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Biographical Sketch

of

Ann Rachel Marsh Nicholes

by Bertha N. Sager

Pioneer Year 1853

Sailed on the Elvira Owen

Captain Cyrus H. Wheelock Company

Born: 16 Oct 1824, St. Heliers, Island of Jersey

Married: Josiah Nicholes

Died: 9 Mar 1909

When I think of Auntie Nicholes, my memory is filled with beautiful thoughts of her, but in any picture there must always be her gentleness of manner and her quiet, unobstructed way with others. Her voice soft, full and low, was yet firm and commanding. I do not recall ever hearing her laugh aloud, although she would laugh heartily. Songs often surged through her soul, though it seldom broke out on her lips. When it did, it seemed more like a prayer softly crooned to herself.

She was always very indignant at wrong and injustice and contented for that which she felt was right. She was tolerant, however, of weakness in others and very humble in her estimate of her self.

To my knowledge she never indulged in gossip, nor in unbecoming stories. She taught those around her to be kind to strangers, loyal to friends and as nearly as possible, to be just to those who were not their friends. If ill report of a friend or an acquaintance came into her home, both she and Grandfather alike insisted that judgment be withheld until they knew more. Morality and manly and womanly virtue was a principle she lived and instilled deep into the souls of her children.

She was essentially a home woman, the first of her duties was to her husband and children. She was the mother of eight children, two girls: Elizabeth and Ann, and six boys: Josiah, John, Joseph, and David being twins. James, who died in infancy, and Dan who was drowned in the Center Street Creek when he was four years old.

It is a marvel to her children and those who knew her how she managed to keep the home machinery working. There were numberless things to do beside spinning and weaving, knitting of numberless socks, and the preparing of meals. Grandmother had her two rooms and Auntie hers, they prepared their meals together and all sat down to one great long table with Grandfather at the head. From twelve to seventeen would set down to every meal, then there were the homeless strangers arriving among them who were always taken home and made welcome.

Another strong impression concerning her was her staunch faith. This she imparted to her children in many ways, but more often by example than precept. Often when called to a bed of illness, while bending over them and caring for their needs, her lips would be seen to move in silent prayer. Soon the soothing touch of her healing hands, and faith in her silent words, her patient would drop off into a restful sleep to awaken much better.

She was a natural born nurse. Her services were called for in cases of desperate illness. In homes where there were contagious diseases she would willingly go, do all she could for them, take the few simple precautions she knew and return to her family without fear. And in no case did her family suffer because of the risk she encountered. Many people testified to the healing power of her simple remedies of herbs and poultices with the healing touch of her kind hands – hands that were required to do so many kind of hard work in the daily routine of pioneer life, but never seemed tired of doing and giving.

Ann Rachel Marsh, born in the Parish of St. Heliers, town of St. Heliers, Island of Jersey, Europe, October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1824. Deprived of the loving care of a mother at birth, she was raised by a stepmother until the age of fifteen, when her father died, thus leaving her an orphan at an early age.

She then learned the trade of tailoress and followed it for five or six years. When an opportunity came to her to enter Major Pace's home as cook. Here she met Mary Hallet who was serving as nurse girl, and together they lived and labored for seven years. Mary Hallet, who, afterward became Mrs. Eugene Henroid, had heard the gospel of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, and was investigating its principles, this interested Auntie and being a great reader, she bought herself a Book of Mormon and the Voice of Warning. Prayerfully reading and studying them, she became convinced of their message of truth and was baptized by Elder Frank Kirby.

In January 1853, in company with other members of the French mission, she sailed from Liverpool for New Orleans on the sailing vessel "Elvira Owen". The voyage across the ocean was without

particular incident taking six weeks to cross and Auntie being extremely sick the entire way except the last day when she said she could smell and the land and sure enough the next morning they were at their destination. They sailed up the Mississippi river to Keokuk, Iowa. Then, outfitting camp for the valley of the Great Salt Lake.

