

## SARAH ANN WILLIAMS FITZGERALD

This is a short biography until the time of her marriage.

Let us turn back the years to March 15, 1840. The place is New Market, Flintshire, North Wales. A lovely little bundle of humanity had opened new eyes that morning upon a new world; life had begun for another of God's daughters - Sarah Ann Williams. The baby grew as all babies do and soon became a favorite of the family, especially of her grandfather Williams, who used to carry her about on his shoulders or give her a small coin when her flying feet would carry her to meet him when he came through the gate.

Her father John Williams, was one of the successful farmers of the town, receiving many prizes at the county fair for his fine horses and geese and cattle. He was considered the man who could plow the straightest furrow, and left the most grain, in all the country round about. Being over six feet tall and very strong, he could carry five hundred pounds of wheat up his granary steps and place it in the bins. He was loved and respected by all his neighbors, and his family was his chief pride and joy.

Each child had work to do. With butter to be churned, cheese to be made, cows to be milked, the animals to be fed, it was a busy household. It fell to Sarah's lot to tend the geese. There were no fences between the farms, and it required constant attention to keep the geese out of the grain fields and along the right paths. They were taken out in the morning to the ponds and feeding grounds and brought back to their pens at night. This life went on for the Williams Father, Mother, four girls and one son, until the death of the only boy, which brought sorrow and grief into the home, but time heals all wounds, and gradually life became happy again.

Then when Sarah was about twelve years of age some strange men from a foreign land came to the village of New Market. They were ministers of a new Gospel - missionaries of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints - "Mormons"! Meetings were held, interest among the people was aroused, and in spite of the opposition, in the course of time many people were converted and baptized. Among them was Mary Williams and her daughters. They longed to migrate with others to Zion -- to the Valleys of the Mountains -- out in Utah, so when Sarah Williams was about 15 years old her father sold his fine horses, cattle, geese and other belongings and bought tickets for the voyage to America. The time of parting was a sad, tearful experience. Sarah's Grandfather Williams said goodbye before they left for the seaport. He felt their

loss so keenly that he didn't want to see them leave the coast of Wales for the long, long journey across the ocean. He knew he would never see them again, so it was with great sorrow in his heart that he said farewell.

The journey was anything but pleasant. The ocean was choppy and rough, the sailing vessel was not the best, and for days at a time when adverse winds blew they would not make any headway at all. Added to the other hardships of the voyage such as sea-sickness, cold and exposure, came scarlet fever, and Sarah was the one who took it in the most severe form. For days she hovered near the brink of the great beyond. Everyone except her mother gave her up for dead, but the faith of her mother never waivered, and though very weak when they finally reached Boston, she was able to walk down the gang-plank, with the aid of her father and mother. They were six weeks on the ocean.

By train they traveled from New York to Iowa City, Iowa, where they formed in companies to make the trek to the mountains. They made, or bought, handcarts in which they put their provisions for their walk across the plains. Traveling light, they sometimes didn't have sufficient provisions, but for a time they passed farm houses where supplies could be bought. Hardships and rationing began when the last farm house was passed. When it rained the handcarts would have to be pushed or pulled through mud ankle-deep. At other times dust and sand combined to make the miles traveled in one day very few indeed. At night when the campfires were lighted, probably a violin could be heard, then someone would sing some Welsh songs, and soon some weak child or babe would be left in a grave beside the way, with perhaps only a few rocks to mark the resting place.

Often Sarah and the girls her age were called upon to gather buffalo chips to make fires. It was on one of these assignments that Sarah saw her first Indian, clad only in a loin cloth and carrying a rifle. He calmly stalked over the brow of a hill and was lost to view. Sarah made the statement that although he was the first Indian she saw, he wasn't the last one!

After entering the bounds of Wyoming their water gave out. Teams and wagons were sent back for more, but days lapsed before they returned and the thirst of the travelers became acute. Tongues were swollen, eyes became bloodshot and the heat of the summer sun beat mercilessly down upon the suffering saints. In speaking of this harrowing experience later Sarah said: "I have seen strong men fall upon the ground, tongues and throats so swollen that they could not speak, almost to the point of death, from the lack of water; and

I have seen women who were nursing babies wet their husbands' lips with milk from their breasts to help keep them alive until the water came. When water did come the thirst of some was so great that they drank too much and died as the result."

The summer was passing, and they kept walking, walking, pushing and pulling. More than one woman had lost her husband on the way, so two women would help each other over the trail and up and down the hills. So the handcart company went on. Many times they were stopped by herds of buffalo passing. Buffalo meat helped out with their food problems. Sometimes at night, when it rained and the wind blew, everyone would be required to hold their tents to keep them from blowing over; many provisions were drenched or lost, and the people would suffer exceedingly. Sickness and death were often the result.

The journey ended when the company arrived in Salt Lake City October 2, 1856. The Williams' spent the first winter in a dugout in Salt Lake City. Later the family moved to 33rd South (formerly known as 14th South). Sarah at this time started to look for work to help out financially at home. She walked from Millcreek (about 33rd South) and came to what is now the Draper-Riverton Crossroad. She gives it as follows: "It seemed to me that a voice told me to take the road to Willow Creek, so I did and came to the home of Perry Fitzgerald where I obtained employment and had all the milk I wanted to drink. It was there I met John Fitzgerald, the oldest son of Perry, and after a short courtship we were married in the old Endowment House in Salt Lake City February 17, 1858, by Daniel H. Wells.

The rest of the history is written by Sarah Jane Fitzgerald Smith, a daughter.

Upon the arrival of Johnston's army Sarah moved to Payson with the Fitzgerald family. Her husband remained in Salt Lake Valley to guard the property and otherwise serve those in authority.

Her married life was filled with all the hardships, privations and dangers of pioneer life. On one occasion she barely escaped being scalped by an angry Indian.

While bringing some immigrants to Utah her husband brought her a cook stove. She was one of the first in Draper to have such a valued treasure. She washed, corded and spun many pounds of wool to provide clothes for her family.

It was a common practice in the early days for those who attended the dancing parties to come to her home for lunch during

the intermission. She became known for the excellent meals she provided. In those days dances began at 2 o'clock in the afternoon and lasted until midnight.

She was the mother of nine daughters and two sons. Her life was truly one of service and loving tenderness, never forgetting the poor and waiting on the sick. She possessed nobility of soul, sweetness of disposition, firmness of purpose and rare judgment in the discernment of right and wrong.

She served her church for 40 years as a Relief Society worker, and she was always liberal in her donations to the cause of righteousness. She has 47 grand children, 60 great grand children, 11 great great grand children at the time of this writing - Jan. 8, 1942. In the family of one of her daughters three sons are bishops, five of her grandsons and great grandsons and one grand daughter have been on missions.

She was left a widow in 1892 with 6 of her 11 children at home. Courage never failed her. Her patriarchal blessing said that she would remain here as long as life was sweet. On February 24, 1917 she asked her grandson, Alma F. Smith, whom she loved, to dedicate her to the Lord, and soon after passed peacefully away.

Her life was a real conversion for eternal happiness. Her memory is cherished by her family and grandchildren.

SARAH ANN WILLIAMS FITZGERALD  
1840 - 1917

