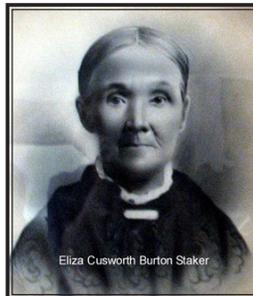


## ELIZA CUSWORTH BURTON

Born: 19 January 1824 Lockwood, Yorkshire, England

Age: 32

Martin Handcart Company



Martha Ann Burton

Eliza was one of four children born to John and Martha Brook Cusworth. They were well-to-do farmers. Eliza attended the schools of England, getting a common education for that time. At the coronation of Queen Victoria, Eliza was a flower girl. There were quite a number of small girls who acted in this capacity, carrying flowers and singing “God Save the Queen.”

Eliza married Joseph Burton in June 1846. She was left a widow on an unknown date. She had great faith to bring her two small children to Utah in a handcart company. When they left England in May 1856, Joseph Friend was 6 years old and Martha Elizabeth was 4. Joseph had a birthday soon after boarding the ship *Horizon*.

The Burton family started their 1,300-mile journey with the Martin handcart company in Iowa City in July. By the third week in October, the weather turned cold. Joseph told of reaching a spring and pitching camp. They had to use fry pans and tin plates to clean away some snow in order to pitch their tent, for they had no shovels. Before rescuers reached them, their rations dwindled to almost nothing. One time Eliza made three trips across the Sweetwater River.<sup>1</sup> Her daughter, Eliza Jane Staker Day wrote: “First she took her boy across on her back. When she reached the other shore she put him down, but he was frightened and tried to follow her back. She was forced to tie him to a nearby tree while she went back to get his sister. She then had to make the third trip to get her handcart. She spent part of the night drying her clothing and it was freezing weather.”

Eliza had hoped to stay with a cousin, William Cusworth, when she reached Salt Lake City, but found he had “become discouraged and apostatized, and had taken his family back [to] Iowa.” Eliza, Joseph and Martha were taken to the home of Isaac Laney where they were cared for and remained for a few weeks. Joseph’s foot was frozen and he lost two of his toes. The family was then taken to Pleasant Grove, where Eliza met Nathan Staker, a widower with several children. They were married February 18, 1857. Nathan was 23 years older than Eliza. They had a happy marriage and loved each other’s children. They had five more children together. In 1859, they moved to Mt. Pleasant, and helped to settle San Pete County.

Nathan’s mother came from Illinois to live with the family when she was 94 years old. She was blind and could not do much besides sit in her room. Eliza was very kind and took good care of her. Grandmother Staker lived to be 100 years old. Eliza lived to be 90 years old. At the time of her death she had been a widow for 31 years and had 96 living descendants.

On Eliza’s 87th birthday, her step-daughter, Mary Staker Farnsworth, wrote a 17-stanza poem for her, rehearsing her father’s lonely state before Eliza came into his life, Eliza’s courageous handcart trek, the participation of one of Mary’s brothers as a rescuer, and her love and gratitude for Eliza as a stepmother. The poem indicates that Eliza’s first husband died shortly before Eliza left England. He “blest” Eliza and encouraged her to continue their emigration plans: “Go on my babes and wife, For you shall reach the promised land, With no more loss of precious life, For God will hold you in his hand.”

<sup>1</sup>This may have been the crossing of the Sweetwater on November 4, as the Martin company moved from Devil’s Gate to Martin’s Cove.

Sources: “Eliza Cusworth Burton Staker,” by Eliza Jane Staker Day, daughter; familysearch.org; Daughters of Utah Pioneers history files; www.lynric.org.



Joseph Friend Burton