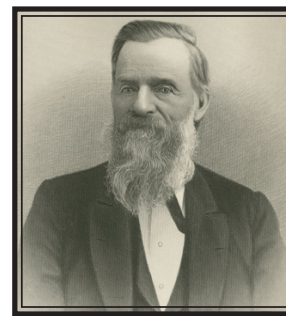


ANSON CALL

Born: 1810 Vermont

Age: 46

Rescuer



Anson's grandfather, Joseph Call, was a veteran of the Revolutionary War, having served under George Washington and fought in the Battle of Bunker Hill. His mother was an immigrant to New England from Germany. Anson's father joined the church in 1831, and desired Anson to join him in his new faith, but Anson was not interested. He said that the preaching of the missionaries was a "constant annoyance. ... I became dissatisfied with all denominations and myself. In the elders' passing through our country, they frequently stopped at my house, and in discussing with them the principles of the gospel, they would cuff me about like an old pair of boots." Although Anson was irritated by his discussions with the missionaries, he blamed himself for his feelings. "I came to the conclusion that the reason for my being handled so easily was because I did not understand the Bible and the Book of Mormon."

Anson struggled with fear and described himself as "proud and haughty." However, he vigorously studied the Bible and Book of Mormon for the next six months and then tried desperately to overcome his pride. He wrote:

When I finished the two books I became a firm believer in the Book of Mormon. I was then taught by the spirit to obey the principles of the gospel ... I was proud and haughty and to obey the gospel was worse than death. I labored under those feelings for three months, becoming at times almost insane ... To be called a Mormon, I thought, was more than I could endure ... I at last covenanted before the Lord that if he would give me confidence to face the world in Mormonism, I would be baptized for the remission of my sins; before I arose from my knees the horrors of my mind were cleared; I feared no man, no set of men.

Anson followed through with his covenant and the Lord blessed him abundantly. He had a speech impediment of stammering which was relieved by a blessing he received after his baptism. He began to preach the gospel to his relatives and friends in Vermont.

Anson followed the Saints to Missouri in 1838, where he courageously faced the persecutions of the mobs and enemies of the Church. In being driven from Missouri, Anson desperately wanted to be independent and not be a burden on anyone else. His desire was to return and attempt to sell some land that he owned near Far West. He sought the counsel of Joseph Smith, Sr. and Brigham Young and they both instructed him not to go back. After choosing to disregard their counsel, he went back and nearly lost his life in the severe beatings he received from the mobs, simply because he was a Mormon. He wrote of this experience: "Had I obeyed the words 'do not go, but stay at home,' I should not have fallen into this trouble. May you who read this be wise, and in this particular, profit by my experience."

In July 1842, in Montrose, Illinois, the Prophet Joseph Smith was with a group of brethren when he prophesied that the "Saints would continue to suffer much affliction and would be driven to the Rocky Mountains ... where they would become a mighty people in the midst of the Rocky Mountains." Anson later described this occurrence:

"I had before seen him [Joseph Smith] in a vision, and now saw while he was talking his countenance change to white; not the deadly white of a bloodless face, but a living brilliant white. He seemed absorbed in gazing at something at a great distance, and said: 'I am gazing upon the valleys of those mountains.' This was followed by a vivid description of the scenery of these mountains, as I have since become acquainted with it. Pointing to Shadrach Roundy and others, he said: 'There are some men here who shall do a great work in that land.' Pointing to me, he said: 'There is Anson, he shall go and shall assist in building up cities from one end of the country to the other, and you, [I] rather extending the idea to all those [other men] he had spoken of[)], shall perform as great a work as has been done by man, so that the nations of the earth shall be astonished, and many of them will be gathered in that land and assist in building cities and temples, and Israel shall be made to rejoice.'" (See History of the Church, 5:85.)

Anson came to Utah in September of 1848, in charge of 20 wagons of the Brigham Young Company. He settled in Bountiful where he served twice as a Bishop and in a Stake Presidency. In 1851, a special session of the legislature appointed him probate judge of Millard county with orders to organize that county, and in 1852 he represented that section in the legislature. In 1854 he founded Call's Fort in Box Elder County. He pioneered Parowan, Fillmore, Pauvan Valley and Carson Valley, and built a warehouse at Callville in 1864. This was the head of navigation on the Big Colorado River. He took part in the Echo Canyon campaign along with his sons, Anson V. and Chester. Anson was a successful merchant and a farmer. He became the father of 22 children.

In October 1856, Anson returned to his home in Bountiful from a mission in Carson Valley. This was after the first call for rescuers was given at conference. After Anson's return, he was also called upon to lead a group of supply wagons from Bountiful, North Canyon Ward, to assist these late companies. After loading thirteen wagons, Anson's group headed east, meeting the Willie Handcart Company at Bridger, Wyoming. Here he met Emma Summers for the first time. Anson and Emma were later married.

Some of the brethren in the relief companies felt that their duty was fulfilled when they met and assisted the Willie company. Others also felt that they did not have enough supplies to push on to aid the Martin company. Anson answered them, "This company [Willie] with a little help and a lot of encouragement will reach the Valley. Those following [Martin, Hodgett, Hunt] never can. We must push on! My teams start now!"

Anson's group pushed on through snow and cold until they reached the Green River where they were forced to camp for a week due to the elements. On November 16, 1856, they finally met the Martin company on Rocky Ridge, and camped with them on Strawberry Creek that night. (See William Broomhead account.) Anson recorded: "We found them starving and freezing and dying, and the most suffering that I ever saw among human beings. In number about 1,000 souls. There soon overtook us about 100 teams from the Valley. We were able to carry nearly all, yet some died every day. It continued cold. We arrived in Salt Lake City after the absence of 33 days. Safe with all the Brethren that went out."

Anson sent two young women from the Martin company to his home to recover. One was Elizabeth Robinson who no longer had use of her feet. Elizabeth so appreciated Anson's kindness that she mended his tattered coat while she rode in the wagon. The other was Margaretta Clark. Anson later married Margaretta. Their son, Wilford Call, wrote: "While the loads were being arranged, ... Margaretta waited in Anson's wagon gnawing at a frozen squash which had been intended for his horses. When [Anson] saw the situation through the back of the wagon he knew that [she] was freezing to death. In his rough venacular, acquired in the West, he told her of her condition and she replied: 'Oh no Sir, I have been quite cold but I am comfortable now.' When he took her by the hand she said, 'Hold on Sir, my hand is a bit sore, you hurt it.' As she struggled he said, 'I calculate to hold on,' and she landed in the snow. With the help of another man he ran her up and down in the snow to induce circulation and so saved for himself a wife who later bore him six children. Father told us that he knew she had passed the suffering point in a freezing death and if left to herself her mortal life would soon be a thing of memory. But mother always maintained that a gentleman from England would have been much more gentle and not so persistent."

Anson and Emma Summers' daughter, Lucina Call Perkins, stated: "I thought my parents were wonderful people. ... I never remember trouble in our life, no big rackets. ... His wives thought he was about the grandest man alive. ... He would talk to all of us, children and parents. His girls and boys. Virtue? He really instilled in our minds that it would be better to die than to be unvirtuous. ... We thought he was a wonderful man. Whatever he said it was that way and there was no other way. It was the right way. I don't think his child would call him on anything. I never heard his children ever say a thing against him."

Sources: "Anson Call and his Contributions Toward Latter-day Saint Colonization" BYU Master's Thesis by Duane D. Call, 1956; "Autobiography of Anson Call" available on internet; "William Broomhead Diary," Church History Library, MS 6952, as transcribed by Jolene Allphin, October 2017.