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Biographical Sketch

of

Richard Steele

by Sarah Ann Steele Shelley

Pioneer Year 1851

Sailed on the Emerald

Born: 14 Feb 1818, Stourbridge, Worcestershire, England

Married: Mary Ann Reese, Nauvoo, Illinois

Died 4 Oct 1881, American Fork, Utah

Richard Steel was born February 14, 1818 in the little town of Stourbridge in Worcestershire, England. His father, who was a native of Cheshire and his mother a native of Worcestershire, were married in 1812 and remained in Worcestershire until 1821. While they were there four sons and a daughter were born to them. Richard was the fourth son. The family then moved to the Staffordshire Potteries where three more sons and three daughters were born. Richard lived the life of the normal child of his class. He attended school until he was twelve years of age; he then worked in the warehouse and glassworks for two years. At the end of this period, in 1832, he became an apprentice in the pottery works and served for seven years. His apprenticeship ended November 11, 1839. Business at this time was very slack in his own vicinity, so he went to Bristol to try to find work at his trade.

For twelve years Richard had attended the Methodist Church and school, but he had no desire to join them. He was just about to affiliate himself with a sect called the Socialists when he heard about the new church called the Latter Day Saints. He attended the meetings and was interested in the elders and their message from the very first. Before long he was convinced of the truthfulness of the message and was baptized a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints on January 21, 1840. Sometime after this he received a letter from his father telling him not to become one of Joseph Smith's slaves. The warning came too late; he had already joined the then hated sect. He soon began traveling about with the elders, helping them in whatever way he could. By this means he became acquainted with many missionaries as well as with many of the saints. He had the usual experience of being refused food and lodgings as well as arguments with ministers and others who did not view religion as he did.

After he had joined the church he was desirous of emigrating to America. On October 16, 1842 he left the potteries and went to Liverpool. The journey to America began October 29, 1842 in a ship called the "Emerald." Weather conditions were unfavorable much of the time, so the voyage was rather a long one. They sailed first to New Orleans, thence up the Mississippi River to St. Louis which city

they reached on January 8, 1843. The winter was a severe one, so he remained in St. Louis working at whatever he could get to do until spring. In April he went to Nauvoo, and on May 6, 1843 he joined the Rifle Company belonging to the Nauvoo Legion. In Nauvoo he met the Prophet Joseph Smith and other prominent church members. In his journal he tells of working several days to pay his tithing. In August he left Nauvoo and went to For Madison to work at his trade of pottery making. He remained there until the spring of the following year when he returned to Nauvoo. He was in Nauvoo at the time of the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith and writes feelingly about this bit of history. He continued in Nauvoo working out his tithing and working for shares in the Seventies Hall and the Arsenal. He was present at the memorable conference in Nauvoo when the mantle of the Prophet Joseph Smith fell upon Brigham Young and he was chosen to be the leader,

On July 13, 1845 he married marry Ann Reese, who was also a convert to the newly established church and a native of England. He continued to work on the Nauvoo Temple until April 27, 1846. This date was memorable to him for another reason – it was the birthday of his first child, Thomas Grafton Steele.

During this time those who had remained in Nauvoo were troubled by mobs, so it decided that they should leave. On July 3, 1846 the Steele family commence their westward move. In September 1846 Richard Steele staked off a claim at Walnut Grove. He fenced about twelve acres of land, built a house, broke some of the land, and planted his crops. Moses Steele, the second son, was born here on September 29, 1848. He sold his claim at Walnut Grove, settled up his business, and left for Salt Lake City on June 2, 1851. He had one wagon, five oxen, three cows, and a mule. They crossed the Missouri River on June 28, 1851 and camped at Six Mile Grove. Here the party was divided into companies of fifty and of ten. He was in the second ten and the second fifty. A Brother Spratley was captain of the ten and A. Gordon, captain of the fifty.

On July 1, 1851 order were given their company to leave. They drove twelve miles the first day. The weather was hot, the roads were poor, and some of the cattle nearly gave out. Fifteen miles seems to

have been a good day's journey. On August 10, 1851 while the company was camped at Ash Grove, a daughter, Mary Elizabeth Steele Hansen, was born. The next morning the company continued its westward journey. They arrived in Salt Lake City October 2, 1851 after having experienced many hardships. Richard Steele went to work at the pottery, which was under the supervision of E. Tomkinson. The family remained in the city until after the April Conference in 1852 when they moved to American Fork.

The first home of the Steels was in the southeast part of town near the John A. Singleton place. About this time the Indians began committing depredations in the vicinity of the town, so it was necessary to move into the fort. They tore down their house and built another on the lot, now vacant, formerly used by the Bonneville Lumber Company. He bought some land near the fort and some south of town and began to farm. The grasshoppers destroyed most of their crops the first two years and they lost some of their livestock, so the beginning years were hard ones.

The following children were born after the family reached American Fork: Richard Reese Steele, February 12, 1854; William Henry, August 25, 1856; George Edward, November 8, 1859; Sarah Ann, April 16, 1863.

In the years that followed his moving to American Fork, he was a willing and an active worker. He was ready to help others whenever possible, and his home was always open to those in need of shelter. He and his boys are said to have kept one family in wood while the husband father was away on a mission. On October 28, 1876 he left American Fork for a mission to England. En route he visited with relatives in Wheeling, West Virginia and in Philadelphia. November 14, he left New York on the steamer "Wyoming" for England. After a voyage of thirteen days on a rough sea, they landed at Liverpool. He was unable to remain to complete a long mission because of ill health. He tells little about his work while there, but he had a chance to see many of his relatives and friends and to visit many places of interest. He returned home July 4, 1877.

He belonged to the school of prophets and was also a high priest. After the organization of the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Association in 1878, he presented the organization with a set of books. There were over one hundred ten volumes which formed the nucleus of our library. Some of these are still to be found on the shelves of the American Fork Public Library. He was one of the first members of the choir of American Fork. On June 6, 1881 members of this organization presented him with a Bible as a token of esteem for his faithful work with them.

He died October 4, 1881 at American Fork, Utah of Bright's Disease. The living descendants of Richard Steel at the present time are: three children - Elizabeth Steel Hansen, Richard Reese Steele, and Sarah Ann Steele Shelley; thirty grand children, ninety-eight great grand children, and forty-seven great, great grand children. This makes a total of one hundred seventy-eight descendants.