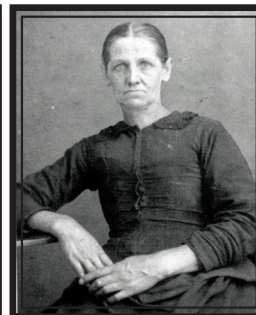
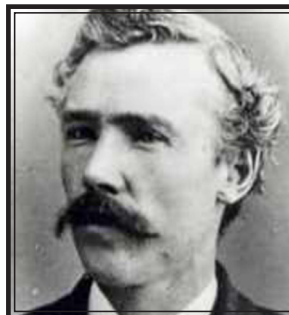


## JOSIAH ROGERSON

Born: 27 Jan 1841 Preston, Lancashire, England

Age: 15

Martin Handcart Company



Josiah and mother, Mary Farren Harrison Rogerson

Josiah's entire family, except for his father, William, was converted to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and planned to gather to "Zion." Mary Farren Harrison Rogerson (age 53) and her children James (25), Bridgett (23), William Valentine (22), Josiah (15), Sarah Ann (13), and John Edward (9), sailed from Liverpool on the ship *Horizon*. They traveled from Iowa City with the Martin handcart company. An older daughter, Jane Rogerson Ollerton, emigrated a few years later but died on the trail. Josiah's father refused to come with the family. James apparently had some kind of handicap and did not realize he would have to walk all the way, so decided upon reaching Iowa City to go back to England. Perhaps he felt he would be a burden on the family.

Jane Rogerson Ollerton's father-in-law and mother-in-law and their four daughters and one son-in-law (James Wilson) were also with the Martin company. Both Ollerton parents died on the trail and the oldest daughter died shortly after arriving in Salt Lake City. James and Elizabeth Ollerton Wilson survived, but their baby, Nancy Horizon Wilson, who was born on the ship, died three weeks later and was buried at sea.

Josiah's mother was a very determined and resourceful person to bring her family out of England and continue across the plains with five children. She had a quilted petticoat with thimbles, crochet hooks, hair pins, broaches and other keepsakes sewn between the top and the lining. Her daughter, Sarah Ann, had a similar petticoat. In this way, they could keep their luggage allowance to 17 pounds per person and still bring some other things with them. She also traded some clothing items at a Fort along the way for jerky and different kinds of pepper which, when made into a hot soup, helped warm them from the inside out. This entire family, led by their courageous mother, all miraculously survived the trek and soon moved to Parowan after arriving in the Salt Lake Valley.

Sarah Ann

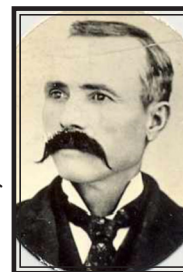


One cold stormy morning, Sarah Ann tried to get out of bed, but couldn't raise her head. The wind had drifted the snow under the edge of the tent onto her long braids of hair and they were frozen tightly. Josiah or another brother came to her rescue and cut off her hair with his pocket knife. She had to walk away, leaving her braids frozen fast to the ground.

Josiah had a keen sense of history and the importance of keeping a record. As an adult he began collecting histories of those with whom he shared his emigration in 1856. Some of these were published in the *Salt Lake Herald*, *Salt Lake Tribune*, *Deseret Evening News* and other places over the years. The following paragraphs are only a few excerpts from those writings (as found on Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel website) and give many insights into the overall story as well as what Josiah and other boys his age experienced:<sup>1</sup>

This will not be a romance, nor the history of "an extinct race that never existed," but the truthful narrative, travelings, hardships, sufferings and privations of one of the most devoted band of Christians that ever knelt in prayer and worship to the Living God and His Son, the Christ.

There are several reasons why the emigration of 1856 was augmented in numbers above that of many years previous ... but the main reason ... was that hundreds of the first converts to Mormonism, in 1837, 1840 and till 1850, had been so whole-souled in their importunities to President Young, Heber C. Kimball, Orson Hyde, Orson Pratt, Willard Richards and other prominent elders that first went to England, Scotland and Wales, with the gospel for "deliverance from the British Isles," that President Young became determined to meet the emergency with the handcart experiment.



John Edward

<sup>1</sup> See Ellen Pucell story in Martin section of *Tell My Story, Too*, to learn of the Rogerson's service to the beleaguered Pucell family (also written by Josiah).

That we started a month too late, and that the snowstorms in the Wind river and Rocky mountains came on a month earlier than usual and than general, tells the story in a nutshell.

