

A personal history of unknown origin in the possession of Robert S. Raymond, gggrandson of Elizabeth.

Elizabeth Robinson Telford, A Handcart Pioneer of 1856 who came to Utah with the Martin-Tyler handcart Company when she was twenty years old, was born May 17th., 1836, in the little Manor town of Beauvale, Nottinghamshire, England. She was the daughter of Samuel and Mary Price Robinson.

Beth, as she was known to the family and friends of her youth, was the ninth child in a family of ten children, three girls and seven boys.

The Robinson family was in moderate circumstances. They owned their own home, a good two story brick house which was built and well furnished by Elizabeth's father who had a life lease on the land. Lord Plumtree (or Plumbtree) was the lord of the manor town of Beauvale, and the one to whom the Robinson's paid the tax on their home.

Elizabeth's mother was a mid-wife, and her father was miner by trade. Being an honest, industrious worker, he always had a job in the mines, and worked on the same shift, getting off at three o'clock every afternoon. He spent the remainder of the day in his garden. He raised flowers and a good vegetable garden, and provided well for his family.

Elizabeth was educated in the city of Eastwood, a distance of ten miles from her home in Beauvale, where she walked to school every day. This was a private school, sponsored and taught by several philanthropic ladies of the gentry.... Later Beth, taught the "Infants School" in the parlor of their home. She also did the fancy stitching on the backs of black gloves for a firm in Nottingham city, doing the work at home.

The Robinson's kept open house for the Latter-day Saint missionaries, and Elizabeth was a valiant defender of Mormonism from her earliest childhood, although she was then a member of the Church of England. She was a student of the Bible, and was outstanding in her knowledge of the Scriptures. She was always successful in her, defense of the principles of the LDS Church, not only against the attacks of some of the other Bible students but even the teachers of the school and their minister, who was called to the school by the teachers to prove to the other students by the scriptures that Elizabeth was in the wrong and to convince her that she should not join that maligned Church or have anything more to do with the "Mormons".

Due to her knowledge of the Scriptures and her understanding of the principles of the LDS Church she was convinced of the truthfulness of the gospel. Elizabeth joined the Latter-day Saint Church during her 18th year. She was baptized on April 14, 1854, by Elder John Cook, the President of the Eastwood Branch of the LDS Church in England.

Two years later she and her brother Solomon began their long journey to Utah, leaving all their family and friends to come to a foreign land and settle with the people of their faith. They left their home in Beauvale on the 20th of May 1856 for Liverpool, where they joined other Saints and set sail on Sunday May 25th. on the ship "Horizon" for Boston, Massachusetts, where they landed on July 3rd. after a voyage of forty days on the ocean.

During the voyage the returning Latter-day Saint missionaries held meetings on board which were attended by the Saints and some of the officers and sailors of the ship. Apostle Franklin D. Richards, the retiring President of the European Mission, promised the emigrants, during one of their meetings that they should have no storms during the voyage, and not spar should be broken. One sailor who heard his sermon, said: "I know that is a lie for I have crossed the ocean thirteen times, and never yet without plenty of storms and some part of the ship broken." But the prophecy proved true nevertheless.

Captain Reece enjoyed the singing of the Saints, and he used to ask Elizabeth and some of the other Latter-day Saint girls to sing for him during the voyage. Among the songs they sang for him was one entitled, "I'll Marry None but Mormons." The Captain answered by saying: "Now I Shall Carry None but Mormons." As he had never before had such a safe and pleasant voyage, nor such happy congenial passengers.

From Boston the emigrants went by rail to Chicago where they spent the night in an old barn. Continuing their journey on the following day to Iowa City, which was the western terminus of the Rock Island Railroad, and the outfitting point for the handcart companies, where they arrived about the 8th of July. The final stop was at the Iowa Camp ground on Iowa Hill three and one-half miles north of the city, where they remained for three weeks waiting for their handcarts to be made for them, as the carts for the Willie's Company, which preceded them were not yet finished.

On the 28th of July, the Martin's Handcart Company began their journey westward from Iowa City to the Salt Lake Valley. They traveled across Iowa, walking 400 miles to Omaha, Nebraska on the Missouri River. And started from Omaha in September to walk 1,031 miles to Salt Lake City over the trackless stretch of prairie, high mountains and desert now known as the Old Mormon Trail.