After a delay of six weeks at Keokuk waiting for wagons and teams to arrive, she with six other women of her company, in charge of Eugene Henroid crossed the plains in Captain Cyrus H. Wheelock's Co. Her experiences of crossing the plains were full of thrills for her, the vast open country was glorious and inspiring, yet aweing and filling her heart with loneliness. She would walk all day and when evening came they would all sit in the encircled wagons, with the cattle in the center to prevent the Indians from getting them.

Supper would be prepared and every body made comfortable for the night. Their meals consisted of milk, bread, beans and sometimes dish of Buffalo meat. They ran out of Salt the last three days of the journey. Auntie always did the cooking for her group and although she had never before cooked over a camp fire, with instructions from others she soon learned to make a very light bread and other savory dished in a bake oven.

At night they would gather together to dance and sing. No travelling was done on Sunday. Religious services were held and such songs as, "Come, Come Ye Saints, no toil nor labor fear, but with joy wend your way, and "The morning breaks, the shadows flee. Lo! Zion's standard is unfurl'd! The dawning of a brighter day, Majestic rises on the world." Floated over the vast lonesome plains. They arrived in Salt Lake City October 6<sup>th</sup>, 1853. She was taken home by Sarah Briton and there she met Josiah Nicholes and consented to come down to American Fork as his house keeper. She stayed one month and in November Grandfather took her back to Salt Lake City and they were married by Brigham Young.

All old country people were taught that a man and a woman can be friends and marry and be friends still. The one thing esteemed by them was to be a founder of a family that will not perish while the

earth shall stand. And to have a man to stand before the Lord in the Priest's office in every generation of time was the one greatest blessing life can give.

The winter of 1853 passed with plenty to subsist on. Then the years of 1854 and 55 when the grasshoppers took the crops. Grandfather managed to save a little barley. This they would grind and make into cakes, it was green in color and you would have to pick the hulls out as you ate, but it was better than nothing with their diet of pigweed greens and thistle roots.

Later her children remember her gathering wild rose leaves and catnip, drying it and serving it as a warm drink or tea. She would also take a squash and cook it in an iron kettle until it absorbed its own liquor and sugar and spread it on their bread for butter. They had a cow but her cream she would churn, place the unsalted butter in a saucer with a string and a button, light it, it was called a bitch light, but was all the times provided. About 1860 candle molds were brought in and she learned to make tallow candles.

She was an expert cake and boiled pudding maker. She made these with a little molasses and flour, as she was not able to buy sugar nor shortening.

Grandfather was called to sit in a council meeting, his velvet britches were good but his shirt were worn out, so Auntie took her linen table cloth that she had brought with her, made a nice neat shirt, well figured with a silky figure and he was all set for his meeting.

The first suit of clothes that Bishop Leonard Harrington had made here in this valley, Auntie made from the first woven cloth manufactured by the Provo Woolen Mills. Bishop Harrington was very proud of his suit, he even wore it back to Washington D.C. to meet with the President of the United States on our right as a people. Auntie spun wove and sewed the clothing for her family as well as knitted all their stockings.

She was a member of the first choir under the leadership of Thomas Filcher. They had no music but would pitch the tune to a tuning fork. Her voice was a full rich soprano.

About the only exciting experience she ever had with the Indians out side of feeding them was when she and Lucy Thomas went over on the west side of the lake to gather berries. They had gathered all they could and was returning home when two big fat Indians climbed into their wagon frightening them terribly, but they drove along until they came to Porter Rockwell's and turned into his lane. The two braves who had had a jolly good laugh at the pale faced women jumped off and ran as fast as they could out of sight. Porter Rockwell saddled up his horse and accompanied them into Lehi with a scolding, telling them never go berry picking alone, again.

She did not crave public work, as in the public she was timid. Quiet as she appeared, and backward in pushing her self forward, she had tremendous courage. In the presence of illness of accident she had a steady nerve, and in a crisis she was calm. She never failed those she served at any moment of their lives. How secure even a little child felt in her presence.

The last long illness was a courageous one. Long weeks of illness she met with cheerfulness but with great solicitude for those who cared for her. It was not the way she had wished to go, but since she could not choose she met death with the same heroic spirit she had exhibited in life. She passed on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1909, in her own home surrounded by her family.