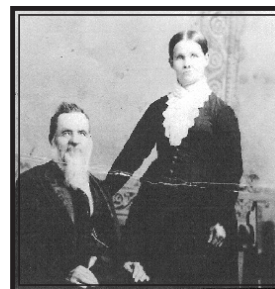


EMMA SUMMERS

Born: 1828 England

Age: 28

Willie Handcart Company



Anson and Emma Summers Call

Emma's father worked in a rock quarry and her mother made shirts and kid gloves for the gentlemen of the parish. Emma was a frail child but when she was fifteen she hired out as a house servant. "Mormon" missionaries taught the gospel to Emma's mother and some of the children in the family. Although her father protested, Emma joined the Church and planned to emigrate to Utah. Emma worked as a housemaid for a wealthy family in England. She saved her money so she could travel to America to be with the Saints and her brothers who had emigrated previously. She sailed on the ship *Thornton* on May 3, 1856, and arrived in New York on June 14. Emma was rather frail, a little over 5 feet tall, with medium brown hair and soft blue eyes.

On July 9, the Willie Handcart Company was finally ready to leave from Iowa City. Their journey was beset by hazard, hardship, delays, hunger, and finally starvation and death to those who succumbed to adversities too numerous and severe to bear. Emma shared a handcart with Mary Anne and Janetta Hodges (mother and daughter), and Sarah Choules. Emma also had a brother, Edwin, who was with the Hunt Wagon Company as a teamster. Edwin stayed at Devils Gate that winter. (See Dan Jones biography in Rescuer section of *Tell My Story, Too*.)

When they arrived at Ft. Laramie there was no surplus of food for immigrants, so the company pressed on in weather that was proving to be a further handicap to the Saints. Weary and undernourished and facing a further reduction in food and with the rough mountain terrain ahead, they had no choice but to keep going under ever-increasing adversities. Early snowstorms stalled the handcarts. Footwear that had been relied on to take the Saints through to the valley had by this time worn out. The bare feet of many were visible through the dilapidated shoes or boots, while the feet of others were wrapped in skins or any material available. Emma endured some nights sleeping with snow and mud frozen to her clothes and feet.

Under these conditions, the Willie Company traveled as far as possible each day, pausing only to bury those who died of exhaustion and malnutrition. Snow continued and food diminished until the last of the flour was eaten on October 19. At Rock Creek they finally met more relief, but thirteen members died in one night there. The weather by this time was extremely cold and much of the fuel for fires had been covered by snow. Emma was still among the living, and wearing the sun bonnet which protected her face from the sun and wind of the plains. When more rescuers arrived, one of the teams was driven by George Summers, Emma's older brother. George directed Emma to his home, then continued on to help the Martin Company. (See George's story in Rescuer section of *Tell My Story, Too*.)

When Emma arrived in Salt Lake on November 9, she was still wearing her bonnet which had been burned in places by the camp fires. Her hands and feet had been badly frozen and she had lost nearly all of her hair. This grieved her because when she left England she had a beautiful long braid down her back. Her dress hung in shreds below her knees, here and there a patch and scorched spot, but she had achieved her goal to be in Zion among the Saints. Less than four months later, Emma married Anson Call, one of her rescuers on the plains. Emma's mother emigrated in 1866. She was cared for by Emma for the last seven years of her life.

It is said by Emma's family that she was a jolly, witty, and lovable woman. "Even the many years of trials and bitterness had not quenched her joy of life nor dulled the sparkle of her eye."

Source: *Emma Summers Call: Utah Pioneer in the Willie Handcart Company*, compiled by Orland Call, 1997; photo, courtesy Ella Rose, Orem, Utah, 2003.