

SARAH FOSTER



Age: 25
 Born: 9 Sept 1830, Hyson Green, Nottingham, England
 Martin Handcart Company

Sarah Foster was one of three daughters and six sons of William and Eliza Tomlinson Foster, who were born and raised in Scotland, but moved to England after their marriage due to “hard times.” William was a merchantman and operated a number of seafaring ships. The family was well off financially and employed many servants. Sarah was reportedly also a great niece of Lady Ellenore Gray of Scotland. When one of Sarah’s grandmothers married the gardener of a certain royal family, she was disowned by her own family for doing so. Sarah soon learned what this type of treatment would mean personally.

At the age of eighteen, Sarah heard the LDS missionaries teaching on a street corner. Interested in their message, she returned the following evening. The third evening that she attended, she “felt the Holy Ghost bear witness to her that they were preaching the true gospel of Jesus Christ.” That evening her parents questioned why she was coming home late to the evening meal. When she told them of her whereabouts and newfound faith, they became alarmed and had a long and serious discussion with her. They forbid her to read the Book of Mormon, but she did so at night by candlelight. Sarah told her parents of the Gospel principles she had learned from the missionaries from America, of the prophet Joseph Smith who had talked with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, and of her intentions to be baptized and confirmed a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Her parents told her that they would consider this a disgrace to the family and that if she followed through with her plans she would be disowned by them. They told her that she would find the doors locked and they would never allow her to come home again.

Sarah stated that she knew that if she denied the testimony she had received, it would be displeasing to God. She was baptized the next day, September 21, 1848. She said she felt so happy after her baptism that she was sure she would be able to pass a little of this happiness on, so she went to her home but found her parents unwilling to see her. One of the servants met her at the door and told her he had been instructed to not let her enter. Sarah said that she did not have any hard feelings toward her parents as she walked away, only sorrow that she could not make them understand. She was especially close to her youngest brother, Isaac, and missed him terribly. Some Church members took Sarah in and for the first time in her life she had to work to earn money for her board and room. She saved for her emigration to be with the Saints in Utah.

For almost eight years Sarah endured cheerfully, depending on her faith and prayers for guidance and comfort. It is reported that she was very patient and kind and eager to learn God’s will for her and attended all of her Church meetings. She made friends with two other girls who had also joined the Church and these three made their plans to come to Zion together. (It is not known at this time who these other two girls were.) When the long-awaited day came, these three friends stood on the deck of the ship *Horizon*, watching until England was completely out of sight.

Sarah had saved enough for her trip that she actually had extra money. While in Iowa City, she noticed that some of the little children from poor families actually had no shoes. She used her extra money to purchase shoes for them. When Sarah’s own shoes became completely worn through, she took the oxen hide wrappings from the wagon wheels to wrap her frozen feet in. Later this hide was washed, boiled and eaten to keep from starving. Sarah’s feet gave her trouble the rest of her life and she never again wore shoes with any degree of comfort.

Sarah became especially close to the Ollerton family. James Ollerton (age 56), died on November 12, just three days after resuming their journey after their five-day stay at Martin’s Cove. James had no doubt been like a father to Sarah. Eight days later, the mother, Alice Dandy Ollerton (age 53), also succumbed to death, leaving her own three daughters orphaned.¹ Sarah and the Ollerton daughters kept a watchful vigil as well as a fire going all that night. They said Alice felt she was dying, but was afraid they might only think she was dead in the morning and go on without her. She died during the night and the fire had thawed the ground enough for a decent grave to be dug for their mother, dear friend and surrogate mother of Sarah Foster. Shortly after arriving in Salt Lake City, the 19-year-old daughter, Alice Ollerton, also died.

(Sarah Foster - Page 2)

Sarah had some other friends with whom she had become acquainted in England—Thomas Jackson Schofield and his wife, Martha Whitworth Schofield. They had already come to Utah in 1853 and were living in Nephi. When they learned that Sarah had come with the Martin handcart company, they sent for her by asking their friends, Brother David Udall and his wife,² to bring her to Nephi. Sarah lived in the Udall's home for about a year, doing housework and sewing for the family after she recovered sufficiently.

