

LOUISA MELLOR

Born: 1841 England

Age: 15

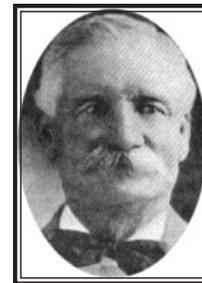
Martin Handcart Company



Mary Ann Payne Mellor



Louisa Mellor (Clark)



James Mellor, Sr.

Louisa's parents loved the gospel and were willing to sacrifice for it. Her father, James, Sr., had served as branch president in Blaby, England, often traveling 30 miles each Sunday to preach in several different towns. Louisa often accompanied her father on these Sunday visits. Later, James was also president of the Leicester Branch for two years. He held camp meetings in town, in the public market place and in all the principle parts of the town. He also distributed tracts in the villages all around. He later converted his older brother, John, and his family. They also emigrated to Utah. When James taught his mother-in-law, Charlotte Squires Payne, about the Gospel, she was too ill to be baptized. She "begged James to go to Zion and there attend to her salvation." She died soon after this.

Louisa relates, "The hardest thing [we] had to do was to leave my poor grandfather [Payne] for he was a good man. He wept and offered money to his dear daughter, my dear Mother, but relief was offered too late, for the Gospel was dearer than anything else. My dear Mother grieved for her dear old Father, which brought sickness on, and she came near losing her life."

After the Mellor's arrived in Liverpool, James and his family worked diligently to gather the supplies they would require on the voyage to America. The family consisted of James (age 37) and Mary Ann (36), Clara and Emma (twins - age 2), William Charles (age 5), James Jr. (Age 7), Mary Ann (Jr.) (Age 10), Charlotte Elizabeth (age 14), and Louisa (age 15). Mary Ann, grief-stricken over parting from her aged father, worried and suffering from overexertion in their preparations, became ill and gave premature birth to conjoined twin girls on the day the ship was to leave. The babies lived for seven hours and then died together. The family had to decide whether to abandon their long-awaited voyage, or leave Mary Ann behind as she wanted them to do. Mary Ann begged the family to follow through with their original plans since their passage had already been arranged and their few worldly possessions were already packed and on board the ship. James finally agreed to leave his wife in the hospital in her desperately ill condition and took five of the children on board the ship. Louisa, the eldest of the children, had anticipated celebrating her 16th birthday on the ship that very day. Instead, she stayed behind to assist in the care of her ailing mother, as well as one of her twin sisters, Emma Marintha. James and the other five children boarded the ship *Horizon*, left the dock at Liverpool and cast anchor in the River Mersey.



Emma Marintha Mellor

Bad weather delayed the actual departure of the ship for two days, and James was able to go ashore to see his wife. Although Mary Ann was seriously ill, she was determined that they should carry her onto the ship where the rest of her family was awaiting the moment of departure. The doctor was upset and predicted that Mary Ann would die and the sharks would follow the ship until she did. Even so, James said that he wouldn't give her up if she was determined to come along. On Sunday, May 25, 1856, Mary Ann was carried on a stretcher to the shore where she was placed on a steamer going out to meet the sailing vessel which was preparing to leave. She was able to board the ship. When the captain learned of her presence on the ship in her condition he commented that she would likely soon be food for the sharks. Elders George Goddard and Cyrus H. Wheelock came on board to bid the Saints farewell and administered to Mary Ann, promising her that she would "come to Utah" and "see her seed in Zion," and that her mission on this earth was not yet finished. Five months later, Elder Wheelock would add a physical rescue to this spiritual and emotional rescue, as he was one of the first rescuers to help the Martin company.



James Mellor, Jr.

Louisa and her family all made it to Utah, where her mother did have another child. The Elders who had given Mary Ann the blessing, didn't recognize James because his hair had changed from black to white as snow, yet he was only 38 years old.

While on the trail, a few weeks before the last terrible crossing of the Platte River, Louisa's mother had felt overcome with weakness and a wave of homesickness. She persuaded the family to let her stop and rest beside the trail. The company could not wait for her, so James said goodbye, promising to return after getting the children settled in camp. Mary Ann kissed each of the children and tried to reassure them. Louisa told her sister Elizabeth to take care of the rest of the family and that she would stay with their mother. After awhile, Mary Ann became quite discouraged and she sat down on a boulder and wept. Louisa had faith that the Lord would help her know what to do. She said that she went a few yards away from where her mother was, knelt and prayed with faith that God would help them, that He would protect them from the wolves, and that He would let them reach camp. Louisa wrote: "As I was going back to where Mother was sitting, I found a pie in the road. I picked it up and gave it to mother to eat, and after resting awhile we started on our journey, thanking God for His blessings. A few miles before we reached camp we met my father coming out to meet us. What a joyful meeting that was. We arrived in camp at 10:00 p.m. Many times . . . Mother felt like giving up and quitting; but then she would remember how wonderful the Lord had been to spare her so many times, and she offered a prayer of gratitude instead."

Louisa's brother, William, told about their father catching a large turtle one day. He thought it would make good soup for his family. The children gathered around while James tried to kill the turtle, but he couldn't break the shell. This was an amusing diversion for the children, but James finally became so exasperated that he plopped the stubborn turtle into the kettle of boiling water alive. James had to hold the lid on the pot in order to keep the turtle from flopping out. Later, Charles said, "The soup was sure good."

On October 19, the Martin company made their final crossing of the North Platte River. It was very cold and the Saints were already in a weakened condition from rations having been cut recently. Louisa and her sisters tied up their dresses and waded in water up to their waists as they navigated their handcart through the chunks of ice and swift water. When Louisa's sister, Charlotte, was older she told about it in these words: "On entering the water, our first impulse was to turn back and not wade across. The water was so cold that it sent pains right to the bone and the muscles cramped. We steadied ourselves as we held on to the cart and pushed. Father pulled. By the time we got across, our limbs were so numb that we could hardly keep from falling as we trudged along. The north wind cut like a sharp knife. We finally camped where we could get some cottonwood and willows for firewood." [Nine days later, the first rescuers would locate them near this place, stranded in deep snow, and many dying. Louisa wrote:] "We were so fatigued and hungry that we would sometimes stop and get rawhide to chew on, as our food was diminished. We tried to keep a little flour as long as we could to make porridge for the children; at first it was biscuits; then pancakes; then porridge. Often we would cook a hide, or a piece of it, to get a little strength. It being winter, we could not find weeds to help out."



The North Wind
©Julie Rogers
Used by permission

On Sunday, November 30, 1856, Brigham Young told a group of Saints gathered for Sabbath day meetings that the Martin handcart company would arrive in the Valley that afternoon. He told the Saints to take them to their homes and nurse them back to health, both body and spirit.

Henry Roper, age 19, told about meeting Charlotte Elizabeth Mellor that day when she was brought to his mother's home: "As I carried her into the house, I looked into her dark eyes and there was a romance born. It was love at first sight. . . . We were married Feb. 4, 1857."

Louisa concluded her autobiography with an invitation to her posterity to "hunt up our records" after they were dead, as they had not had time to do all of the temple work. She promised that "if it is consistent with the will of our Father in Heaven, we your parents, will aid you and bless you in all righteousness."