

SARAH CHOULES

Born: 31 October 1832 Grafton, Wiltshire, England

Age: 23

Willie Handcart Company



Sarah was one of three daughters of David and Elizabeth Cripps Choules. She was the only member of her family to join the Church and was disinherited because of her baptism. At the time of her emigration she was engaged to Isaac Smith Jr., the son of Isaac and Charlotte Eagle Smith. Isaac went ahead to Utah to prepare the way in 1854, and Sarah went to live with his parents. In 1856, Sarah sailed on the *Thornton* to America, with her future in-laws and with fellow Saints who would soon comprise the majority of the Willie handcart company.

While the people were in Iowa City, preparing handcarts and tents to begin their journey, Isaac Smith Sr. had a sad experience, as recorded by William Woodward, a returning missionary and sub-captain in the Willie handcart company:

Thursday, July 7, 1856. I rode on a mule to find out some particulars at Indian Town. Crossed the Nishnabotna River about five miles from camp and after about two miles travel arrived at Indian Town. . . Isaac Smith, a member of our company, lost at Indian Town, six sovereigns, one Mexican dollar, one United States half dollar, and one dime. I went back to Indian Town with the mule team. Brothers [Charles] Oliver, Isaac Smith, and two women as witnesses, went to town in the wagon with me [and] a search warrant from Esquire Smith J.P. Mr. Brewster's house was searched, but we could get no trace of the money. Staid at Indian Town all night.

Four days later, Woodward wrote that “many of our company agreed to leave the company.” Apparently, Isaac and Charlotte Smith were among those who did not continue past Iowa City.¹ They became affiliated there with a splinter group of “Josephites” and never came west. With much faith and courage, Sarah continued on with the Willie company, now having lost the association of her parents and her future in-laws. She took no possessions other than the clothes she was wearing, so depended on the compassion of others. Sarah pulled a handcart with Janetta and Mary Anne Hodges, mother and daughter, and Emma Summers. Sarah suffered greatly on the journey. Family records indicate that she never fully recovered and had to have several toes amputated.



Sarah and Isaac were married in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City in June 1857. Their first of five children was born in Bountiful. The young couple then moved to Richmond, Utah, where they settled. They also had a farm and orchard in nearby Lewiston.

Sarah died of pneumonia in 1871. Her youngest child, Mary Ellen, was only four years old. Mary Ellen said that Isaac then became both her mother and father. Mary Ellen was very close to her father and often told her children and grandchildren of his kind and generous qualities, as well as the many adventures she had with him. It was said that Isaac “could have been well-to-do if he had not given so much money, food and shelter to so many.”

The posterity of Sarah Choules Smith likewise honors her for courage to see her way to Zion and for the heritage of faith she left them.

Sources: “Autobiography of Isaac Smith, Jr.” and other Isaac and Sarah Choules family histories, copies in files of Jolene Allphin; *History of William Woodward 1833-1908*, 1st edition, 1980, 2nd edition with Addendum, 2005; *Emma Summers Call*, compiled by Orland Call, 1997.

¹Some family histories say the Smiths traveled as far as the Missouri River (nearly 300 miles) with the Willie Company, but they don't appear to be listed on any company rosters. Isaac Smith Jr. made five trips back across the plains, three times by wagon and twice by rail. He made these trips for missionary work and to assist other pioneer companies into the Salt Lake Valley. Each time, Isaac visited his parents and tried to persuade them to come to Utah, but to no avail. Three of his brothers did come later and settled in Richmond, Utah.