

Alice Fish Walsh Strong

Alice Walsh Strong was born April 16, 1829, at Over Darwin Lancashire, England. As a girl she worked in the cotton mills at Lancashire and rose to the position of overseer of four of the steam looms. She joined the church when she was sixteen, and was afterward married to William Walsh and became the mother of three children by him - Robert, John and Sarah.

It was the desire of the Saints then as now to come to Zion and this wish was granted to the Walsh family in the spring of 1856. They, with other Mormons, set sail from Liverpool on the 19th of May of that year in the ship "Horizon". The bank of saints that left at this time were unfortunate from the outset. They began the journey a little later than usual and before definite plans had been made. They were forced to commence the trip because the men had given up their positions and funds would not permit their staying in England.

The ocean voyage that can be accomplished in less than a week now required six weeks on the "Horizon". While on the ocean the oldest Walsh child, Robert, had the measles and the mother was so ill that she had to stay in the berth the entire trip. But the end of the voyage finally came and the "Horizon" docked at Boston, Massachusetts.

From Boston the immigrants traveled on flat cars to Winter Quarters, arriving there July 8, 1856. The riding on flat cars was exceedingly uncomfortable as they were so crowded that it was impossible to lie down. The party was delayed at Winter Quarters for six weeks as the hand-carts were not ready for them. This wait made them very late in commencing the trip across the plains.

However on August 25th, 1856, the journey was begun. The Walsh family was assigned to the Martin Company. There were 576 persons, 146 handcarts and seven wagons in the company.

The first great sorrow of the family was the death of Robert. He had not been well at all after they started across the plains. When he became so ill that he could not eat the food provided, his father took one of their blankets and went a long distance to a settlement and sold the blanket to buy something that the boy could eat. The child did not get well and somewhere between Winter Quarters and Devil's Gate was laid away. The mother's suffering was so great at the time that she does not recall where the spot was.

As stated before, the handcart company was late in leaving England and right had it not been for the early winter. On October 19th the first snow fell and winter commenced in earnest. From then on the misery of the handcart can notably be described. No covers had been provided for the handcarts and as they had been made of unseasoned timber, they broke down; and owing to the weakness of the immigrants and the teams, the baggage had to be limited to ten pounds per person. This necessitated throwing away blankets and supplies that were really needed for the comfort of the people. Shoes gave out and they were forced to walk in the snow barefooted. Then the food supply grew short and they were rationed. History says that toward the last of the journey strong men

broke down and wept like children. Alice Walsh- Strong has told of her suffering on the way.

“There were three couples to one tent and nine children under eight years of age. The weather was getting very cold and the men had to stand guard every other night, and not having much to eat they could not endure it. I have seen them come into camp looking wild for the want of food and clothing. When we arrived at Devils Gate we were all widows, with no protector or anyone to pitch our tent. Many nights we shoveled away the snow to make our beds on the ground; getting up in the morning wet through with the warmth of our bodies coming in contact with the cold earth.

“This we did day after day as long as we had strength. One night as I came into camp, I dropped to the ground in a dead faint, with my baby in my arms. I had some peppercorns with me and as soon as I came to my senses, I took some of them to warm me. I had only a little thin gruel all day, this being our ration. It was very hard to keep ones strength, especially with a nursing baby.

"My husband died at Devils Gate. The ground was frozen so hard the morning he died that they could not dig a grave. I think they must have put him under the snow. Nine others died the same night.

"This left me alone to care for my two children. The boy became so weak that he could not stand alone. I had to sit and hold both of the children nearly all the time. When we came to a place where we could go no further and I had no exercise, my shoes froze to my feet. Later when I was able to remove them, the skin and flesh came off too, leaving only the bones. My hands were severely frozen. I can remember seeing some of the people eat singed rawhide, but I could not do so. Finally relief came. When Brother Young (Jos. A. Young) rode into camp on a white mule covered with snow, we thought he was an angel. When the wagons were filled and all were ready to start, I was sitting in the snow with both of my children on my lap. There seemed no place for me, but just before they left, it was decided that I should ride in the commissary wagon.

This I did and remained in it until we reached Salt Lake. Joseph B. Alvord, the young man who drove the wagon, understood frontier life and helped me with my children."

The part of the ill-fated handcart company of which Alice Strong was a member, arrived in Salt Lake City November 30th, 1856. She found herself in a strange land, she knew no one, and had nothing but the clothes she wore.

There were others in the same plight and to take care of this difficulty, so many were allotted to each ward. Alice Walsh Strong was assigned to' the Tenth Ward and went to live in the home of Jacob Strong, whom she afterward married. So desirous was she to let her mother in England know of her safe arrival, that she went out washing to earn sufficient money to buy a stamp (25 cents) to write home. Her mother could not actually believe that the letter was from her daughter, as she thought she had perished on the trip across the plains.

The arrival in Salt Lake did not end the trials of Sister Stong. Just when she was rejoicing in having a home once more, word came that Johnson's army was coming. The saints and her family went to Springville. Hard times came to them there and it was very hard to obtain enough food to eat.

After their return to Salt Lake during the same year, Alice Walsh Stong's first child by Jacob Strong was born, Lucinda. Two others, William J. and Alma E. blessed this union. When one of these children was born, mother was living in a log cabin with a dirt roof. One day it started to rain and continued to rain for seven days. After it stopped raining outside, it still kept raining on the inside of the cabin. Cups and pans, and an umbrella were used to try to keep the water off the bed, but mother caught cold and was ill for a long time.

In those days the pioneers had to make their own clothes and Alice Walsh Strong learned to spin and weave. They had to get the wool from the sheep's back and card, spin, color and weave it into cloth. There were not many weaving machines at that time so the cloth was made into clothes by hand. Mrs. Strong also did weaving for other people.

The settlers also had to depend on the crops alone for their food. When the grasshoppers came and ate all their wheat, hard times again appeared. Flour cost as much as \$25.00 and \$30.00 a hundred and was very hard to get even at that price.

But with all the trials and hardship, her faith never wavered. At one time her mother in England wrote and told her that she would send the money to defray the expenses for her return to England, but Sister Strong replied that "not for all England would she return." This is her testimony:

"I joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Over Darwin, Lancashire, England at the age of sixteen. The girl who taught me to investigate the principles of Mormonism, afterward apostatized.

"I have always been proud to think I had the courage to join, and although the suffering which I passed through was terrible, I am still thankful that the Lord preserved my life and made it possible for me to get to Zion. Jesus said, "Unless we forsake Father and Mother, houses and lands for His sake, we are not Worthy of Him." This I have done for Him, because I am the only one of my Father's or Mother's family to join the church, and I left my loved ones and all those dear to me in England. I have passed through many trials but have never regretted coming to Zion."

On the 18th of February 1872, her husband Jacob Strong died and she again was left a widow. To provide for her family under the trying conditions of pioneer life is an accomplishment worthy of record in this sketch. During the summer of 1890, she discontinued keeping a house of her own and for the balance of her life she lived with her children. In latter years of her life she was afflicted with rheumatism and deafness so that

she was never really able to enjoy the reward that the toil and hardship of her earlier years had earned. Never the less in her advanced years she enjoyed the companionship of friends who would frequently call and visit with her.

She passed away peacefully on the 8th day of August 1924 at home of her daughter Lucinda Strong Campbell, at North Ogden, Utah being at that time in her 96th year.