This was the biggest company, with the fewest wagons, the most infirm and the least provisions of any company crossing the plains, and also the most women and children.

This added to the late start and the severe winter weather was responsible for the unprecedented hardships endured by this company which was described by historians as one of the saddest in the history

of the West. They were cheerful, however, this courageous, heroic band of emigrants, and true to the spirit of all our noble Pioneers.

They sang as they marched along the rough dreary trail and in the evening around the camp fires. Among the most popular songs, was the famous Mormon Hymn,

"Come, come ye Saints, no toll
nor labor fear,
But with joy wend your way;"

.....
"And if we die before our journeys'
through,
Happy Day! All is well."

Another favorite was their notable "Handcart Song", the chorus of which goes as follows:

"Some must push and some must pull
As we go marching up the hill,
As merrily on the way we go
Until we reach the Valley, O!"

During this tragic journey the winter storms came over a month earlier than usual, and were more severe, and to add to the misery of cold and hunger they had to wade all the streams and rivers. At the last crossing of the Platte River on October 19th. it was snowing and bitter cold. The river was full of blocks of ice and the water was deep. It came up under Elizabeth's arms as she waded across. Many were dying from hunger and cold. At this crossing eleven were buried in one grave. Their clothes were frozen on them every night.

Elizabeth was forced to leave most of her clothing and personal belongings at the outfitting point, as they were allowed to bring only fourteen pounds each, including clothes, bedding and provisions, etc. On the plains, as they grew weaker, they were forced to discard even a part of that, so in the coldest weather they were nearly naked, and the provisions gave out so that they were reduced from one pound of flour per day to just two spoonful, one in the morning and another in the evening which they made into gruel, as they had no other food. No salt nor pepper, no meat or vegetables or anything else to eat. They got only one buffalo on the plains, and didn't even see a rabbit.

The suffering of this company was beyond words to express, and those who didn't die were so weak and ill that they were near death.

One incident that shows their weakened condition on that ill-fated trek was told of two men, Luke Carter and William Edwards, who pulled a handcart together to the crossing of the North Platte. They shared the same tent and bunk but finally quarreled. Mr. Edwards was not a

strong man and one day he complained of fatigue, and begged his companion to let him drop down by the side of the road and die. Mr. Carter, thinking a rest would revive him, complied with the request. Mr. Edwards walked from under the shafts of the cart to the side of the road, laid down on the prairie and in ten minutes he passed away. Another man was going to commit suicide. His wife had died on shipboard when she gave birth to a baby. The baby starved to death for the lack of proper food. He was left with the care of four or five small children, the oldest girl had both of her feet frozen so badly that they had to be amputated. This was more than her father could endure, so one day while he was lying under his handcart at the noon camp he prepared to end it all. He had taken his razor out and the sun flashed the light in a girls eyes, she screamed, attracting the attention of the entire camp, thus averting another tragedy. This unfortunate mans life was saved, as he wasn't allowed to carry out his desperate plan, but he was so discouraged over the pitiable condition of his family that he wouldn't continue on his journey but remained in Laramie...

Another day after winter set in, as the company was traveling along the miserable trail, an old lady fell full length into the snow, her arms extending over her head. There she remained, too weary and ill to make any effort to regain her feet. Completely exhausted but praying aloud to the Lord, asking Him to permit her to live to reach the Valley. Thus she laid until some member of the company helped her up. At the camp that night she passed away.

Another member of this courageous company, known as Father Stone, who traveled with a little grandchild about two years of age, lagged behind the company one day and was taken up by the Hunt Wagon Company, traveling in the rear. He was invited to stay with them over night but being anxious to regain his own company, he and his little granddaughter continued on into the night and on the morrow their mangled remains were discovered on the plains surrounded by packs of wolves.

As winter advanced and President Young learned of the suffering of the Handcart Companies, he sent relief trains to meet them. Sixteen wagons with provisions were sent out from Salt Lake City. They met the Willie's Handcart Company on October 20th and seventeen men and nine teams pushed on to meet the Martin Handcart Company, and Hunt Wagon Companies.

