

Harriet Neeley Strong

by Her Daughter

Ida Strong Groom

My Mother, Harriet Neeley Strong, was born September 10, 1839, at Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois. She was the daughter of Lewis Neeley and Elizabeth Miller Neeley and was the seventh child of the family of eleven. There were eight boys and three girls. Their names in order were Alanson, William, Armenius, who died at the age of four months, Mary Jane, Armenius (2nd) who lived to be seventy-two years of age, Lewis Arnold, (1838-1840), Harriet, Lewis (2nd), John, Hyrum Smith, and Elizabeth Ann, who died at the age of one month. There was also Elizabeth (2nd), Grandmother died at the time of the last child's birth, the date of her death being February 2nd, 1847.

The Neeley's were converts to the Mormon Church in New York in its early history. They joined the Saints and traveled with them to Nauvoo. They later joined Captain Warren Foot's Hundred, and Capt. Wall's Ten - traveling westward with them to Utah, the seventh company to arrive in the year 1850, three years after the first company of Mormon pioneers arrived. They underwent many hardships in pioneering a new territory. Mother was eleven years old when she crossed the plains and walked most of the way. She used every available moment to knit stockings even while walking. On one occasion when they made camp, she, with a girl friend, took their knitting and wandered away from the rest of the group. For some reason she laid down the stocking which she had been working on, and was three-fourths done and was never able to find it again. This was indeed a great loss as the source of yarn supply was left behind when they left Nauvoo.

Mother's Mother died when Mother was eight years old, her death being due to exposure at the time of child-birth. On their way from Nauvoo to Winter Quarters, she had given birth to a baby girl at Kaneshville, Pottswattamie County, Iowa, and died eight days later leaving the tiny babe, Elizabeth. Mother's father married another woman by the name of Sophia Ketchum, prior to their coming to Utah. This woman was part Cherokee Indian and not only treated Grandfather's children unkindly, but her own children as well. After they came west, and as soon as Mother was old enough, she sought a home elsewhere, doing whatever work she could and sometimes simply working for her board and lodging. She was baptized a member of the L.D.S. Church in 1848, at the age of nine. At one time after she had been visiting in Brigham City with her sister Mary Wright, she attempted to walk to Salt Lake City, in hopes that someone in a buggy going her way would give her a ride. Becoming weary and faint she stopped at a house by the roadside and asked for a drink. She fainted while the water was being brought to her and was ill for several days. She remained with these good people who cared for her until she was well. This was the home of William Strong and Martha B. Alvord Strong. She became fast friends of these people before returning to Salt Lake City.

William and Martha Strong were divorced in the fall of 1855. Mother was married to William Strong, April 17, 1856, by Brigham Young in his office, the ceremony being witnessed by his father and mother, Jacob and Sarah Hill Strong. He also married this same day Sarah Garlick Richmond, the widow of a very dear friend, having promised at the time of the death of this friend to care for his widow and child. Mother was a plural wife and was but seventeen years old when she married, but was no doubt happy and glad to have a home. On July 26, 1862, she was endowed and sealed to William Strong in the Endowment House.

Mother had thirteen children, five of whom are still living. Her early married life was spent in Springville, Utah, where four of her children were born. While in Springville, Mother had to part with her first child, a little girl just two years of age, who was burned very badly. Her clothes had caught on fire from an open fireplace. In 1864 they moved to Salt Lake where the remainder of the family were born and where they all grew to manhood and womanhood except one who died in early childhood. The names of the children were Sarah Elizabeth, Harriet Lucinda, Mary Lademe, William Hill, Emmaline Jane, Lewis Napoleon, Heber Parley, Alice Louise, Helen Maude, LeRoy Neeley, Ida Violet, Ira Armenius, and Marvin Albert.

Mother was able to tell of many trials as well as pleasures that the Saints encountered, such as the cricket plague and the part the Seagulls took in ridding the country of this pest. She also told of how the grasshoppers become so bad that they would almost eat the clothing from off their backs. And then she told more pleasant stories of how they used to sweep the door yard and then remove their shoes and stockings and enjoy themselves dancing. They would not dare to dance in their shoes for fear they would wear them out. Mother's brother, William Neeley, made a violin which he played for them to dance by. Mother's time was pretty well occupied as her children were born about every two years. She spun and wove the material for their clothing on a loom belonging to Grandmother Strong. She also knit stockings for her family. The soap they used in the early days Mother made, later however, she was able to buy soap. She knew how to make candles and rag carpets. Father had a place in Emigration Canyon which he farmed along the creek bottom. He also took out cattle for people in Salt Lake City. Mother made butter and took it to the city to the market to sell.

