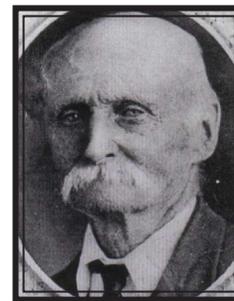


## ELI ALEXANDER TRACY

Born: 25 November 1833 Ellisburg, Jefferson, New York

Age: 23

Rescuer



Eli was the first child born to Moses and Nancy Naomi Alexander Tracy. His parents joined the Church in New York when Eli was only six months old. The Tracy family was living in Nauvoo, Illinois, when Eli was baptized. When he was 78 years old, Eli wrote about his baptism in a poignant letter to a friend:

My Dear Friend and Brother, Charles F[ranklin] Middleton,

Come with me in recollection, back seventy years ago today, when two little exiles, eight years of age, stood on the banks of the Mississippi River, waiting their turn to be born again of the water and of the spirit. Think of it, when the great latter-day prophet, Joseph Smith, led us both down into the water and baptized us. This circumstance is as fresh in my memory as it was the day it transpired. There are few now living who were baptized under his hands. Then again, I think what a blessed privilege it has been to you and to me of seeing and knowing the man who was an instrument in the hands of the Lord in bringing forth this latter day work. The man who communed with the Father and the Son and with other heavenly beings. I am thankful that the Lord spared my life this seventy-eight years, but now dear brother I realize that the evening tide of life is approaching and how long the Lord will permit me to live I know not. Be the time long or short I desire to so live that it may be said of me “well done thou good and faithful.”

In speaking of the Prophet Joseph Smith, it seems remarkable when we call to mind that the Savior of the world was baptized under the hands of John the Baptist, and that John sealed that commission upon the head of Joseph Smith who in turn performed that ordinance for you and for me. It seems to me that you and I came in close touch with those Heavenly Beings. I do not speak boastingly, far from it, but I feel proud of the honor of having been baptized under the hands of the Great Latter-day Prophet, Joseph Smith. . . . These experiences of the past leave a bright spot in my memory which time cannot erase. You and I may not live to witness another birthday, but be that as it may, I hope that when that time comes I may be worthy of a place in His Kingdom. Before closing I wish to pay a tribute to your parents and my parents for their fidelity and integrity to the principles of the gospel through all the persecutions and mobbing of the Saints. They have kept the faith and have gone steadily on. If I could only live to make my calling and election as sure as I believe theirs is, I shall be satisfied. I bear my humble testimony to the Divinity of Joseph’s mission and will close with the following[.] Praise to the Man who communed with Jehovah. Your friend and brother, Eli A. Tracy.

The Tracy family was living in Ogden, Utah, in 1854. Before the year was over, Eli made the next important covenant in his life—he married Eliza Ann Sprague on Christmas Day. Eli wrote:

We lived with my parents for a short time and then went to keeping house. Our furniture would not be considered up to date these days of style and extravagance as it only consisted of a table which I constructed out of some rough boards. Our bedstead was primitive in style and our house was decorated with three dining chairs which consisted of three stools with three legs in each. The third one was kept in reserve in case we should have a caller which we frequently did. Our culinary outfit consisted of one skillet and lid and one teakettle and one pot to boil our potatoes in, and I think for knives and forks. . . . Very few couples nowadays would think of getting married under these circumstances, but that was the best that could be done in those early days of simplicity, but we were content and happy in our humble home. No king and queen in their palace were happier than we, and I will make the statement that after sixty years of married life our devotion and love for each other has never grown cold but as we grow older in years and wiser as they pass along, that love and devotion increases, and so may it continue.

Eli’s autobiography covering 1855 and 1856 chronicles the challenges he and Eliza faced as he was called to serve a mission at Fort Supply and his subsequent participation in the rescue: “In the fall of 1855, I was called to fill a mission to the Lamanites at Fort supply near old Fort Bridger now in Wyoming, but before starting myself and wife went to Salt Lake City, and received our endowments and were sealed together for time and all eternity by President Brigham Young. On the same day, November 3, 1855, I was ordained an Elder and set apart under the hands of Heber C. Kimball.”

In Eli’s blessing, Heber C. Kimball said: “We set thee apart to go on a mission to Green river to the Lamanites. . . . It shall be well with thee and thou shalt go and preach and no power overcome thee, no bullets, nor bayonets. God have power over thee inasmuch as thou will hold sacred the principles of endowments that shall be taught thee this day and live in honor of the principles revealed to thee.”

