

SARAH ANN HAIGH

Born: 1837 England

Age: 19

Martin Handcart Company



Sarah Ann's maternal grandparents' line, the Simpsons, were clock makers by trade and descendants claim they were the inventors of the famous grandfather clock. At the early age of nine years, Elizabeth Simpson, Sarah's mother, was left an orphan, along with several brothers and sisters. She was reared in the family of an aunt, her father's sister. At age twenty-six, she married William Haigh, October 10, 1834, and to them were born two children, Samuel and Sarah Ann. Sarah's father died about 1840. Shortly after the death of William, Elizabeth joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

At age thirty-six, Elizabeth married Richard Bradshaw. They had four children. One died as an infant. Richard was also a member of the Church. They had been preparing to leave England for Utah when the news of the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith reached them. They were advised to remain in England until affairs quieted down. Before they could leave for America, Richard died of pneumonia on October 16, 1849. Elizabeth was expecting a baby at the time of Richard's death. She was blessed with a little boy whom she named Richard.

In her second widowhood, Sarah's mother never gave up the hope of gathering to Zion. She worked, waited, and prayed. The opportunity came in May 1856, when Elizabeth (48) found herself and five children, Samuel Haigh (21), Sarah Ann Haigh (19), Robert Hall Bradshaw (11), Isabella Jane Bradshaw (10), and Richard Paul Bradshaw (6), on the ship *Horizon*, ready to sail from Liverpool to America. Elizabeth's brothers tried to persuade her to remain in England and promised to educate her children and care for all of them if she would stay. She turned to them and said, "I am going to Zion."

They landed at Boston, Massachusetts, and went by train to Iowa. Here they waited for handcarts to be built and joined with the Martin handcart company. Sarah Ann's family had left England with plenty of clothing and other belongings, but could only take what could be packed into the one handcart for the family. Most of their supplies were given away to those in need. Elizabeth did keep her two wedding dresses and later was able to give them to her two daughters.

Before they left England, Sarah Ann's mother received a blessing promising she would take all her children safely to Zion. When the company reached the last crossing of the icy North Platte River, the early winter storm began. Everyone had to cross, the old and weak and small. Sarah Ann made 32 trips across the swiftly running river, carrying sixteen people to safety on her back. She was only about five feet tall herself. The next day, 13 to 18 people died, some being those who had spent their last strength carrying others across this river. Sarah told how the icicles jingled from her wet skirts and mud froze to their feet. She later told her children that she wondered if it was the end and if the Lord had led them over that long hard road just to let them perish in the storm and cold.

Also at this crossing, Sarah's mother, a small and dainty woman, took her youngest son, Richard, a lad of six years, and seated him upon her shoulders with his legs around her neck as he held to her head. As they started across the stream, they were caught by the current and carried downstream. Several called, "Let the boy go . . . or you will both be drowned. Save yourself." She refused to give them heed and struggled on until she made it to the opposite side. Finally, others came to help her out of the water. Immediately, in her exhausted condition, she raised

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her right arm to the square as a witness of the testimony she then bore to the waiting crowd that God had protected and saved her and her son. Another time, Sarah's brother, Samuel, was brought into camp and pronounced dead. It appeared that he was, but his mother's faith was strong in the promise of taking all her children to Zion. She asked that the Elders anoint him with oil and administer to him and Samuel recovered.

Sarah Ann's family survived the terrible experiences of the Martin company and arrived in the Salt Lake Valley on November 30, 1856. They were sent to Bountiful to the home of Bishop Stoker. Sarah married Franklin Standley, one of the young men who had come out from Salt Lake City on the Rescue. They had one daughter, born in 1858. Franklin died in 1859. Sarah later married a German man, Louis Miller. They were blessed with six children, five boys and one girl. The girl died in infancy.

Sarah and her family stayed in Bountiful for six years, then moved to Hyrum, Utah. Her home was simple after having been born to people of wealth and influence in her native England. Louis died in Hyrum, Utah, in 1909. Sarah died a year later at the age of 73. Sarah's granddaughter wrote: "At the present time a large posterity are very proud to be the descendants of Grandma Miller. We are proud of her courage and strength of character, of the culture she brought with her from Old England. This culture showed itself in the very neat way she always kept herself and her home, in her love of beautiful handiwork and dainty nice things, lovely flowers [and] the lovely way she cooked and served her meals. She was a real lady."

Sources: Daughters of Utah Pioneers history files; *The Millers*, volumes I and II, compiled by Bonnie Miller, 2010; *Autobiography of Elwyn Fred Ralph*, 2012.

Note: Sarah reported that as rations were cut and people began to lose weight, she never did, even though she was starving, too. Of the meager ration of a little flour stirred with water in a tin cup, Sarah said, "Even that didn't make me thin. Most of the camp were just skin and bones." Her descendants have suggested that perhaps she had a slow metabolism to go with her determined attitude and tremendous amount of faith. Sarah's story of carrying people across the Platte River on October 19 is portrayed in T.C. Christensen's movie *17 Miracles*, although Sarah is not named. Elizabeth Simpson Haigh Bradshaw's story is portrayed in T.C. Christensen's movie *Ephraim's Rescue*.

"I'LL NEVER LET GO"

Elizabeth Bradshaw
and son, Richard

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"NOT THE END"

Sarah Ann Haigh
carries others

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