Sarah married Thomas Schofield as his second wife in October 1857. Brigham Young performed the marriage in his office with the Udall's, Amasa Lyman, Lorenzo Snow, and Martha Whitworth Schofield as witnesses. When they returned to Nephi, Martha and Sarah lived in the same home where their children said “the two women were peaceful, quiet ladies and saw that peace and harmony ruled in their home.”

Sarah gave birth to a baby girl, Ellen Lovina, in January of 1860 and in December of 1861 the Schofield families were sealed in the Endowment House in Salt Lake City. The following spring, Thomas Schofield was blessed by Sarah's gift of prophecy. Thomas needed to get his crops planted, but his oxen had strayed away and he had already spent a week searching unsuccessfully for them. He was a very discouraged man as he returned home to tell Sarah the bad news. She listened quietly and then said, “Thomas, if you go right now, two miles up [this certain canyon (which she described to him)] and go up the ravine to the left, you will find your oxen there behind some oak brush.” Thomas did not question Sarah's inspiration and left immediately, returning a short time later with his oxen, “a very humble and grateful man.”

Sarah gave birth to a baby boy, William Jonah, on 19 March 1862. She died one week later, leaving her two little children for Martha and Thomas to raise. These children reported that their father and Martha “assumed this responsibility in a noble way, instilling a testimony of the gospel, giving spiritual strength to them to endure to the end. They grew up honoring their mother, Sarah Foster Schofield It is with the greatest respect and feeling of thankfulness for her courage in giving up her parents, sisters and brothers, and worldly goods and placing her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, knowing her testimony was true, that her posterity love and honor her. They are grateful for her humble faith and strong testimony and stalwart character to walk each step across this country, pulling her handcart in the year 1856.” The children said that Martha often told them stories from Sarah's life.

A few years after Sarah's death, a letter came to Nephi from England, addressed to Sarah Foster Schofield's heirs. The letter was from the courts of England and stated that the William Foster estate had bequeathed the sum of \$5,000.00 to Sarah Foster's heirs. This was apparently the smallest amount required and then compelled to be disbursed to Sarah's posterity by the law of England. The money was placed in a trust fund for Sarah's two children until they became of age. This letter and inheritance was said to be the only tie that the children ever had with their Foster relatives in England.

Although Sarah did not live to see her little ones grow to adulthood, they brought her a large posterity to honor her name in her new home in the Rocky Mountains. William married and had 13 children. Ellen became the mother of 9 children.

¹John and Alice Dandy Ollerton had three of their unmarried daughters with them; Alice (19), Jane Ann (15), and Sarah (5), as well as their married daughter, Elizabeth Ollerton Wilson (24), and her husband, James Wilson (26). Elizabeth gave birth to a baby girl on the ship just a few days after leaving England. She and James named her Nancy *Horizon* Wilson. The baby lived less than a month and was buried at sea on June 19, 1856. The Ollerton's also had a son, Seth, who was married to Jane Rogerson, whose mother and siblings were also in the Martin handcart company. Seth and Jane emigrated in 1864. Sarah would have been deeply involved with all of the heartache experienced by this family. It is possible that Alice and Jane Ann Ollerton were the “two friends” with whom Sarah planned her emigration.

²David Udall married Eliza King in 1850 in England and they became the parents of 9 children. Eliza King is likely the “wife” referenced here. In April of 1857, David married Elizabeth Rowley who had also just arrived in the Salt Lake Valley in November with the Willie handcart company. (See Ann Jewell Rowley story in Willie section of *Tell My Story, Too*.) David and Elizabeth became the parents of 15 children. During 1857, the David Udall family was thus caring for two handcart girls and helping them to recover from their ordeal. In 1880, David and Elizabeth Rowley Udall's daughter, Sarah Jane Udall, married Sarah Foster Schofield's son, William Jonah Schofield, thus uniting these two families and their 1856 handcart heritage again.