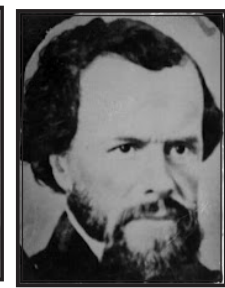


SOPHIA FRYER GEARY

Born: July 12, 1829 Yarmouth, Isle of Wight, England

Age: 27

Independent wagons with Willie, then Hodgett Company



Sophia Fryer and John Thomas Geary

With the help of hundreds of rescuers on the final part of their journey, the Geary family struggled through 16-20 foot snow drifts as they descended the steep trail through Emigration Canyon, finally arriving in Salt Lake City on December 15, 1856. Sophia Geary wrote: "After a long pull and a strong pull and a pull all together, we have managed to fight our way through rivers, roads, creeks, over hills, and dales and snow, and everything else which is good and bad [and] I am thankful we are here." Sophia's husband, John Thomas Geary, recorded: "We are all well and fully alive so trust in the justice of the Kingdom of God which may he grant to be the lot of all the honest in heart." Sophia gave birth to a baby girl on December 9, less than a week before arriving in the valley. John wrote: "I must say we have two little responsibilities living. Sophy¹ and another little girl born back at the mouth of Echo Canyon, therefore we named her Echo, then added the name Workman after our Captain."² Echo Workman Geary's birth came only two weeks after Sarah Squires of the Martin handcart company delivered a baby girl near the same place. The Squires baby was also given the name "Echo."



Echo Workman Geary

Sophia and John were married in London, where John had a law practice. He was from a wealthy family and had the advantage of tutors and an education in seven languages. Sophia also came from a prominent family. After their marriage, the newlyweds "led a three hour parade of both families and friends through the streets of London." However, after joining the Church in 1851, John and Sophia "caused such a commotion that the Geary family turned them out without a single copper...disowned [John] entirely, and wished to never see him again. They became fugitives, John even having to shave his head in disguise." The young couple moved to Liverpool, where church members took them in and John worked loading freight at the docks. By 1853 they had sailed to America. Their first baby, Sophia Ann, was born at a campground in Keokuk, Iowa. They moved west to Council Bluffs, where Thomas Fryer Geary was born in 1855. He died in 1856.

In August 1856, the Gearys joined with the Andrew Siler independent wagons in Florence, Nebraska. This small company of four wagons traveled with the Willie Handcart Company from Florence. The Willie company journal records an accident four days later: "Aug. 22. During the afternoon Sister Sophia Geary had her left foot run over by Bro. Wilford's waggon. She was administered to in the evening by Bros. Siler, Cantwell and Geary, Capt. Siler officiating. He sealed the blessing of health and strength upon her and promised that inasmuch as she would exercise faith she should walk tomorrow." The next day the journal acknowledges Sophia's faith with this entry: "Sis. Geary walked a considerable distance pursuant to Bro. Siler's promise."

After reaching Ft. Laramie, the Siler group remained behind, then joined with the Hodgett wagon company to complete the journey. The Geary family later settled in Toquerville, where they raised cotton and John taught school. He was noted for never whipping the children. Sophia had three more daughters before John died from an accidental gunshot wound in 1867. He is buried in the Salt Lake City cemetery. Sophia remarried to Joshua Thomas Willis, had two more children, then died in childbirth with a third. She and her baby, James, are buried in the same grave in Toquerville, Utah.

Sources: Lyman, Paul D., *The Willie Handcart Company*, 2006; johnthomasgeary.blogspot.com; wchsutah.org; Nichols, Kaye Page, "Echo Workman Geary," research paper, May 2010; familysearch.org.

¹Sophia Ann Geary, born in Keokuk, Iowa, was 3 years old.

²John Bond of the Hodgett Company mentions a rescuer with the company at this time who he refers to as "Captain Albert Workman." The rescuer for whom Echo is named may have been Cornelius Workman or Albert Workman.