

Alice Walsh Strong  
Autobiographical sketch

Source:

In Josiah Rogerson, Papers [ca.1895-1914], fd.2

We left on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July and traveled on the stage road through the State of Iowa, to Council Bluffs, Ia [Iowa]; on to 24<sup>th</sup> of August, a distance of over 300 miles. Next day we ferried the Missouri and made camp at Florence. We left here on the 27<sup>th</sup> of Aug. for 1,031 miles journey to Salt Lake. My eldest son Robert [Walsh] was never well after we started, and one night after we had camped my husband took one of our quilt s [quilts] and went quite a distance to sell it for something more desirable to eat. He did not recover his health on the journey and died on the way between Laramie and Devils Gate. My grief at his interment is beyond expression, on account of the location and the certainty that his remains would be molested by wolves.

At night in our tent s [tents] there would be three couples and six to eight children under eight years of age. The weather after leaving Laramie became very cold at nights, and the hardship on the men having to stand guard six hours every other night was beyond human endurance.

Our rations had to be cut down both for adults and children and the clothing of both sexes becoming insufficient for the healthful warmth of our bodies.

Arriving at Devils-Gate about the first of Nov. on account of the nightly fatalities of the male members of our company, for two or three weeks previously, there were many widows in our company, and the women and the children had to pitch and put up the tents, shoveling the snow away with tin plates etc, making our beds on the ground and getting up in the morning wet with melted snow and lie on our clothing. This hard service continued with all that were able to endure it till we nearly reached the South Pass, and one night I dropped to the ground in a dead faint with my baby in my arms. I had some pepper pods with me and recovering from my stupor I took some of them to warm all <our food> and to recover my strength. During these times we had only a little thin flour gruel two or three times a day, and, this was meager nourishment for a mother and a nursing baby.

My husband [William Walsh] died and was buried at or near Devil's Gate and the ground was frozen so hard that the men had a difficult task in digging the grave deep enough [enough] in which to inter him, and several nine others that morning, and it is more than probable that several were only covered over with snow. Here I was left a widow with two young children. The boy [John Walsh] became so weak, he could not stand alone, and I had to sit and hold both of them in the relief wagons from this on. At times most of us had to walk after being met by the teams from Salt Lake, and late in the day, and toward evening my shoes would nearly freeze to my feet and at one time in taking them of[f] some of the skin and flesh came of[f] with them. Some of the bones \_f [of] my feet were left bare and my hands were severely frozen.

When the relief help reached us and nearly all of us had been assigned to some wagon I was sitting in the snow with my children on my lap, and it seemed that ther[e] was no chance for me to ride, but before the last teams had left the camp, I was assigned to ride in the commissary wagon, and did so until our arrival in Salt Lake City.

The young man in charge of the commissary wagon, was, Joseph B. Alvoard; and seemed to be well acquainted with frontier and mountain life and realizing my condition of a widow with two children, he helped me early and late to the bes[t] of his ability.

Arriving in Salt Lake Nov. 30<sup>th</sup> 1856, with two children and the clothes I stood up in, were all of my possessions in a strange land, without kin or relatives; the extra clothing we had started with and pulled on our carts to the Devils Gate, was left there and I never saw it afterwards.