

## SAMUEL OPENSHAW

Born: 1834 England

Age: 22

Martin Handcart Company



Samuel's parents embraced the gospel with some of the earliest English converts in Lancashire in 1840. The spirit of gathering to Zion was very strong with them and everyone worked hard toward this goal. Some worked in the linen mills 12 hours a day. In 1854, Samuel's brothers, Roger and Eli, were the first to leave England. Roger left behind his new bride, Eliza Booth. In Utah, Roger and Eli lived on meager rations for two years in order to save money to send for the rest of the family. This included Samuel's parents, William (age 60) and Ann (50); his siblings, Levi (19), Mary (17), Eleanor (14), and Mary Ann (10); and Roger's wife, Eliza Booth (19).

Samuel kept a diary aboard the ship *Horizon* and across the plains until the first week of October, after which time Samuel did not date his summarized entries. Excerpts from Samuel's diary in this biographical sketch tell some of the family's experiences:

Aug. 7—traveled through a beautiful country where we could stand and gaze upon the prairies as far as the eye could carry, even until the prairies themselves seemed to meet the sky on all sides ... Thought how many thousands of people are there in England who have scarce room to breathe and not enough to eat. Yet, all this good land lying dormant, except for the prairie grass to grow and decay, which if men would spread themselves and obey the commandment of God to replenish the earth, instead of thronging together in cities and towns and causing the air to be tainted with stinks and giving rise to disease, what a blessing it would be for men (people).

Aug. 22 - arrived at the Missouri River where we were ferried across to Florence [Nebraska]. We went to the top of a hill where we could view the country all round and the Missouri River to a great distance. Every place we came through we were admired by the people very much. Some looked upon us as if we were deceived; others who were old apostates came with all the subtlety of the devil, and all the cunning they have gained by their own experience, trying to turn the Saints to the right hand or to the left, but thanks be to God, but few or none adhered to their advice.

Sept. 7 - Eleanor has the Ague and Diree and is so badly that we had to pull her in the hand cart. Eliza also is yet so weak that we had to pull her also in the hand cart which made it just as much as we could pull.

Sept. 8 - We started about 8 o'clock this morning; traveled until 1 o'clock; stopped for dinner one hour, started again and traveled until 10 o'clock at night on account of not being able to find any water or wood. Traveled about 24 miles and found some (little) water in holes that had been dug in the sand. We pulled Eliza on the hand cart all day.

Sept 9 - traveled through a very hard, sandy, up hill and down road; halted for dinner about 2 o'clock but there was not water, but an old mud pit; started again at 6 o'clock. It thundered and lightened awfully, and rain at a distance, but as if to give everyone their share it rolled over and gave us a good soaking in the rain, rolled on until it died away at a distance. We were almost worried with mosquitos. Traveled until 11 o'clock when we camped at the Prairie Creek, which is very good water. We have traveled two days without water except mud water and that only twice.

Sept. 16 - Started at half past 8 o'clock. The weather is extremely hot which makes it hard traveling. Stopped at one o'clock, but moved no farther today. It would truly be an amusing and interesting scene if the people of the old country could have a bird's eye view of us when in camp; to see everyone busy -- some fetching water, others gathering Buffalo chips, some cooking and so forth upon these wild prairies where the air is not tainted with the smoke of cities or factories, but is quiet here. One may see a creek at a distance and start and travel one hour towards it, yet seem no nigher than you did when you started.

Sept. 19 - ... still continued to travel over the sandy bluffs which is very hard pulling. Eliza continues in a lingering state so that we have to haul her on the hand cart.

Sept. 21 - Eliza on account of being exposed to the weather is considerably worse.

Sept. 23 - traveled 11 3/4 miles today, and it is, I think, the hardest day we have had on account of deep sands. We had to pull Eliza all through them.

