

MARION BROWN (or Fleming) MARSHALL

Born: 12 May 1822 England

Age: 34

Martin Handcart Company



Marion's mother died when she was very young. Her father was an officer in the Royal English Navy and was therefore unable to be home to care for her after her mother died. It is believed that Marion's father was Admiral Charles Fleming. She was placed in the care of a family by the name of Brown as a young girl where she was given all the advantages of a child of wealth and also took their name. As a teenager, Marion's guardians were changed to the Peter Hughes family. About this same time, the Hughes family fell heir to a large fortune which Marion always believed belonged to her. (This was about the same time that Charles Fleming died.) Of the beautiful clothes and silver and other things taken from chests and used in the Hughes household, Marion overheard a servant say, "It's a wicked shame. They belong to the child." Marion was not happy in the Hughes home and finally ran away to work in a shop making bonnets for ladies where she was very skilled and successful.

Marion married Charles Montague Marshall in Liverpool about 1845. They moved to Ireland where they had two children, Emily and Gifford. Gifford died Oct 9, 1850, and Charles died February 23, 1851. In her widowhood, Marion supported her daughter as a forewoman in a millinery store. It was while working here that she heard the Mormon missionaries preach. She attended their meeting with friends, expecting to ridicule the Elders and their teachings. At the end of the service she said to her friends, "Oh girls, I could not laugh at this." When she informed her late husband's family of her intentions to be baptized, they told her they would never again recognize her. Nevertheless, Marion borrowed a Book of Mormon, was taught the gospel by James Ferguson and was baptized by Elder Gilbert Clements in Dublin, Ireland. Her daughter, Emily, was eight years old.

One day at a meeting, Brother Ferguson spoke to Marion about Priesthood blessings and having Emily administered to. Emily had been left deaf for some time from Scarlet Fever. Marion agreed to seek the healing blessing for her daughter. A few minutes after administering to her, Elder Ferguson spoke softly to Emily who was standing across the room with her back to him. He said, "Would you like a bag of sweets, Emily?" She turned, smiled and said, "Oh, thank you, sir."

Marion and Emily soon answered the call to gather to Zion. Later in life Marion told her daughter that she had felt the spirit of gathering, that the Lord was about to establish His kingdom and she did not want to delay her coming, fearing the opportunity would be taken from her. Marion's obedience and faith were rewarded with another blessing from the Elders, as they promised her that she would cross the seas in safety and comfort. She had been dreading the crossing from Ireland to England as well as to America, as she had been so desperately ill before when she sailed. This pronounced promise was fulfilled to her.

Marion and Emily crossed the Atlantic Ocean on the *Horizon*, arriving in Boston June 30, 1856. This large company of Saints, led by Edward Martin, traveled to Iowa City, Iowa, mostly by train, where they prepared their tents and handcarts and discarded all but 17 pounds of personal luggage for their trek.

Marion told the stories of her trek to her children and grandchildren. Excerpts are quoted here as written by her granddaughter, Viona Leta Banks Petersen:

(Marion Marshall - page 2)

“When they crossed the Platte [River] for the first time, Emily had gone while they camped [nooned] for awhile, with some other children, to gather flowers. When they started to cross the river, Marion thought Emily had been carried across with the rest of the children. When everyone was over, she looked for Emily and saw to her dismay that the child had been left and was running, her arms laden with flowers, toward the fording place. The child thought others had waded and seemed intent on wading alone.

“Marion called frantically to the child, ‘Go back, go back,’ gesturing wildly to her. It seemed no one sensed her danger immediately and no one offered to go after the child. Marion cried out, ‘Isn’t there someone who could go after my child?’ It was necessary for one of the brethren to swim across and bring the child over. His name we would like to know.

“After they passed Ft. Laramie it was deemed advisable to curtail the [daily] allowance [of flour] to three-quarter pound to make the food hold out as long as possible. Later it fell to one-half pound and subsequently still lower. They were advised by the leaders to divide the allowance of food into three portions, one for breakfast, one for dinner and one for the evening meal. Some were obedient and some hungrily ate all at the first or second meal. These suffered most through their lack of wisdom. Grandmother [Marion] made two sacks in which to store the dinner and evening meals worth of flour. She then hid it in the sleeves of her dress to keep it for later use. The flour cakes were made of flour and water only. They didn’t have salt. Emily got sick without salt and asked for it. . . . This was a great trial for a girl of [nine] because she could remember the comforts of home in Dublin.

“Grandmother told that the obedient ones suffered the least. Some, tired at night, exhausted and weak, would lie down to sleep in their wet shoes. The advice had been given to remove them and dry the feet at night. Some of them had their feet frozen and suffered in later years as a result. Nothing short of a miracle enabled her to cross the plains in the dead of winter, a widow with a little girl to care for. They arrived in Salt Lake City on November 30, 1856. She was taken to the home of Margaret Judd Clauson, wife of Hiram Clauson who was Bishop of the 18th ward. Margaret Clauson and my grandmother became lifelong friends.”

One of the rescuers who came out from the Valley to rescue these pioneers was Elder James Ferguson who had taught the gospel to Marion. Marion married Henry Ebenezer Bowring in 1857 and had three more daughters. Emily Marshall celebrated her 10th birthday the day after arriving in the Valley. She married Thomas Orchard and had two children.

Marion had various letters and other papers pertaining to her family history which were kept by her daughters in a chest of drawers after her death. The family owned a millinery store in Ogden and had a housekeeper do the work at home. Upon returning from work one day, the new housekeeper was asked how she had gotten along. She replied, “Oh, just fine. I cleaned out the drawers in that chest and rid it of all those old papers.” All that was left was the ashes of the papers Marion had brought from England. Included in those papers were “beautiful verses of poetry” written by Marion on “ribbon paper.” As writing paper was not plentiful in those days, Marion wrote on this paper that had been used for bolts of ribbon to keep the ribbon smooth. She had plenty of this “ribbon paper” to bring home from the millinery store. It must have looked like useless clutter to the housekeeper.

Marion had received a good education in England, was well-read and refined. She had taught Sunday School in the Episcopal Church before her first marriage. When living in Salt Lake City she was a member of the Salt Lake Dramatic Club. One history (Tullidge) recalls her talent: “During these performances our home company did excellent work, not only in the support of the eastern stars who played here, but also in their own comedies and farces. Mrs. Marion Bowring long held the stage as a local actress. Her Elvira is remembered to this day as a powerful and impassioned performance. Even Lyne as Pizarrio was fully matched by Mrs. Bowring as Elvira. She also made an excellent Emilla in Othello as she did Juliana in The Honeymoon.”

In later life, when Marion’s daughters asked her if she would endure her 1856 journey again, she bravely replied, “If I knew that was the only way I could get to Zion and obtain the blessings of the gospel, I most certainly would.”

Sources: Daughters of Utah Pioneers history files; Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel website; “Mrs. Marion Bowring,” obituary, Ogden Standard, Feb. 25, 1891; Edward William Tullidge, *History of Salt Lake City*.