

ELIZABETH HORROCKS JACKSON

Born: August 5, 1826 in England

Age 30

Martin Handcart Company

Elizabeth was the oldest of eleven children. At age seven she was placed to work in a silk factory. When she was 15 years old, she was baptized as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Elizabeth married Aaron Jackson on May 28, 1848. They had three children. They prepared to emigrate to America and in the Spring of 1856 the family sailed from England. Elizabeth and her husband, Aaron, (31 or 32), their children, Martha Ann (7), Mary Elizabeth (4), Aaron Jr.(2) and Elizabeth's sister, Mary Horrocks (19), left for Zion together.

Elizabeth left a good journal record of her experiences. She said 'I have a desire to leave records of scenes and events through which I have passed that my posterity may read what their ancestors were willing to suffer for the Gospel's sake and that what I now word is the history of hundreds of others who passed through and suffered as we did for the Kingdom of God's sake.'

Elizabeth and her family and sister joined with the Martin Company. She mentions the long journey . . . "pulling our handcarts filled with provisions and little children through deep sands and rocky hills or fording streams was a dreary time. We reached camp, cooked supper, ate and retired for the night to rest our weary limbs only to pursue our monotonous course the next day."

Elizabeth recorded some of the awful suffering of the company. By October their food rations were very scant. They reached Fort Laramie on October 8, 1856, and shortly after leaving this area, it became necessary to reduce the flour rations. The rations were reduced several times, finally to less than a half-pound a day in order to make them last as long as possible.

Elizabeth's husband, Aaron, became very ill with mountain fever. He rode in a wagon one day, but said the conditions were so terrible he would not go back, no matter what it took for him to continue. They came to the Platte River on October 19 and Aaron attempted to cross the stream. He reached a sand bar and sank in exhaustion. Elizabeth's sister, Mary, waded in to help him. Aaron was placed on a handcart and they pulled him to camp. A storm came just as they crossed the river.

Once in camp, Elizabeth fed Aaron what little she had and made him a bed. For four days they continued and then, "he tried to eat but failed. He had not the strength to swallow. I put him to bed as quickly as I could . . . Bedding had become very scarce, so I did not disrobe, slept until, . . . about midnight. I was extremely cold. The weather was bitter. I listened to hear if my husband breathed-he lay so still. I could not hear him. I became alarmed. I put my hand on his body, when to my horror I discovered that my worst fears were confirmed. My

husband was dead! I called for help to the other inmates of the tent. They could render me no aid, and there was no alternative but to remain alone by the side of the corpse till morning. The night was enveloped in almost Egyptian darkness. There was nothing with which to produce a light or kindle a fire. Of course I could not sleep. I could only watch, wait, and pray for the dawn. But oh, how these dreary hours drew their tedious length along. When daylight came, some of the male part of the company prepared the body for burial . . . They wrapped him in a blanket and placed him in a pile with thirteen others who had died, and then covered him up in the snow. The ground was frozen so hard that they could not dig a grave."

Elizabeth's sister, Mary, was also sick at this time and she became deranged in her mind. For several days she ate nothing but hard frozen snow. A few days after the death of Aaron, members of the company were so weak that there were not enough men with strength to raise the poles and pitch the tents. She wrote, "The result was that we camped out with nothing but the vault of Heaven for a roof, and the stars for companions. The snow lay several inches deep upon the ground. The night was bitterly cold. I sat down on a rock with one child in my lap and one on each side of me. In that condition I remained until morning." [See painting below]

Elizabeth also became very depressed. She wrote: 'It will be readily perceived that under such circumstances I had become despondent. I was six or seven thousand miles from my native land, in a wild, rocky, mountain country, in a destitute condition, the ground covered with snow, the waters covered with ice, and I with three fatherless children with scarcely nothing to protect them from the merciless storms. When I retired to bed that night, being the 27th of Oct., I had a stunning revelation. In my dream, my husband stood by me and said, 'Cheer up, Elizabeth, deliverance is at hand.' The next day the advance rescue team found them. The family was helped into the Salt Lake Valley and arrived in November 1856.

Elizabeth later wrote: 'I will not attempt to describe my feelings at finding myself thus left a widow with three children, under such excruciating circumstances. I cannot do it. But I believe the Recording Angel has inscribed in the archives above, and that my sufferings for the Gospel's sake will be sanctified unto me for my good . . . I [appealed] to the Lord . . . He who had promised to be a husband to the widow, and a father to the fatherless. I appealed to him and he came to my aid . . . Aaron was left there to sleep in peace until the trump of the Lord shall sound, and the dead in Christ shall awake and come forth in the morning of the first resurrection. We shall then again unite our hearts and lives, and eternity will furnish us with life forever more.

'I have a desire to leave a record of those scenes and events, thru which I have passed, that my children, down to my latest posterity may read what their ancestors were willing to suffer, and did suffer, patiently for the Gospel's sake. And I wish them to understand, too, that what I now word is the history of hundreds of others, both men, women and children, who have passed thru many like scenes for a similar cause, at the same time we did. I also desire them to know that it was in obedience to the commandments of the true and living God, and with the assurance of an eternal reward - an exaltation to eternal life in His kingdom - that we suffered these things. I hope, too, that it will inspire my posterity with

fortitude to stand firm and faithful to the truth, and be willing to suffer, and sacrifice all things they may be required to pass thru for the Kingdom of God's sake."



Painting by Jolene Sjoblom. In Visitor's Center at Martin's Cove. Used by Permission