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The Martin Company became stranded near the last crossing of the Platte River from October 19-28. Eliza reportedly died on October 18. Samuel summarized:

We are now seeing the storms increasing upon us in the midst of an inclement and howling desert, far away from human succor and having only a few days rations in the camp. We have summoned all our strength and efforts to make another move, but our oxen having died off and our strength being very much reduced - the snow, cold, the blasting winds, it seemed impossible for us to travel. In fact, we were traveling all day, cold, hungry and fatigued and only traveled about 5 miles. We put up our tents, and then shoveled out the snow and put it around the bottom of the tent, in order to keep out the winds and to make ourselves somewhat comfortable. . . . After camping here [at Red Buttes] several days, and all the flour in the camp nearly used up and were not able to move and about 370 miles from [Great Salt Lake] City, and it being by far the nearest to look for succor. Yet, we did not despair. We looked forward for support with gleaming hope upon our countenances. In the midst of all this uncertainty and doubt, our hopes were realized for lo and behold, Joseph A. Young and two others with him, came riding into camp. [Oct. 28] Voices from all parts of the camp rang out, 'help for the camp.' We all rushed together to hear the news. He told us that there were about 10 wagons loaded with flour, sent out from the valley for our relief, and was about 50 miles ahead of us at a place called Devil's Gate. In the morning, we summoned all our efforts and strength, impelled with the prospect of deliverance, and we again started on our journey. We now had one pound of flour per day, which in a measure began to recruit our strength so that we were enabled to perform the journey before us. The brethren which came out to meet us, did administer every comfort and help that was within their power, to the sick and the infirm. [A few days after arriving at Devil's Gate, it became necessary to seek better shelter.] We traveled about two miles, crossed over the Sweetwater, some on the ice and others waded through, which was about 3 ½ feet deep. James Lord and myself pulled the handcart across the creek. The women and children were all carried across by some of the brethren who had come from the valley. We then went into a canyon where we camped [for five days]. [This "canyon" later was known as Martin's Cove.]

When word about their family reached Roger and Eli Openshaw, they rushed with other rescuers to take assistance to them. Roger was heartbroken when he learned that his bride, Eliza, had been too frail to withstand the journey and had died along the way. A biography of Eli's life tells of him meeting his mother: "He learned from the first wagon that his mother had become so weak that she had to be hauled and that she would be found in the provision wagon. He immediately made his way to the wagon. He lifted up the cover from the side saying, "How you all." For a moment there was silence, then his mother replied, "Aye, Aye, Eli, is that you?" and she began to cry. The only way she had of recognizing him was by his voice, for his clothing was made from an old wagon cover and his face was whiskered and he showed sign of worry and hard work."

The Openshaw family finally arrived in the Valley on November 30, 1856. After a short stay in Salt Lake to recuperate, they traveled to Santaquin to the two-room log home Roger and Eli had built for them. Eliza Booth's parents and sisters emigrated in 1864. Her mother died on the trail near Devil's Gate, about 50 miles west from where her daughter, Eliza, had died eight years earlier. Upon arrival in the Valley, the Openshaws took the Booth family into their home for care. The Openshaw family continued to be active in the Church and in their community as well-respected citizens. Samuel's brother, Levi, was known for his fine sense of humor and cheerful disposition. However, his experiences in the Martin Handcart Company "were stamped on his memory so strongly that they remained there the rest of his life and he would burst into tears when pressed by his friends and relatives to relate his experiences." (Emma Ellen Openshaw Kay)

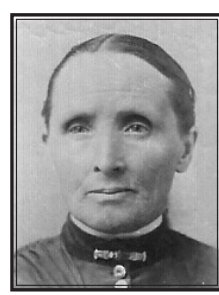
Sources: Keele, Pearl Holman, 1887-1979: "Eli Openshaw biographical sketch," MS12260, begins frame 1139, Church History Library; Madsen, Carol Cornwall, *Journey to Zion: Voices from the Mormon Trail*, Deseret Book, 1997, 640-654; Daughters of Utah Pioneer history files; Openshaw family histories in files of Jolene Allphin. See "Experience of a descendant of Mary Openshaw" at [http://www.tellmystorytoo.com/member\\_pdfs/maryopenshaw\\_1286.pdf](http://www.tellmystorytoo.com/member_pdfs/maryopenshaw_1286.pdf); See art and story depicting a miraculous rescue of Ann Openshaw at <http://www.tellmystorytoo.com/fine-arts/julie-rogers/bringing-them-home>



Eleanor  
Openshaw



Ann Walmsley  
Greenhalgh  
Openshaw



Mary Openshaw