Joseph A Young and two others, Dan Jones and Abe Garr, were sent on ahead to announce their approach to the emigrants. They found the Martin's Company near the Sweet Water on October 29th, in a most deplorable condition. They had lost fifty-six by death since leaving the Platte River nine days before. Most of their bedding had been abandoned on the road as they were too weak to haul it. The Company was strung out three or four miles along the trail. There were old men

pulling and tugging at their carts, many of which were loaded with sick wives and children. There were also little children from six to eight years of age who were struggling through the snow and the mud.

Two days later, on the first of November, the emigrants with the assistance of the relief party, reached Devil's Gate in the Sweet Water Valley. Here they were forced to leave many of their belongings under the care of Dan Jones of the relief party and fifteen others. Several days later they made the last crossing of the Sweet Water. The crossing of this river was a terrible ordeal to the weary travelers. It was intensely cold. The river was wide and the ice was three or four inches thick, and the stream full of sharp cakes of ice which bruised them severely as they struggled through the water. The river was deep and about forty yards across and many were unable to wade.

Three men of the rescue party, David P. Kimball, George W. Grant and C. Allen Huntington waded back and forth for hours helping the handcarts through and carrying the women and children. One of the men offered to carry Elizabeth across, but she said she would wade the river if he would carry her brother Solomon, as he was so ill that she knew he would die in the water. She started to wade across the river but another man came and insisted on carrying her over, which was very fortunate as she was not strong enough for such an ordeal.

Soon after this crossing, probably during that night her brother Solomon died. His death occurred on November 5th. and he was buried three miles north of South Pass. After Solomon's death, Elizabeth allowed one of the young women to take the boots off his feet and wear them as her shoes were in holes. Elizabeth was also wearing a pair of her brother's boots as her feet were so badly swollen that she couldn't wear her shoes. And after his death, she also wore his coat, and one of his handkerchiefs tied on her head as the wind had blown her hat away.

As they grew weaker and were forced to throw away apart of their load, Elizabeth discarded clothes, bedding and provisions, but kept their books. Among these were her Church works, a Barclay's dictionary and the books belonging to her brother who was a surveyor.

While traveling along the Sweet Water and after the emigrants reached the mountains they were met by other relief trains from Utah. But they still didn't have teams enough to allow all the weary travelers to ride, so tried to give them all a turn, but Elizabeth walked over a thousand miles without riding a single step. She was suffering so much fatigue that she felt like it was impossible to go any farther and it was only the thought of her parents in faraway England, and their grief when they received the message that she as well as her brother had died of hunger and cold on the plains that made it possible for her to continue on. Otherwise she would have laid down in the snow and died.

Finally, with her feet frozen so badly that she could no longer keep up with the company in her exhausted condition, she started out one morning far in advance of the others to avoid being left behind. But they soon caught up with her and continued to pass her. She was too proud, as well as too shy to ask for a ride. Although she had never a turn she plodded resolutely on while the entire company passed her, one by one all the relief wagons, except one driver had gone on ahead. Elizabeth was steadily losing ground and the wolves were grimly drawing closer, so she knew that she would meet the same fate as the little girl and her grandfather, unless she received help... It was only the fear of the wolves, even then, that made it possible for her to ask for aid... In desperation, as she neared the foot of the hill and watched the last relief wagon pass by, she got the courage to call to the driver, Anson Call of the relief party, and asked him to give her a ride. He said his team was too weary to take her up the hill but she could ride when he reached the summit. He was very much surprised that she hadn't been given a ride sooner. She managed only by a supreme effort to reach the top of the hill. Then Mr. Call had to carry her and put her in the wagon, and that night she had to be carried to the camp fire and have her boots cut from her frozen feet.

During that afternoon while Elizabeth was riding along the trail with Mr. Call she spent the time mending his coat which was badly tattered. Welcoming the opportunity of repaying him for the ride he was giving her. When they reached the camp that night it was impossible for Elizabeth to get out of the wagon, or to take a step so she was carried to the campfire where boots were cut off, and her feet wrapped in gunny sacks. Her feet were so black from the continued freezing that it was feared they must be amputated to the knees. But she would not consent to this, as did quite a number of her unfortunate companions, but her recovery was due only to her great faith and persistent care that she received. Even under those adverse conditions her feet were carefully bathed in warm water every night and morning.