On December 24, 1888, Father died leaving Mother with seven children, four of whom were unable to support themselves. The two eldest of the children also passed away shortly after Father's death. This was indeed a trying period in Mother's life. We had just moved in the Fall from the old log house into our new brick house and Father died that winter. He died very suddenly with heart disease. Father had been a member of the Mormon Battalion. He had enlisted in 1846, when but eighteen years old. He was in Company E, under Captain Daniel C. Davis. Up to this time he had received a Government pension for his services in the Battalion, but after his death, because Mother

was a plural wife, it seemed that she would not be able to get his pension, in spite of the fact that she needed it so badly. However, finally by the aid of a lawyer by the name of William Fuller, she was able to get the money. He, living in the Tenth Ward, knew of Mother's condition and gave his services free of charge. She received twelve dollars a month which came in quarterly payments. While this was insufficient to take care of the family's needs it was at least a great help.

Marvin was one year and seven months old when Father died. Up until this time Mother had not taken any active part in the Church other than attending her meetings when she could, but about this time she was called upon to be a Relief Society visiting teacher in the Tenth Ward, which position she filled faithfully.

Shortly after Father died, Mother's stepmother, Sophia Ketchum Neeley, came and stayed with her one winter while she was having her eyes treated for cataracts. Grandmother was quite blind and needed considerable attention which Mother gave to the best of her ability.

Prior to 1894, my sisters, Mary Strong Dodge and Emma Strong Freeman with their husbands and families, had moved to Idaho from Salt Lake City to find homes for themselves. In the Spring of 1894, Mother moved to Willow Creek, now Ucon, Idaho, so that she might get land for her three boys, and be near her daughters who had already moved to Idaho. The quarter section of sage brush land which Mother homesteaded was where part of Ucon is now built. A little one room house was erected about where the Ucon mill now stands and this was the beginning of our Idaho home. Mother sold her property in Emigration Canyon to the City of Salt Lake and with the proceeds she was able to buy a team of horses, a cow, and farm implements which aided us greatly in getting a start. We all had to work to clear the land of sage brush, Mother helping also. The boys, though young, worked hard getting the place fenced and in condition whereby crops could be raised.

Many friends were made who treated us very kindly at this time. Among them were Heber Andrus and family, whose place joined ours on the south. Bishop Simmons and family, George Simmons and family, Barretts, Robinsons, Robert Andrus and wife, Huffackers and many others.

Once when Mother was going out to plant in the garden she tripped on the clothes prop and broke her arm. It was broken in the elbow and when it healed it remained stiff. Although after this she was unable to put her right hand up to her head, she still combed her hair in the same neat way. All Mother's life she was full of hope and courage, never looking for the impossible. She was always of a cheerful disposition rather of the merry-making type. She could sing and step dance and also knew how to play the Jew's harp. Some of the songs she used to sing were: "Mistletoe Bough", "Shine on Silver Moon",

and many church songs. She took an active part in the Willow Creek Ward. She was called to work in the Primary shortly after she came to Idaho, acting as President of the Willow Creek Ward Primary, also as a visiting teacher in the Relief Society. This took her among the sick and those who were called to mourn. Many times she walked when the boys were using the horses from our place at Ucon to Groom's, Jeff's, Greenwood's and Godfrey's, a distance of three miles or more from home then back again, feeling tired but happy in the work.

Mother worked hard and in 1897 we built a new three room house which made us much more comfortable. A lawn was planted in front also trees and flowers. In the summer of 1899, the railroad was built and as they surveyed the land from Idaho falls to Ashton, Mother's house was found to be in the proposed path of the railroad and had to be moved. It was moved back in the field where it now stands. Mother felt very badly about being moved as this meant more work in getting trees, flowers, etc., started again.

In the Spring of 1900, Mother suffered a paralytic stroke and was unconscious for several days and it was thought that she could not get better. We had Doctor Wright of Salt Lake City come up to see her and he did not entertain much hope for her recovery, but through the faith and prayers of all she did recover, but was never able to do her own work. Myrtle Dodge Tyler, Mother's granddaughter, stayed with her for the remainder of Mother's life. My Mother died January 13, 1904, death being due to heart trouble. She was sick for three months and during that time was unable to lie down.

Funeral services were held at Willow Creek and the body was shipped to Salt Lake City where another service was held in the Tenth Ward Chapel and she was laid to rest in the Salt Lake City Cemetery. Thus closed the life of a noble character, a true pioneer, a devoted wife and mother, whose courage and service to others we hope never to forget.

Original typed by Harriet Strong Speirs, Granddaughter of Harriet Neeley Strong