

DUP AF Book 2  
Biographical Sketch  
of  
Mary Ann Reece Steele

by Sarah Ann Shelley, daughter

Pioneer Year 1851

Born 22 Aug 182 in Cheshire, England

Married Richard Steele 13 Jul 1845 at Nauvoo, Illinois

Died 31 Oct 1888

In Cheshire, England August 22, 1823, Mary Ann Reece Steele was born to William Reece and Frances Beckett Reece. She was their first and only child. Her mother died when she was two years old. Her aunts took care of her until her father married again. She had one half brother and several half sisters. One rich aunt, who had no family, paid for her schooling; but thinking that she would be happier where there were children, she sent her to live with another aunt. This aunt, instead of sending her to school, selfishly made her stay home and take care of her younger children. Because of this she had very little schooling, and at the age of nine years she had to earn her own living, going out to farmhouses to work.

She joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at the age of seventeen and came to America for the sake of her religion. She earned her passage across the ocean by helping a friend care for her children. During the trip across the food and the water ran short, and she did not have enough of either. Some lady on the ship felt sorry for her and gave her some weak vinegar to drink, so that she could quench her thirst.

After arriving in America, while she was working to support herself, she learned to braid straw and to make hats.

At the age of twenty-two she married Richard Steele, July 13, 1845 at Nauvoo, Illinois, and received her endowments in the Nauvoo Temple on January 31, 1846.

Both Grandfather and Grandmother Steele were present at the memorable conference held in the Nauvoo temple when Brigham Young was chosen leader of the church, October 6, 1845. When Brigham Young arose to speak, they said he both looked and spoke as Joseph Smith the prophet did, and the people knew he should be their prophet and leader.

While they were living in Nauvoo, a son was born to them, April 27 1846, whom they named Thomas Grafton Steele. When this baby was only three months old they were driven out of Nauvoo by the mob. Grandfather was not well, so it fell to grandmother's lot to gather their belongings together, put them in a cart, and pull them down to the river, so they could be taken across on the ferry. As she

was pulling her load some of the mob called to her saying that she made a good horse. This was on July 3, 1846.

In September of that year, Richard Steele staked off some land in Walnut Grove, built a house, and planted some crops. While they were living here, another son was born to them on September 29, 1848. He was named Moses Beckett Steele. After they had lived at Walnut Grove a little over five years, they sold this land and prepared to leave for the valleys of the mountains. They left June 2, 1851. They crossed the Missouri River June 28, 1851, and camped at Six Mile Grove. On July 1, 1851 the Company they were in made the real start on the long journey. Throughout this trip, grandmother helped all she could even to hitching up the oxen and the mule, known as Jinny, who was always on the lead. This trip must have been very for grandmother as well as all the other women, for they had to walk a great deal of the time.

After many tiresome days journey, on August 10, 1851 at nine o'clock at night a baby daughter, whom they called Mary Elizabeth Steele, was born. The next morning they continued the journey as usual.

They brought a young man with them to help grandfather, but he sometimes shirked his duties. Then grandmother would help. This she did when the baby was only nine days old. They arrived in Salt Lake City October 2, 1851, staying there during the winter. After April conference they came to American Fork to make their home.

After they came to American Fork, Utah, three sons and a daughter were born to them. They are Richard R. Steele, born February 12, 1854; William Henry Steele, August 25, 1856; George Edward Steele, November 8, 1859; and Sarah Ann Steele, April 16, 1863.

Grandfather Steele built four homes in American Fork. Two of these were built on the lot on the corner of First East and First North Streets, which is now vacant. They lived here most of the time.

After the railroad came to American fork, the depot being near their home, grandmother often met the train. If there were

immigrants who did not have a place to go she took them home and cared for them until they could get settled.

She was always kind and willing to help and to give of what she had. When neighbors were sick, she has gone to sit up with them at night, helping to care for them. Even when they had diphtheria, she was not afraid to give her services. She would leave some clothes on the porch, changing them before going and upon returning from those afflicted.

The early pioneers had to do so many more things than we do today, for what they could not make or trade with their neighbors they had to do without. What would some of us mothers do now if we had to prepare the wool for our clothes by washing, cording, spinning, weaving, and sewing the material by hand before we could have new suits and new dresses? Yet it seems to me that other things they did would be harder, that of making soap for example. They had to gather oak wood and burn it to get the wood ashes which they put into a barrel. They then poured water over them and allowed them to stand for some time. That which dripped off this mixture was lye. This they used with grease and water, boiling it to make their soap. How did they get their grease: The women went out hunting for dead animals, which they skinned, taking the fat on them for their soap. They also saved and used the rinds and little bits of fat from the animals they killed for food.

Mother has braided straw for grandmother to make hats with, so they could make new hats without buying them.

Their fourth and last home was on the corner of Third East and Main Streets, now known as the Henry Steele home. They moved into their home December 10, 1875. The day they moved, their youngest son George Edward was kicked by a young heifer that he was attempting to milk. He died the following day from his injuries.

In the spring of 1875, another son, Moses B., was called to go and help settle Arizona. The next year, October 28, 1876 grandfather left for a mission to England, returning from his mission July 4, 1877.

Grandmother had many trials and hardships but ever stood faithful to her religion through them all. She was always a kind and

loving wife and mother. She died on October 31, 1888, at the age of sixty-five years two months and nine days. Her living descendants are three children: Richard R. Steele, Mary Elizabeth Steele Hansen, and Sarah Ann Steele Shelley, thirty grandchildren, ninety-eight great grandchildren, and sixty-three great, great grandchildren. This makes a total of one hundred ninety-four living descendants.