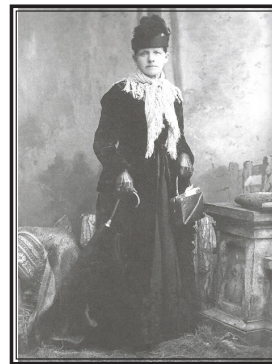


ALICE BROOKS

Born: 16 February 1835 in Bolton, Lancashire, England

Age: 21

Martin Handcart Company



Alice Brooks was one of four children born to Samuel and Sarah Astley Brooks. Her mother died when Alice was 8 years old. Her father then married Alice Cockshott, a widow with three living children. Alice and her step-sister, Mary Alice Cockshott, were both interested in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but their parents were against it.¹ Sometimes the girls would sneak away to attend meetings anyway. After much coaxing, the parents finally gave the girls permission to attend a baptism. They were both baptized on that day, June 26, 1849, when Alice was 14. It is said that before morning, Alice was desiring to gather with the Saints in Zion. She worked hard as a weaver in a cotton mill for the next 7 years to earn money to emigrate. Alice and Mary² walked long distances to attend Sunday meetings.

Although Alice faced much opposition from her father, she never lost sight of her goal to reach Zion. When she reached legal age and her departure was imminent, she left home one night and went to stay with an LDS family.³ When Samuel Brooks found his daughter missing, he made one last desperate effort to get her to change her mind. At 2:00 a.m., he went to the house where she was staying and ordered her to return home. Alice tearfully told her father that she would never come home again. He tried to find a policeman, thinking to force her to obey, but was unsuccessful. Returning to the home, Samuel demanded that Alice turn over her clothes, which she did, but she still did not change her mind.⁴

Alice bore her testimony at the last “Fast Meeting” she attended before leaving England. After she spoke, an unnamed person arose and spoke by the gift of tongues, which was then interpreted by that same gift. The prophecy was that Alice would reach Zion through much tribulation. She was promised that she would become a “mother in Israel” and that her last days on earth would be her best. This promise strengthened her many times during her difficult journey.

In May 1856, Alice boarded the ship *Horizon* in company with her aunt and uncle, Alice Smith Brooks (age 53) and Nathan Brooks (60), who had also been baptized in 1849. Their traveling companions were the Peter Mayoh family and the Robert Holt family. Robert Holt was the elder who had confirmed Alice a member of the Church. Alice gave her own account of her journey with the Martin handcart company:

Some days we traveled from ten to fifteen miles and one day we journeyed thirty miles. We usually pitched our tents at night near water and gathered buffalo chips for fuel. Having left most of our clothes behind, we were compelled to spread gunny-snacks on the snow for bedding. We often sat and held our feet in our hands at night to keep them from freezing. Our eatables consisted chiefly of flour, tea and sugar, and we had to depend upon the killing of buffaloes for meat. During that time, when our cattle gave out, we boiled their bones for soup, as there was no meat. We also roasted raw hides and ate them.

At last we found ourselves encamped in a ravine near Devils Gate with just four ounces of flour to each person per day for four days. A great number of people died, sometimes half a dozen a day, and on one occasion sixteen persons were buried in one day in one grave. People would walk until exhausted and then drop down by the wayside dead, leaving their bodies to be eaten by wolves, as the survivors, on account of the frozen ground, were not able to dig graves deep enough to secure them. ... We climbed mountains to get icicles off sage brush and melted the snow to obtain water where with to mix our flour. At Devils Gate⁵ the people were called together for prayer and asked if they were willing to die if the Lord so willed it, or if they were sorry they had come. They all answered that they were willing to die if the Lord so willed it, but they were not sorry they had come.⁶ Almost at the same moment was witnessed the approach of Joseph A. Young on a white horse. He was hailed by us as the arrival of an angel.

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Men and women surrounded him, weeping and holding onto him, pleading with him to save them from death. Elder Young went back and reported,⁷ and the next night we received a pound of flour each. In traveling through Echo canyon, camp fires were built every quarter of a mile to thaw those who lingered behind. At last we arrived in Salt Lake City, November 30, 1856.

Alice married Andrew Arne Andersen in March 1857 in the Endowment House. In 1860 they moved to Hyrum, Cache Valley, Utah, where she resided until her death in 1915. She had a large family of five sons and five daughters, “all of whom were married in the temple except Sara Marie and Samuel, who died soon after reaching maturity.” Alice’s daughter, Martha Marinda Anderson, married Louis Thomas Miller in 1886. Louis was the son of Sarah Ann Haigh, who had also traveled in the Martin handcart company.⁸ The Andersons became very successful farmers in Cache Valley. Alice wrote of some challenges in the early days of pioneering:

“Indians were hostile; we camped in an Indian wikiup, with a fire in the center. One day a rattlesnake wrapped itself around the willows in the wikiup, and a small boy helped me and we succeeded in killing it. There were twenty-five rattles on that snake. There were many snakes and crickets around the camp.”

Alice lived to see all the blessings fulfilled that had been promised to her, including the promise that her last days would be her best. Her health was reportedly better after middle age than it had been before, and she died “quietly and quickly as a snuff of a candle” at the age of 80. In 1950, it was estimated that Alice had over 500 descendants.

¹Family histories record: “[Samuel Brooks] never accepted the teachings of the LDS church, however it is evident he was dissatisfied with the Church of England as he and his two wives and the two children they lost in childhood, are buried in the Unitarian Churchyard at Ainsworth, Lancashire England.”

²Mary Alice Cockshott also emigrated to Utah. She traveled in the Israel Evans Handcart Company in 1857. This was a very small handcart company, with only 28 handcarts and 149 individuals. Alice’s sister, Nancy Brooks, and two other stepsisters, Martha and Alice Cockshott, were also baptized. Alice Cockshot emigrated and settled in Hyrum with Alice Brooks Anderson and Mary Alice Cockshot.

³This may have been the Robert Holt family, as the British Mission Record shows that Alice’s ticket for the ship *Horizon* was sent “Care of Robert Holt” to his address in Bolton. A daughter, Margaret, was close to Alice’s age.

⁴One family history records: “She received her clothes shortly before sailing. Alice was engaged to a young Mormon boy before she left England. She promised him she would wait a year before marrying someone else. . . . After she left, her father feeling that she would be better off with her fiance . . . in America, gave the young man his fare and told him to hurry to America and marry Alice. He caught the next boat (three weeks later). His Company waited until spring before starting west. In Salt Lake, Alice Brooks and Andrew Andersen kept company with each other for a short time. They received a call to go to the Endowment House, which they interpreted as a call to be married. They were married. So when her sweetheart arrived, he found her the wife of another man, although he came within the year she had given him. He died heart-broken and never married.”

⁵This event was not at Devil’s Gate, but at a place known as “Red Buttes,” near the Bessemer Bend of the North Platte River, where the Martin company had been stranded for several days. They were in a similar condition a week later “in a ravine near Devil’s Gate.”

⁶See Allphin, *Tell My Story, Too*, beginning of Martin company section, for other accounts of this meeting.

⁷See Allphin, *Tell My Story, Too*, biography of Joseph Angell Young, for clarification.

⁸See biographies for Sarah Ann Haigh and her mother, Elizabeth Simpson Haigh Bradshaw, in *Tell My Story, Too*.

Sources: Miller, Bonnie, *The Millers: The Ancestors & Descendants of Louis Thomas Miller and Martha Marinda Andersen*, 2010, volume I of II; family records in files of Jolene Allphin; Ralph, Elwyn Fred, *Autobiography of Elwyn Fred Ralph*, 2012; photos courtesy of Elwyn F. Ralph.