August 22 we . . . made camp close to . . . [the Saints' 1847] winter quarters near Florence, Neb[raska]. . . . We rested in the camp ground near the old Mormon sawmill three full days, and after a very remarkable meeting of all the members of our company and being informed fully by President Franklin D. Richards of the possibility of our encountering snowstorms . . . and that we were then three weeks or a month late in starting from there to make the 1031 miles journey . . . we all consented with uplifted hands to go on and take the risks.

One very commendable fact has been omitted in all the sketches heretofore written and it deserves special record and credit. [John Middleton, age 15, half-brother of Ann Webster of the Martin Co.] and [his father, William Middleton, age 40] were in charge of one of the provision wagons of Martin's handcart company. . . . From Fort Kearney . . . and up to the time this ill-fated company became snowbound at the Devil's Gate, [they] would pick up the children that were walking with their mothers and take others from the arms of their parents and put them in their wagon. The fatherly and kindly solicitude characteristic of [William Middleton] and his son deserves all praise. . . .

We made camp at Deer Creek on Saturday, October 18, having made 125 miles in the last nine days; but little did we dream that we were nearing our "Valley Forge," our death rate began to increase nightly. Here we took from our cart sacks which we had brought from all parts of Great Britain, every souvenir and present and every bit of clothing that was not necessary for every-day wear and warmth and burned them on this Indian meadow camp ground, one of the most beautiful camp grounds on the whole journey.



Bridgett

The [last] crossing of the North Platte [River] was fraught with more fatalities than any other incident of the entire journey. Several of the male members of our company, who had pulled their carts over 1000 miles [from Iowa City] . . . were stricken with fear and quailed, and had to be put into the wagons, the younger ones pulling the carts across. I rolled up my trousers and waded that cold river, six or eight rods wide, slipping betimes off the smooth stones and boulders into deeper water. . . . I found my elder brother too weak and timid to undertake the crossing. Soon getting into the rope harness on the lead of the cart, with brother in the shafts and an elder sister wading waist deep in several places, but keeping by my side, I made the crossing again without accident.

More than a score or two of the young female members of our company waded the stream that in many places was waist deep and deeper, and if they unfortunately stepped off one of the smooth boulders, they found the water a foot deeper. Blocks of mushy snow and ice had to be dodged in many instances by the wader, with the sad information that the snow had already fallen farther up the Platte and its tributaries, through which we had to pass before reaching the Sweetwater. . . . The writer has been able to find but one diary that was continually kept by any member of the company after this fatal event, and even the historian, John Jacques, stopped his diary at this point.

Aaron Jackson was found so weak and exhausted when he came to the crossing of the North Platte, October 19, that he could not make it, and after he was carried across the ford in a wagon [I] was again detailed to wheel the dying Aaron on an empty cart, with his feet dangling over the end bar, to camp. After putting up his tent, I assisted his wife in laying him in his blankets. It was one of the bitter cold, blackfrost nights, . . . and notwithstanding the hard journey the day before, I was awakened at midnight to go on guard again till 6 or 7 in the morning.

Putting jacket or coat on (for both sexes had for weeks past lain down at night in the clothing we had traveled in during the day), and passing out through the middle of the tent, my feet struck those of poor Aaron. They were stiff, and rebounded at my accidental stumbling. Reaching my hand to his face, I found that he was dead, with his exhausted wife and little ones by his side, all sound asleep. The faithful and good man Aaron had pulled his last cart. I did not wake his wife, but whispered the fact to my mother. After reaching my hand to the side of the tent and feeling it heavy and weighted with snow, I said: "Mother, the snow has come."

Returning to my tent from the night's guarding, I found there one of the most touching pictures of grief and bereavement in the annals of our journey. Mrs. Jackson . . . was sitting by the side of her dead husband. Her face was suffused in tears, and between her bursts of grief and wails of sorrow, she would wring her hands and tear her hair. Her children blended their cries of "Father" with that of the mother. This was love; this was affection – grief of the heart and bereavement of the soul – the like of which I have never seen since. It would have immortalized any artist by its faithful portrayal, a counterpart of the death scene of Minnehaha. Aaron's demise was not the only one by a half dozen that night, but I am writing only what I saw and know. Enough regarding the fatalities.

In conclusion, I will only add that I never could find words ample and sufficient to express thanks and gratitude to the veterans of the relief party and rescuers sent out by President Brigham Young from Utah.

(See Mormon Pioneer Overland Travel website for more of Josiah Rogerson's writings. More may also be posted at tellmystorytoo.com)