were quite hard. You can imagine how badly she would feel in losing her husband, and the problems that came with that. Her mother in law seemed to feel that she hadn't belonged to the family long enough to share the family property, so she began taking from her the cattle that had belonged to her husband, one by one. And finally she said, "if that baby is a handicap to you, I'll take her and raise her as my own." But that was more than she could take. She said, "over my dead body. You've robbed me of everything else I have, but you'll never get my baby." Mother used to tell us later that the Standley cattle herd acquired a disease, and they lost more than they had taken from her. You can imagine how blue and discouraged she would feel. There was not much of a variety of work to be done. People were just living very close to the earth, providing for themselves from what they could produce. And in this discouraged condition she felt very blue and lonely. She tells of a dream she had one night while she was having all these problems. She dreamed that she was walking down the street, and on the opposite side of the fence she met her husband Franklin Standley. She told him how hard things were for her, and said she wished she could come to him. And he said you can't come yet, your mission isn't completed. But things will work out better for you, more than you have thought. He told her just how many months it had been since his death and he said, "things have been better for you than you thought they'd be, and they'll be better still." And in this same dream, Louis Miller came walking down on her side of the fence, and they walked away arm in arm. She always thought this dream had quite a meaning for her. Not long after that she met Louis Miller. He was quite an individual. He had been a cook on a steam boat on the river. When he came to Utah, he came in a broadcloth suit, with diamond studs in his white shirt, while all the native people were wearing homespun clothes. People said, "Oh that's a summer Mormon, he'll leave when the snow begins to fly and things get rough. Sarah Ann and Louis were married in October of 1859.

One unusual thing, we have in Grandpa Standley's history is the date of his endowments. Grandmother had never had her endowments, but had been sealed for time and all eternity in President Brigham Young's office. Later, after they moved to Hyrum, they made a trip to go back to the Endowment House and were going to be sealed together. In those days they had to drive a team and wagon and it was too far to go in one day, so they had to sleep on the way. During the night, they were sleeping and Grandpa Miller felt that Franklin Standley was between them. So when they got to the Endowment House, he stood for Franklin and had Grandma sealed to her first husband Franklin. This greatly upset the two boys who were already born at that time. This was after they moved to Hyrum, and had their two sons, Louis and Fred. There were quite a few interesting

stories about Grandma and Grandpa Miller in Bountiful. They were having quite a hard time. Grandpa was quite a good cook, but there was no work of that kind in this area. After they came to Hyrum of course, they had to do like the rest of the people. They had to produce what they used for themselves.

While they were still in Bountiful, they told the story of going to the Ramptons one day for dinner. These Ramptons were the progenitors of Calvin Rampton, our former governor. The Ramptons had cooked a good meal. Grandma sat down to eat with them but when she looked at the table and remembered what they had in their own home, she cried. She said, "I can't eat, I've got to go home and eat small potatoes too little to peel with Miller." She usually called him Miller. So she said that they gave her a piece of dough that they had ready to bake. She said that they wrapped it in one of my mothers diapers. I don't know how this was accomplished. But she went home and found Grandpa Miller eating his small potatoes and she said, "Oh, wait a minute, let me fix you something good." And so she made him scones out of this dough that was ready to bake. They had a feast of scones and little potatoes.

Another story that she told was when she gave my mother, just a little child sitting on the floor not even able to walk, a slice of bread. And she sat and crumbed it on the floor and Grandpa Miller said, "Oh, the dear little thing, she doesn't know that that's the last slice we've got!" And he walked out of the house. Grandma wondered if people were right in saying that he was a summer Mormon, and he would go when the times got rough. She wondered if he really would go and not come back. But he came back, and they spent a little more than fifty happy years together. To them were born 5 sons, Uncles Louis, Fredrick, Albert, Samuel, and James. They always called my mother their sister. Grandfather was quite a man. He had had so much experience with immorality, sin and things of that kind on the steam boat that he was very anxious that especially his step daughter grow up right. Mother told me that he said if anyone took advantage of her he'd shoot the ----. He just wouldn't stand for it. And then she'd tell that one time he got Grandmother up from the dinner table to show how he'd seen the young folks dance. They were doing the Plain Quadrill, and some of the boys actually put their arms around the waists of the girl. He thought that was more than should be done. But I think that his determination that the standards of chastity should be kept has been something that has kind of echoed down through the ages.

My mother went by the name of Miller as long as she lived in the Miller household, during her growing up years, until her marriage. Of course she was married by the name of Standley.

One of the things I remember of Grandma Miller was when I went down to her home and made lemon pies for their 50th wedding anniversary. I don't remember how long it was after that that Grandfather died, December 5, 1909. I was 17 years old at that time. My Grandfather had died about a year before, and I remember going with mother down to see Grandmother. She was well but she said, "I have given myself one year after father died, and a year is almost up." She was pretty lonely and discouraged, and before the year was completely up Grandma was gone, November 13, 1910. We all loved Grandmother Miller, she was a wonderful person.

Note: Quotes marked 1 were taken from an article entitled "Saga of the Handcart Pioneers" by Fred Harvey from True West magazine, October 1959.

Quotes marked 2 were taken from an article entitled "Rescue on the Sweetwater" by LeRoy R. and Ann W. Hafen. (Excerpts from their book "Handcarts to Zion", Arthur H. Clark Company, Glendale, California, Publishers.

All of the articles were ones collected by Sarah Ann Allen out of papers and magazines because of the special interest they held to this history.