

John and Sarah Sanderson Halford

John Halford was christened on 17 January 1796, at Blaby, Leicestershire, England. Sarah Sanderson was christened on 8 November 1801 in Whetstone, Leicestershire, England. John married Sarah on 13 July 1818 at St. Margaret's Church in Leicester, Leicestershire, England. They had eight children: Dinah, George Eliza, Mary, William, John, Charles and Frances. George died at 2 months, Charles at 8 years.

John grew up learning the trade of his father: framework knitting. Framework knitting was a hard trade. He would sit on the bench of a framework knitter's machine sewing woolen stockings from early morning until late at night. The rooms weren't well lit and the machines were loud, which left them with eyesight and hearing problems. Some framework knitting benches survive today, which show deep imprints where a framework knitter would sit day after day, year after year.

The entire family was involved in some aspect of the trade as knitters, seamers, winders, or menders. Many other people in the Leicester area were also framework knitters. Several of John and Sarah's children grew up to be framework knitters themselves, as did their children, and their children.

There is no record of how John and Sarah came in contact with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Perhaps missionaries were sent by the Church to spread the gospel near their home. Sarah was baptized first on 16 July 1843, followed by her husband some months later on Christmas Day in 1843 or 1844. Some of their children also joined the Church over the next ten years, including a daughter Eliza. Eliza married Henry Bowns, who served a mission in Derbyshire, a neighboring county, in 1851-1852. Here he had an opportunity to travel by foot, town to town, spreading the word of God.

Eliza and Henry joined other members of the Church emigrating to Slaterville, Weber, Utah, in 1853.

In January 1856, the Church published the following in the *Millennial Star* newspaper:

Let all the Saints, who can, gather up for Zion, and come while the way is open before them: let the poor also come; let them come on foot, with handcarts or wheel-barrows; let them gird up their loins and walk through, and nothing shall hinder or slay them.

Did John and Sarah read this in England? At any rate, they were inspired to join other members of the Church emigrating to Slaterville, Weber, Utah, in 1856. They had now been members of the Church approximately 13 years.

Perhaps their decision was based on the newly established Perpetual Emigration Fund, which helped poor Church members come to Utah from distant lands who otherwise couldn't afford it.

First, they borrowed money from saints already settled in the Salt Lake Valley, which they promised to pay back as soon as they got settled and started earning money. Second, they agreed to walk across the plains with their possessions piled in a handcart instead of an animal-drawn wagon. This saved a lot of money, even though it meant they couldn't bring as many things. Each member of the handcart company could only place 17 pounds of personal possessions in their handcart. Many saints had to throw precious heirlooms they had brought from their homelands in the dust as the handcart trains pulled out.

After coming across the ocean with the other saints on the ship *Horizon*, John and Sarah were assigned to be part of the Martin Handcart Company which was the last handcart company to cross the plains that year. This company was said to have many members who were aged, weak, and sick. John and Sarah, being around 50 years old at the time, would have been classified as two of the aged, as 50 was considered very old then.

The company left Iowa City on 18 July 1856, which is late in the season for the length of time it would take to walk to the 1,300 miles to the Salt Lake Valley. Their leader was Edward Martin and this group of pioneers is referred to as the "Martin Handcart Company." When they reached Wyoming, they were hit with an early but enormous snowstorm and were caught stranded and unprepared for the extremely cold weather. Because of the lack of food, supplies, cold temperatures, illness, etc., many individuals of this company died while crossing the plains. Salt Lake thought that all the pioneer groups had arrived by early fall and were unaware that this company was in route. When Salt Lake received word of the troubles and whereabouts, a rescue party was sent out to give them aid and assistance, and to bring them back safely to Salt Lake City.

The 1860 Utah Federal census, taken four years after the handcarts rolled into the Salt Lake Valley, lists Sarah but not John living in Slaterville, Weber, Utah. No record of John's death has been found. Even though the handcart company kept a list of those who died on the trail, John's name is not found there. Because the conditions were so harsh towards the end of their handcart journey, members of the Martin Handcart Company were unable to keep up recording information. Did he die on the trail? His name is not listed in the cemetery where Sarah is buried. No one knows if his eyes ever saw the Salt Lake Valley.

John and Sarah were Saints of great faith who sacrificed everything they had to join the Saints in Zion. Their home, possessions, money, and comfort all mattered less to them than following the Lord's commandments and serving Him. John and Sarah's family honors them and their examples of love and faith.