It was Jesse Perkins of South Bountiful, a member of the relief party, who carried Elizabeth back and forth from the wagon to the camp fire every day for the remainder of the journey to the Salt Lake Valley, as it was impossible for her to walk any more until after she reached Utah.

Elizabeth with other emigrants of the Martin Handcart Company, arrived in Salt Lake City on Sunday November 30th, 1856, just as the Sabbath meeting was out.

When she saw that cheerful, happy throng of pioneers, so clean and neatly dressed and compared them with her own Country people in their pitiful tattered clothing, hungry, bedraggled and frost bitten, she could no longer restrain her tears, the first she had shed on that long tragic pilgrimage across the plains, where she had faced danger

and death and every privation. And where she had left her brother buried in the snow. The only relative she had in this new land and the only member of that company that she had ever known before leaving her native land.

But one hundred and fifty of this valiant band of emigrants never lived to reach their destination, as they died of unprecedented hardships on the plains.

Elizabeth, after her arrival in the valley, lived at the home of Anson Call in Bountiful, until she was married the next March. She was married in the Salt Lake Endowment House in Salt Lake City, Utah on the 13th of March, 1857 to John Telford of Bountiful, Utah. He was a pioneer of 1851. They resided in Bountiful for many years where they built a good brick house on their small farm in East Bountiful.

Elizabeth passed through all the trials and hardships of pioneer life in Utah, living in Bountiful, Brigham City and Richmond during the early settlement of these communities, but she never complained although she had made so many sacrifices to come to this new land of promise.

Elizabeth Robinson Telford was a woman of fine character, supreme faith and courage. She was broadminded, scrupulously honest and truthful. She was unselfish and conscientious to a fault, and had a wonderful sense of justice. She was educated and refined, proud and sensitive. She was fastidious in dress and in thought. Quite, modest and unassuming in her manner. She was of a highly spiritual nature and very reverent. Keen of perception and a good reader of character. Elizabeth was a lover of nature in all her moods and seasons. She loved animals, especially fine horses. She loved to read good books and was interested in all the cultural things of life. Her old fashioned flower garden was a joy to all who knew her.

She was a good housekeeper, thrifty and efficient and always neat and clean. She was an excellent seamstress, doing all her own sewing by hand, the finest of stitching and tucking. Her husband's white linen shirts were made according to the fashion of that time with fine tucked fronts. Her tucks were made but two threads wide and the shirts laundered to perfection. She also knitted for her family and made the finest of knitted and crocheted laces.

When she was only a little girl in England, Elizabeth knitted a lace edging for a table cloth for a surprise present for her mother. She used number 100 thread which she set up on pins, instead of using her mother's knitting needles. When her mother received the lace and found out that it was knitted on pins, she asked to see Beth's hands. When she saw their condition she said: "The poor little pricked fingers", as she tenderly kissed each finger tip. Although usually undemonstrative, her mother was quick to show her appreciation and

loving sympathy to the little daughter who had worked so painfully and hard to make the lovely gift for her mother. It was a sweet memory of her wise and understanding mother that Elizabeth carried always in her heart.

Elizabeth, true to her heritage was a most devoted wife and mother. She was kind and thoughtful of others and respected their rights. She was a good neighbor and a generous and loyal friend. She despised a liar or a trouble maker, and couldn't tolerate anything vulgar, mean or petty.

Her children were well trained in all the basic principles - obedience, self control, honesty and industry. In sportsmanship, generosity and consideration for others. The best in fiction, literature, history and religion.

Elizabeth was active in the Relief Society and sang in the choir for many years. She was the mother of nine children, two of whom died in infancy, and one boy who died at the age of eight years.

This noble pioneer woman, who was admired and respected by all who knew her, died at the age of 74 years, after an illness of two years. She passed away at her home in Richmond, Cache County, Utah on February 22nd., 1910 and was interred in the Richmond City Cemetery.