Eli’s own words tell how these promises were fulfilled, as well as the sacrifices he and his wife made to serve this mission:

(Eli Tracy - Page 2)

I testify that the promises made by this servant of the Lord have been verified upon my head for I have travelled alone by day and by night when the Indians were very hostile and have not been molested. I had no fear for I had implicit confidence in the blessing pronounced upon my head early in the winter of 1856. In January, I was taken down with the mountain fever and was hardly able to sit up on bed. We counseled with the president of the mission, a brother by the name of Felps who was in charge. He meditated for a few moments and then said, Brother Tracy, it will be all right whether you stay here or whether you return home, so we decided it would be for the best to return home where I could get proper care. So my brother and My Uncle fitted up an ox team and made me as comfortable as possible and we started home. I stood the trip very well considering my condition. We came down by the way of Weber Canyon. The boys had to break the ice every crossing of the River. I think we had to cross it twenty-one times, but after we got as far as what is known as the Devil's Gate in Weber Canyon the wagon tongue broke so we could go no further with the wagon. We had a horse with us that my brother rode so the only thing to do now was to put me on the horse. I was so weak by this time I could hardly sit in the saddle, so they had to strap me on. They took our bedding and lashed it on to the ox yoke and after we had got through the canyon it became quite dark, and in going up a steep hill near Uintah, the saddle cinch broke, and I with the saddle took a tumble. The horse took fright and ran away and was not found until [the] next day. The boys spread down the blankets and made me as comfortable as possible. It was a bitter cold night and snow on the ground. I think I would have frozen if my brother had not kept up a fire all night. My uncle took the oxen and went on to Ogden and notified my folks. My father hitched up his team, putting in plenty of bedding and got to where we were just at daybreak in the morning. I was put into the wagon and we reached home in about two hours. I was very weak for quite a number of days but through the kind nursing of a mother and devoted wife, I was brought through all right in a few weeks.

The following Spring, 1856, myself and wife made preparation to start back to Green River or Fort Supply, but the water was very high that spring, so we abandoned the idea of taking a wagon and concluded to go on horseback. We saddled up a couple of mustang ponies and packed our blankets and provisions and lashed it to our saddles and started into the hills. We went by way of Weber Canyon. We had to take the Indian Trail on the north side of the river until we reached Echo Canyon. In those early days there were no houses or settlements, so we would camp where night would overtake us. We would spread down our blanket and cover ourselves with another and this would complete our equipment for the night's rest, except the wide canopy of Heaven for a covering with a silent prayer offered up for his protection over us. And no sound but the howl of the big mountain wolf which would make the night hideous. It made my wife a little nervous, but to me it was music to my ear as I was always fond of venture. We travelled on in this way until we reached Bear River where we found the water very high. It looked like a dangerous undertaking to try to cross it, and she replied that if my horse could make it she thought hers could. We decided to make the attempt. We either had it to do or turn back. We were about one hundred miles from home. I told my wife that I would try it first, so I unsaddled my horse and rode into the stream to see if I could make the crossing. I had no fear for myself for I was a good swimmer, but I made it across alright. My horse only had to swim two or three rods in the middle of the stream. When I came back I noticed my wife looked a little pale and I asked her if she felt afraid to cross. She replied, 'Not much,' so I cinched up [her saddle] good and tight and she got on astride. I told her to hold to the horn of the saddle and to let go the bridle reins. I tied a rope to her horse's neck and I took hold of it and we started in. After we had got to the swimming part of the stream our horses plunged in and we made the other shore alright. After we had crossed we made preparations to dry our clothes. After it was all over I thought she would collapse, but through her strong will power she came around alright in a few moments. After we had made a fire and dried our clothes and gotten something to eat we gave thanks to the Lord for His providential care over us.

In the fall of 1856, Eli and his brother, Mosiah, both went out from Ft. Supply to assist the late companies. Eli's wife and the other women at Ft. Supply sent baked bread and cooked meals. Eli wrote about the sad challenges of the immigrants:

I went out with others to meet the hand cart company going back as far as the Sweet River beyond the South pass, and found them in a terrible condition, with snow on the ground and bitter cold, and if it had not been for help from the valley, they would have perished. I remember that after we arrived at Green River and had made camp, I was asked to look after a little boy eight or nine years of age, and that after thawing out his shoes by the fire and after pulling off his stockings the flesh peeled off clear to the bone. It was a sickening sight. The poor little fellow died that night and was buried the next morning with two or three others that had [died] through exposure, and the rest got through to the valley, although some were pretty badly frozen. [The boy was possibly Herbert Lorenzo Griffeths.]

On a happier note, that winter, Eli recorded: "On the third day of February, 1857, our first child was born and we named her Eliza Ann and like most fathers and mothers we thought she was the only child."

Sources: Copies of "Eli Alexander Tracy" autobiography and letter to Charles Middleton courtesy Cecily Nelson, Kaysville, Utah; *Ensign*, March 2012; Jolene Allphin, "Rescue Timeline," unpublished research paper, 205-206; Jolene Allphin, "Martin company death list," unpublished research paper.